

Shi-LOUD

 COLOR THE PICTURE



The night was very cold and very clear, and the snow in Munching Meadow lay smooth and blue under the stars. It was so quiet that Shiloh could hear the snow squeak under his hooves, *creek, creek*, when he walked.

Everybody else in the woods was asleep. Tomorrow was the Overflow Feast, the biggest feast Wonderful Woods had ever had, with the whole woods at one long table. Shiloh had been waiting for it for days and days. And he was so excited that he couldn't close his eyes.

So he wrapped up in his blanket and went out to stand in the meadow, the way his mama did when she couldn't sleep. And he looked up.

The sky was moving.

At first it was just a little green glow, low over the hills, like somebody far away had lit a lantern. Then the glow grew. It stretched up across the sky in a long, wavy ribbon of green, and the ribbon rippled, like a curtain when the wind blows through it. Then pink came, and purple, and a little bit of gold, and all of it danced together, slowly, across the whole sky over Wonderful Woods.

Shiloh's mouth fell open. His blanket fell off. He didn't even notice.

And then he saw that he wasn't alone.

At the far edge of the meadow, where the pines began, stood the Silent Stag. He looked as if he were made of morning mist and river light, soft and silver-blue, with antlers like branches of light. He was looking up at the dancing sky too. He stood in the deep snow, and there were no tracks behind him at all.

Then, slowly, the Silent Stag turned his head and looked at Shiloh.

Just looked. And Shiloh knew, all at once, that this was too big for just one little sheep in a meadow. Everybody had to see it. Everybody.

When Shiloh looked back at the pines, the Silent Stag was gone.

Shiloh ran.

He ran across the meadow and through the trees, and the first place he came to was the Moose home. He banged on the door with his hoof, *bam bam bam*, and he opened his mouth to shout, and what came out was: "...baa."

It was a very small baa. Shiloh had never shouted anything in his whole life.

But the door opened anyway. Mr. Moose stood there in his blanket, with a sleepy nightcap hanging off one antler. Behind him, a vine shook, and Mr. Monkey came sliding down from the treehouse next door in his pajamas, half asleep, and landed in the snow with a soft *whumpf*.

"Shiloh?" said Mr. Monkey, yawning. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing's wrong," whispered Shiloh. "The sky. The sky is dancing. Everybody has to see it. But I can't make my voice big."

Mr. Monkey looked up. And his eyes went wide, and his yawn turned into a gasp. He wanted to see it forever. But even more than that, he wanted everybody to see it. Right now. Before it was gone.

"WAKE UP, EVERYBODY!" he started to shout.

But Mr. Moose stopped him. He was thinking. Shiloh had seen it first. Shiloh had run all this way. This was Shiloh's news to tell.

"Shiloh," said Mr. Moose. "You tell it. We'll run with you. At every house, say it a little bit louder."

Shiloh swallowed. "Okay," he whispered.

The three of them ran through the snow, Mr. Monkey on one side of Shiloh and Mr. Moose on the other, to Benji's burrow by the clover.

"Benji," said Shiloh, a little louder. "The sky is dancing."

Benji poked his head out, and his ears went straight up.

Next they ran to Bruno's den. Bruno was snoring so loud the icicles over his door were shaking. *SNRRRK... whoooo. SNRRRK... whoooo.*

"Bruno!" said Shiloh, louder. "The sky is DANCING!"

Bruno came out of his den. But he didn't wake up. He walked right out into the snow with his eyes closed, still snoring, with his blanket dragging behind him like a cape.

"He's sleepwalking!" whispered Mr. Monkey. "Hee hee hee!"

Shiloh took the deepest breath he'd ever taken.

"BRUNO! LOOK UP!"

Bruno's eyes popped open. He looked up. And he sat right down in the snow. "Ohhhhh," said Bruno.

Then they ran on, and Shiloh got louder at every home. Hazel's. Dottie's. Ricky's. "THE SKY IS DANCING!" Ricky came out with a piece of bark to write down every color. Dottie came out spinning in circles, trying to see all of it at once, until she got dizzy and fell over in the snow, and lay there on her back with her legs up, looking at the sky.

"This is the best way to see it," said Dottie from the snow. "Ha! Ha!"

So everybody lay down on their backs in the snow.

Sammy was already up, because Sammy was always up. She zipped down from her treetop nook and landed right on Mr. Moose's tummy. "Why is everybody lying on the ground?"

"LOOK UP!" said Shiloh.

And Sammy looked up, and for the first time in her whole life, Sammy Squirrel held still.

By the time they got to the Wishing Tree in Sunny Square, Shiloh wasn't whispering anymore at all. He climbed right up on the Listening Log, stood up as tall as

one little sheep can stand, and he shouted so loud it rang out over the whole woods:

"EVERYBODY! WAKE UP! LOOK UP! THE SKY IS DANCING!"

And all over Wonderful Woods, doors opened. Windows opened. Mamas and daddies came out in their blankets. The old crow and his grandchicks came flying over from across the river. Mama Hedgehog came up the littlest trail. And everybody stood in the snow and looked up, and everybody said the same thing: "Ohhhhh."

"Hee hee hee!" went Mr. Monkey. "Shiloh! You were so loud! You're not Shiloh anymore. You're Shi-LOUD!"

"Ha-ha-ha!" laughed Mr. Moose. "Shi-LOUD!"

Shiloh's wool went pink all the way to his ears. But he was smiling the biggest smile anybody had ever seen on him.

Last of all, very slowly, came Tessie. She looked up at the sky for a long, long time.

"I saw the sky dance once," said Tessie softly. "When I was very small. I've waited my whole long life... to see it again."

She squinted. "It's a little blurry... these days," she said. "But it's still... the most beautiful blur... I ever saw."

After a while, the colors faded, slowly, until there were only stars again.

Before anybody went back to bed, Mama Monkey handed out white circles right there in Sunny Square, and everybody painted by starlight. Shiloh's had nothing on the front. On the back, he painted the sky, green and pink and purple, dancing.

And the next morning, Shiloh would tell the whole story to everybody he saw, all over again, just the way it happened. But for now, everybody went back to their homes, and Mr. Moose and Mr. Monkey walked Shiloh to his door, one on each side of him.

"What a day!" said Shiloh, in his own little voice again. "The sky danced, and the Silent Stag was there, and I ran and told everybody. Bruno sleepwalked, and Dottie fell over, and Sammy held still. I got louder and louder. Mr. Monkey called me Shi-LOUD. And Tessie got to see it again."

Then Shiloh went inside, and the two friends walked home under the stars. Mr. Monkey whistled, and Mr. Moose hummed, and together they sang:

*We are better together,
Moose and Monkey forever.*

And over Munching Meadow, under the quiet stars, a little blanket lay in the snow right where Shiloh had dropped it, and not a single hoofprint was anywhere near the pines.

Let's Talk

- 1 Shiloh's voice was tiny. How did it get so big?
- 2 The dancing sky was a gift nobody made. What gift like that would you run and tell everybody about?

Your Turn

Make a white ornament for a gift nobody made. Front: what it is. Back: draw it.

FRONT: WHAT IT IS



BACK: DRAW IT



This one stays white. When you are done, trace its edge with a gray crayon.

Make a real one: with a grown-up, hold plain paper over this page against a sunny window and trace both ornaments. Cut them out, glue them back to back, and hang it with your family's ornaments.

SAMMY'S JOKE



Which is faster, hot or cold?

Unscramble the letters to finish the joke. The picture is a clue!



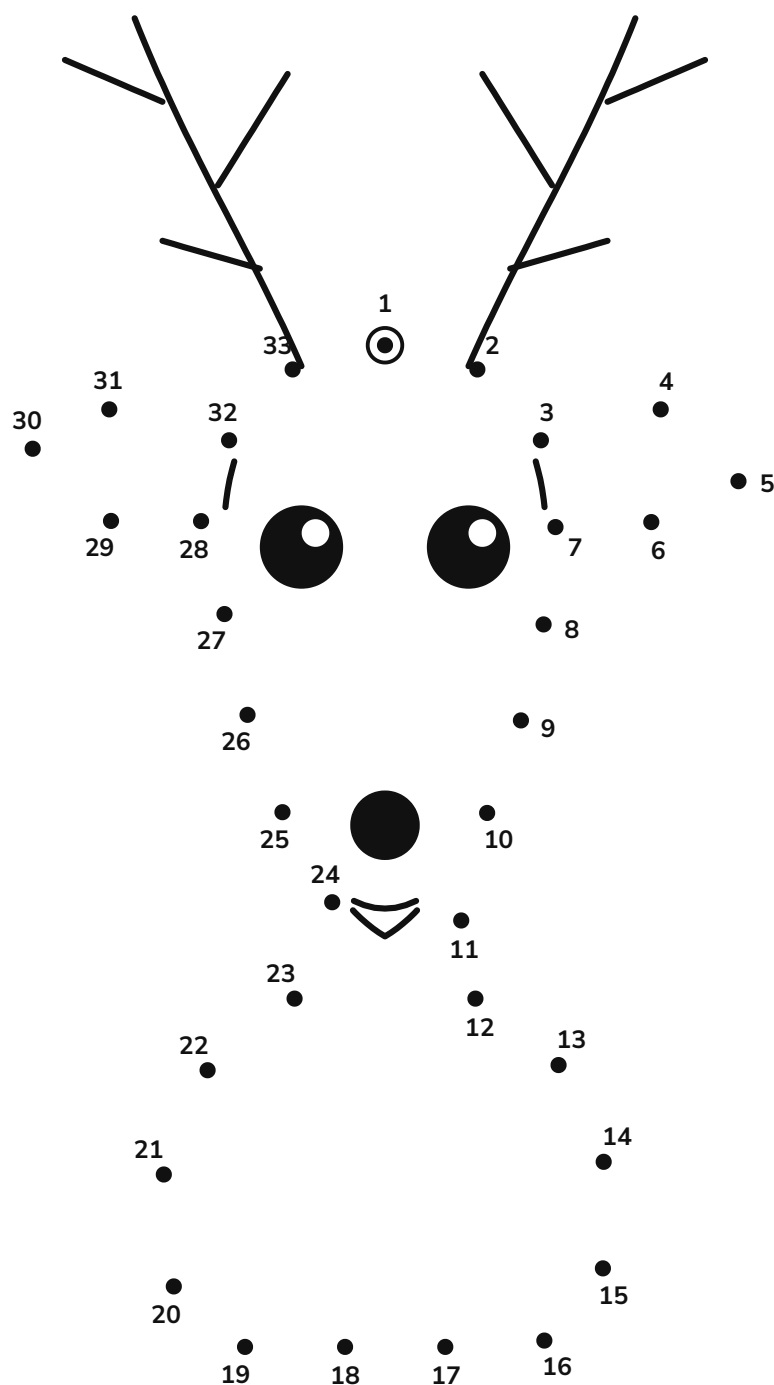
CLUE



_____. You can catch a cold!

Connect the Dots

Connect the dots to find who stood at the edge of the meadow. Start at 1 (the circled dot) and count up to 33. Then join the last dot back to 1, and color it!



 Read With Me

DRAW THE STORY

 Yells! looks up. It is lit up, and it shifts! stands still. Then swish!  is not on the hill.“Up,” says , as soft as can be.At ’s den: “Up!” At ’s den: “UP! UP!”Then  yells, “UP! UP! LOOK UP!”

The pals look up. “Ah!”

PICTURE WORDS  Shiloh  the Silent Stag  Benji  Bruno

Color a star each time you read it.

♥ My Thank-You

Trace the dark word. Then trace or write the light words. What good gift did nobody make?
Write it or draw it on the line.

Nobody made

It is a gift!

👁 Christmas Eve I Spy

Find and count each one. Write how many in the box.

