

Pulling as One

 COLOR THE PICTURE



The storm had blown itself out in the night. In the morning, the whole woods was buried in deep, soft, brand-new snow, so deep that Benji could jump in and disappear completely, with only his ears poking out.

"Hee hee," went Benji, from somewhere under the snow.

The friends had a plan. They would take the little dark home everything it needed. A lantern with a candle inside, lit from the fire at the Moose home. A bundle of firewood. A pot of soup. Two warm blankets. They put it all on Daddy Monkey's big wooden sled.

The sled was very heavy.

"I'll pull it!" said Mr. Monkey. He grabbed the rope and pulled with all his might. The sled didn't move. Mr. Monkey's feet slid out from under him, and he ended up lying flat on his tummy in the snow, still holding the rope.

"Hee hee hee! It's too heavy for one!"

"Then two," said Mr. Moose.

Daddy Monkey had been watching. He went into his workshop, and there was a lot of sawing and tapping, zzt-zzt, tok-tok-tok, and when he came out, he was carrying a wooden harness. It had two loops, side by side, one for each of them, so they could pull the sled together.

But the first harness didn't fit. Mr. Moose's loop was too low, and Mr. Monkey's loop was too high. When they put it on, Mr. Moose was bent over with his nose in the

snow, and Mr. Monkey was lifted right off the ground, dangling with his feet kicking.

"I'm flying!" said Mr. Monkey. "But I'm not pulling!"

"Ha-ha-ha!" laughed Mr. Moose, from down in the snow.

So Daddy Monkey took it back to his workshop. More sawing. More tapping. And this time, he made it just for them. One side high, for a tall moose. One side low, for a small monkey. He shaped the wood to fit Mr. Moose's shoulders, and he shaped the other side to fit Mr. Monkey's.

They put it on. It fit.

"It's heavy," said Mr. Monkey.

"But it fits," said Mr. Moose.

And off they went, pulling the sled out of Sunny Square toward the far edge of the woods. The other friends came too: Bruno and Hazel and Dottie, Benji and Shiloh and Ricky and Percy.

But very soon, there was a problem.

Mr. Monkey was so excited to get there that he pulled fast. Mr. Moose pulled slow and steady, the way he did everything. And when one side of a sled goes fast and the other side goes slow, it doesn't go straight. It goes around.

They went around in a circle. Then another circle. Then another one.

"Why are we back at the Wishing Tree?" asked Hazel.

"We're making a snow donut!" said Mr. Monkey, looking at the big round track in the snow. "Hee hee hee!"

"Haw haw haw!" went Bruno. "A snow donut!"

Sammy came zipping around the donut track the other way. "What falls down all winter and never gets hurt?" she called. "SNOW!" And she zipped off before anybody could answer.

"Ha! Ha!" barked Dottie, and flopped down in the snow on purpose, to see if it was true. It was.

Mr. Monkey stopped. He looked at the far edge of the woods. They had to get there. The little dark home was waiting. He wanted to pull harder, faster, right now.

But Mr. Moose was thinking. It wasn't about pulling harder. They were both pulling hard. It was about pulling the same.

"Mr. Monkey," he said. "When you step, I'll step. Every time. Let's say it."

"Step," said Mr. Monkey.

"Step," said Mr. Moose, at the same time.

Step. Step. Step. Step. Mr. Monkey took small fast steps, and Mr. Moose took big slow steps, but they stepped at the very same time, every time. And the sled went straight. Straight out of Sunny Square, straight across the meadow, straight through the deep snow.

The friends walked alongside, saying it with them. "Step! Step! Step!" Even Percy said it, and Percy had never pulled anything in his life.

By the afternoon, they had come all the way to the bramble patch.

It was a big tangle of prickly bushes, all covered in snow, and nobody ever went through it. The far side of it was where the dark home was. But the brambles were thick, and the sled couldn't get through.

The friends looked at each other.

"I can help with this part," said Bruno. And he did. He held the prickly branches back with his big paws, very carefully, one at a time, so nobody got scratched. Hazel stamped the snow down flat behind him to make a path. Dottie went ahead with her nose down, sniffing out the way. Ricky walked in front, pointing out the safest way.

And Mr. Moose and Mr. Monkey pulled the sled through, step, step, step, along the path their friends made.

Then, right in the middle of the brambles, the sled went over a big snowy bump. It bounced up. And the lantern on top bounced right off and landed in the snow, *fffft*. The little light went out.

Everybody stared at it.

"Oh no," said Ricky softly.

The lantern was dark. The fire from the Moose home was all the way back on the other side of the woods. It

was getting late. There was no way to go back for more light before dark.

Mr. Monkey felt it in his chest, heavy. They had pulled all this way to bring a light. And now they didn't have one.

"We can't light anything now," he said.

Mr. Moose looked through the last of the brambles. And there it was, just ahead. A tiny little home, tucked under a fallen log, with a tiny round door and a tiny round window. It was dark.

"We can't bring the light," said Mr. Moose slowly. "Not today. But we can still bring everything else."

So they pulled the sled the last few steps, and Mr. Monkey knocked on the tiny door. *Tap, tap, tap*.

For a long moment, nothing happened. Then the tiny door opened, just a crack.

Inside was a very small, very old mouse with soft gray fur and tiny round seeing glasses, a lot like Tessie's, leaning on a little stick. She looked up at all of them: a moose, a monkey, a bear, a horse, a dog, a bunny, a sheep, a raccoon, and a pack rat, standing in the snow outside her door.

"Oh, my," she said. "Nobody has knocked on my door in a long, long time."

"Hello," said Mr. Monkey. "We saw your home from the top of Lookout Ledge. It was the only dark one. We came to bring you a light. But our light went out."

The old mouse looked at the lantern. Then at the sled, with the firewood and the soup and the blankets. Then at all of their faces.

"Well," she said softly, and her whiskers trembled, "you've brought me plenty. More than plenty. My name is Granny Mabel. Won't you come in?"

That night, back home, the friends painted red stars and hung them near the top of the pine. Mr. Moose painted Bruno on the front. On the back, he painted big paws holding back the brambles, so nobody got scratched.

"What a day!" said Mr. Monkey. "Daddy made a harness, and the first one made me fly. We made a snow donut, and then we said 'step, step,' and went straight. Bruno held the brambles. The lantern fell off and went out. But we found the little home, and it's Granny Mabel's."

Mr. Monkey whistled, and Mr. Moose hummed, and together they sang:

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

And by the Moose home door, the wooden harness hung on a peg, one loop high and one loop low, still a little bit warm from pulling.

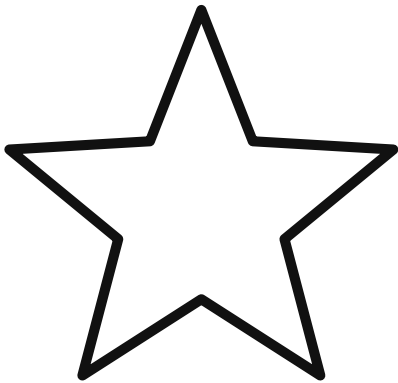
Let's Talk

- 1 Mr. Monkey was fast and Mr. Moose was slow. How did they get the sled to go straight?
- 2 Who outside our house did something hard for you, or for somebody else?

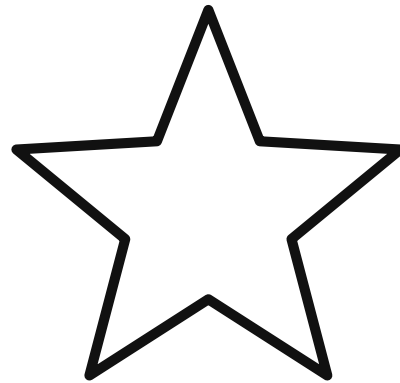
Your Turn

Make a red star for someone outside our house who did something hard for you. Front: their name. Back: draw what they did.

FRONT: THE NAME



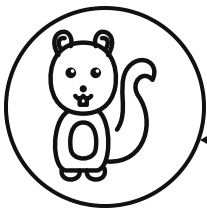
BACK: THE THANK-YOU



This one is red. Color it red when you are done!

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

SAMMY'S JOKE



What is a mouse's favorite game?

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



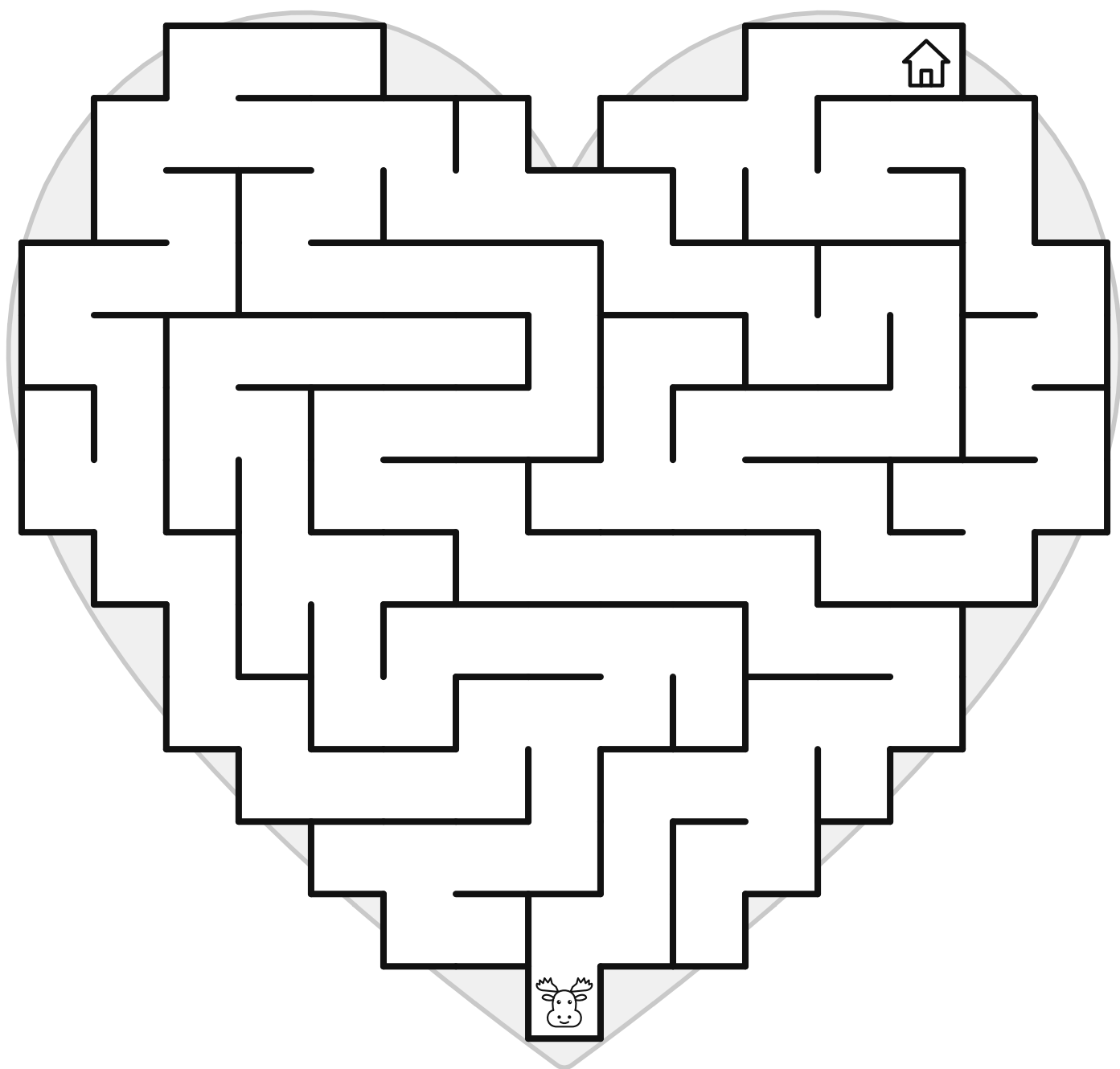
CLUE



_____ and squeak!

☆ Step, Step, Step

Pull the sled through the brambles to Granny Mabel's little home. Start at Mr. Moose.



 Read With Me

DRAW THE STORY

Step, Step! and  tug a sled. It is a big, big sled. is quick.  is not quick.

The sled spins in a ring, and spins, and spins!

“Step when I step,” says .

Step. Step. Step. The sled glides!

At the thick brush,  lifts the brush up.

Past the brush is a small hut in a log.

“Get in!” says Gran.

PICTURE WORDS



Mr. Moose



Mr. Monkey



Bruno



Color a star each time you read it.

♥ My Thank-You

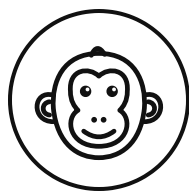
Trace the dark word. Then trace or write the light words. Write their name on the line, or draw a tiny face. Read it to them!

Thank you.

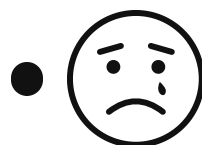
for doing a hard thing for me.

♥ Feelings Match

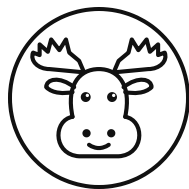
How did they feel? Draw a line from each friend to the face that matches. One face will be left over.



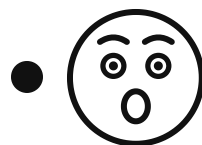
Mr. Monkey, dangling from the first harness



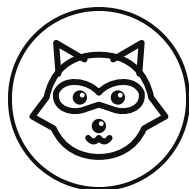
sad



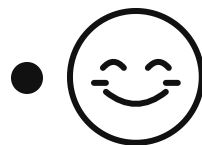
Mr. Moose, when the sled went around in a circle



surprised



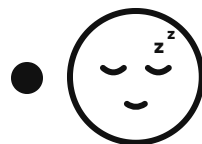
Ricky, when the lantern went out



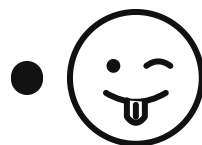
proud



Bruno, holding back the prickly brambles



sleepy



silly

