

The Last Night of the Year

 COLOR THE PICTURE



The last day of the year was cold and bright, and the snow sparkled so hard in the sun that it looked like the whole woods was covered in tiny stars. Icicles hung from every branch, and when the wind blew, they tinkled together, *ting-a-ling-ting*.

In Sunny Square, everybody was getting ready for the Last Night Party. There would be games, and music, and hot apple cider, and at midnight, the whole woods would shout goodbye to the old year and hello to the new one. Mr. Monkey had been waiting for it all week.

But in the morning, Mr. Moose and Mr. Monkey had gone back through the brambles to Granny Mabel's, with Mama Moose, to see how she was doing.

Granny Mabel was sitting in her tiny chair by her tiny cold fireplace, wrapped in one of the blankets they had brought. Her tiny home was very neat and very clean, with a tiny teapot and tiny teacups and a tiny bed. And it was very, very dark.

"My leg doesn't work so well anymore," said Granny Mabel. "I can't walk far. I can't carry wood. So when my last candle burned out, a long time ago, I just... sat in the dark." She smiled at them. "But I'm used to it. You two run along to your party. I'll be just fine."

Mr. Monkey looked at her, so small in her big blanket, in her dark little home, on the last night of the year.

And he couldn't go. He just couldn't. Not to the party. Not with Granny Mabel sitting here by herself.

"Mr. Moose," he whispered. "She's going to be all alone tonight. On the last night of the whole year."

Mr. Moose thought about it. "Granny Mabel," he said, "we could bring you a candle from home tonight." Granny Mabel shook her head, very gently. "Not tonight, dear. I've had the dark a long time. Tonight I'd just like some company."

"Then we won't go to the party," said Mr. Moose. "We'll stay here. With her."

Mr. Monkey's mouth fell open. Then it closed. Then he nodded, hard. "We'll stay."

Granny Mabel blinked behind her spectacles. "But your party, dears," she said. "All your friends. The games, and the cider, and midnight..."

"We want to stay with you," said Mr. Monkey.

So Mama Moose went home and told everybody, and then she and Daddy Moose came back with more blankets and a basket of food, and lay down in the snow right outside the tiny door to wait.

So Mr. Moose and Mr. Monkey stayed.

Mr. Monkey fit inside Granny Mabel's home just fine, if he scrunched up a little. But Mr. Moose was much, much too big. He tried to go through the door anyway, and only his nose fit. So he lay down in the snow outside,

and pushed his nose in through the tiny round door, as far as it would go.

His big moose nose took up almost the whole room.

"Hello," said Mr. Moose. His nose was inside. The rest of him was outside.

"Hee hee hee!" went Mr. Monkey. "Mr. Moose is a nose!"

"Eek-eek," went Granny Mabel, in a tiny squeaky laugh, holding on to her spectacles. "I've never had a nose for a guest before."

Granny Mabel made tea in her tiny teapot. She poured a cup for Mr. Monkey, and a cup for Mr. Moose. But a mouse teacup was very, very small, and when Mr. Moose took a sip, his tongue went in, and the whole cup was gone, cup and all, *SHLUP*.

"Oops," said Mr. Moose, and very carefully, he gave the cup back. It was a little bit wet.

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

"Hee hee hee!" went Mr. Monkey.

Granny Mabel told them stories, in the dark. Stories from when she was a tiny young mouse, and the woods were young too. She told them about the time she rode down Rainbow River on a leaf. About the year it snowed so much that her front door was on the roof. About a winter long, long ago, when the sky danced, and she saw it.

"I saw it too!" said Mr. Monkey. "Last week! The sky danced again!"

"Did it?" said Granny Mabel softly. "I didn't know. I was in here."

And that made Mr. Monkey even more glad they stayed.

It got later and later. Far away, through the trees, they could hear the party in Sunny Square: music and laughing and a big cheer every now and then. Mr. Monkey listened. He thought about the games. He thought about the apple cider. Then he looked at Granny Mabel, wrapped up in her blanket, telling stories in the dark, happier than she'd been in a long time. And he scooted closer to her.

Mr. Moose's nose fell asleep first. Then the rest of him. He snored, and because his nose was inside the tiny home, every snore rattled all the tiny teacups on the tiny shelf. *Hrrrrnk... rattle-rattle-rattle. Hrrrrnk... rattle-rattle-rattle.*

Just then, Sammy came zipping through the brambles from the party, with a little cup of apple cider for Mr. Monkey. She heard the snoring and stopped. "Is that a moose," she whispered, "or a THUNDERSTORM?" And she zipped right back to the party, so fast she forgot to leave the cider.

"Hee hee hee!" whispered Mr. Monkey. "It's not a thunderstorm. It's a snore-nose!"

"A snore... nose," whispered Granny Mabel. "Eek-eek-eek!" Her spectacles slid right down to the end of her own tiny nose.

And then, right before midnight, they heard it. A great *whoosh* of wings, outside the door. Something very big landed in the snow, so softly that hardly a flake moved.

Mr. Monkey peeked out the tiny window.

It was Everest Eagle.

Everest had come all the way down from the top of his cliff, the highest place in the whole woods, to the very smallest home in the whole woods. He looked through the tiny window at Granny Mabel. Then he stepped close to her little home, and spread his great wings out wide, all the way around it, like a roof over a roof. And the cold wind stopped. Right away, everything was warmer.

He didn't go back to his cliff. He stayed.

Far away in Sunny Square, the whole woods shouted, "HAPPY NEW YEAR!"

Granny Mabel looked up at the great wings around her home. She looked at Mr. Monkey, curled up next to her, and at Mr. Moose's sleeping nose, and through the door at Mama and Daddy Moose, waiting in the snow.

"I'm not used to this," she said softly. "I'm used to the dark. I'm not used to company."

"You can get used to it," said Mr. Monkey sleepily.

When the sky turned pink, Mama Moose took out the white stars she had brought in her basket, and Mr. Monkey painted one by the first light of the new year. He left the front of it empty. On the back, he painted a tiny home under a log, and a great eagle with his wings around it.

"What a day!" said Mr. Monkey, yawning, on the walk home through the brambles. "We didn't go to the party. We stayed with Granny Mabel. Mr. Moose was too big, so only his nose came in, and he drank his teacup, cup and all. Granny Mabel told stories in the dark. Mr. Moose's snore rattled all the teacups, and he was a snore-nose. And Everest came all the way down and put his wings around her home, and stayed all night."

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

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

And behind them, past the bramble patch, in the very first morning of the new year, a great eagle still sat in the snow with his wings folded around the smallest home in the woods, while the sun came up and found him there.

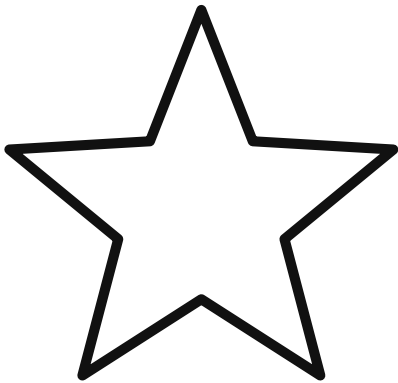
Let's Talk

- 1 Mr. Moose and Mr. Monkey missed the big party. Why?
- 2 Everest came down from the highest place to the smallest home. Why do you think he came?

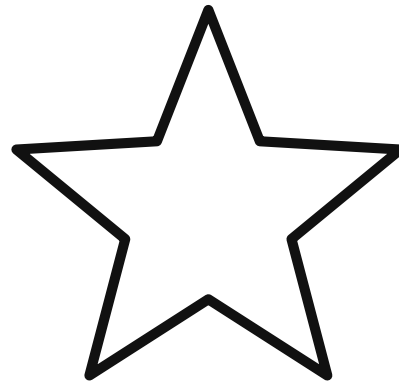
Your Turn

Make a white star for a good gift nobody made, like snow, the stars or a new morning. Front: what it is. Back: draw it.

FRONT: WHAT IT IS



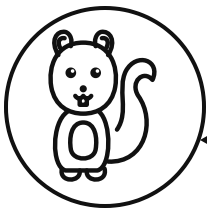
BACK: DRAW IT



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

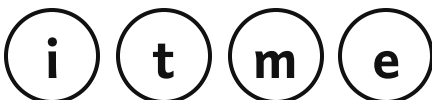
Make a real one: with a grown-up, hold plain paper over this page against a sunny window and trace both stars. Cut them out, glue them back to back, and hang it with your family's stars.

SAMMY'S JOKE



Why did the boy sit on his clock?

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



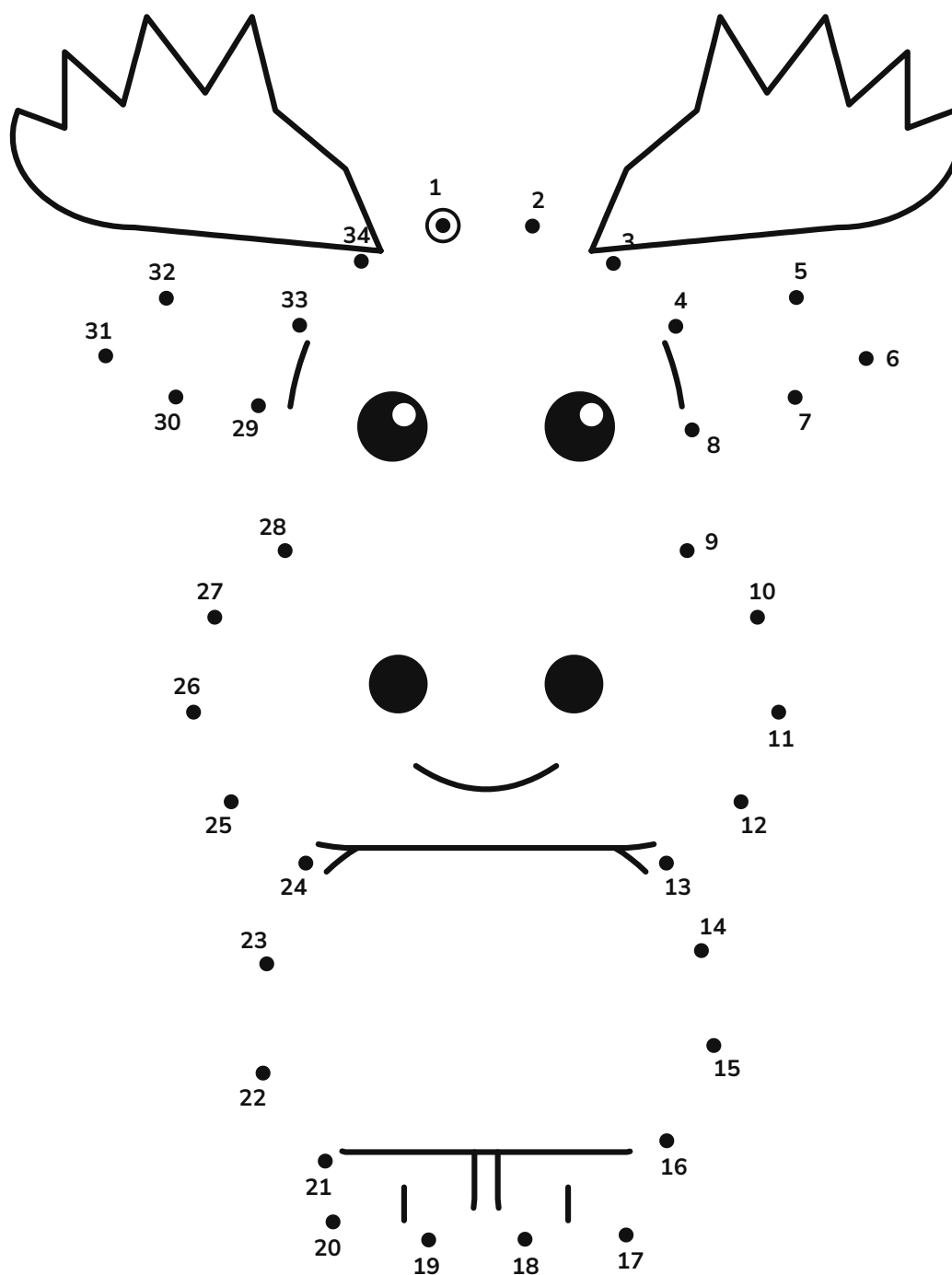
CLUE



He wanted to be on _____!

Connect the Dots

Connect the dots to find whose nose came in the door. Start at 1 (the circled dot) and count up to 34. Then join the last dot back to 1, and color it!



 Read With Me

DRAW THE STORY

Not at the Bash

The pals have fun. But Gran has no lamp.

“We will sit with Gran,” says .

 is big. Just the tip of him fits in!

Gran has a cup for him. Gulp! The cup is in .

 naps, and the cups clink and clink.

Then  lands. He sets his wings on the hut.

It is snug!

PICTURE WORDS  Mr. Monkey  Mr. Moose  Everest



Color a star each time you read it.

♥ My Thank-You

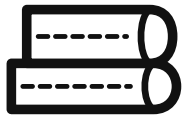
Trace the dark word. Then trace or write the light words. What good gift did nobody make? Write it or draw it on the line.

Nobody made

It is a gift

👁 Warm Hunt

Find things that keep someone warm. Check each one!



a warm blanket

☐

a warm drink

☐

mittens or
gloves

☐

a scarf or a hat

☐

something that
makes heat

☐

a warm hug

☐