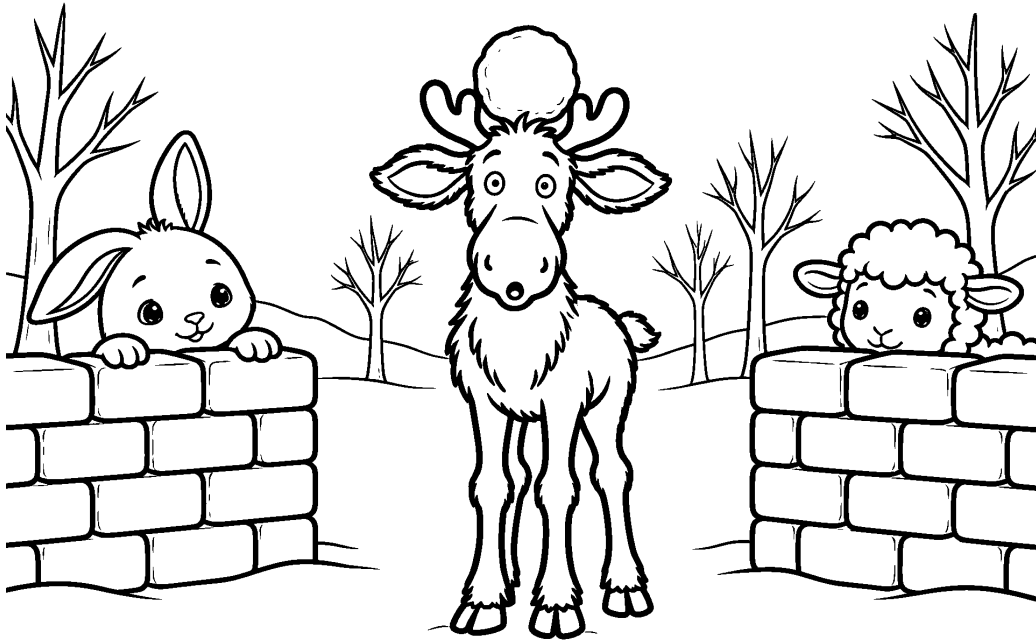


The Truce Moose

 COLOR THE PICTURE



The morning sun came up over Sunny Square and turned all the snow pink and gold. It should have been a happy morning. But when Mr. Moose and Mr. Monkey walked back into the square, still wrapped in their blankets from the night on Lookout Ledge, they stopped.

There were two snow forts.

One was on the river side of Sunny Square, built around a big rock. Ricky and Bruno and Sammy and Shiloh were inside it. The other was on the Wishing Tree side, built around a little pine. Hazel and Dottie and Benji were inside that one.

In between them was a wide, empty stretch of snow that nobody was standing on. Well, almost nobody. Right in the very middle stood a big, lumpy snowman. It had a snowball for a nose, and a snowball for a hat, and snowballs stuck all over it every which way, like it had been in a snowball war all by itself.

"Who made that?" asked Mr. Monkey.

"Nobody," said Ricky. "It's all the snowballs that missed."

"Hee hee hee!" went Mr. Monkey. "The snowballs made a snowman!"

"What happened?" asked Mr. Monkey.

"Snowball war," said Ricky, peeking over his wall. "It's been going on since breakfast."

"Who's winning?"

Ricky thought about it. "Nobody," he said. "We're all just cold."

It was true. Everybody was cold. Everybody's paws were red. Nobody had any snowballs left, and nobody wanted to make more. But nobody wanted to be the first one to come out, either. So they just sat there in their forts, grumpy, looking at each other across the empty snow.

Then Mr. Monkey saw Benji. Benji was peeking over the top of the Wishing Tree fort. And across the empty snow, peeking over the top of the rock fort, was Shiloh. They were best friends. They always played together. And now they were on different sides, and they were just looking at each other, sadly.

Benji gave a tiny wave. Shiloh gave a tiny wave back. Neither of them came out.

Mr. Monkey felt it squeeze his chest. "Mr. Moose," he whispered. "Benji and Shiloh. They want to play. But they're on different sides."

Mr. Moose looked at the two forts, and the empty snow in between. Nobody wanted the war anymore. But somebody had to go first. And going first was scary, because what if the other side threw a snowball?

"Somebody has to go out in the middle," he said slowly. "And bring something. Something that says, we're done."

"We need a truce!" said Mr. Monkey, loudly, so both forts could hear.

Dottie's head popped up over the Wishing Tree wall. "A

MOOSE?"

"A truce," said Mr. Monkey.

"We already HAVE a moose!" said Dottie, and she pointed right at Mr. Moose.

Everybody looked at Mr. Moose.

Mr. Moose looked at the empty snow in the middle.

Then he took a deep breath, and he walked out into it, slowly, all the way to the very middle, and stood there.

"I'm the truce," he said.

"He's the Truce Moose!" said Mr. Monkey.

Just then, one last snowball came flying over from somewhere, *fwoop*, and landed with a soft *plap* right on top of Mr. Moose's antlers.

"TRUCE!" said Mr. Moose. "I'm the TRUCE!"

"Hee hee hee!" went Mr. Monkey.

"Ha! Ha!" went Dottie, from her fort.

"Haw haw haw! Sorry!" went Bruno from the rock fort, and he jumped up so fast to say sorry that he bumped the roof of his fort with his head, and the whole roof fell down on top of him, *FLUMPF*.

Bruno sat up out of the snow pile, with the roof on his head like a hat. "My fort fell on me."

"Haw haw haw," he added.

Then Mr. Monkey had an idea. Something that would go first, before anybody had to say anything. So he climbed up on the giant snow lantern, right next to the Truce Moose, and he started to sing. It was the only song he could think of.

He whistled. And Mr. Moose hummed. And together they sang:

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

There was a quiet moment.

Then, from the Wishing Tree fort, a tiny voice started to hum along. It was Benji. And from the rock fort, another small voice joined in. It was Shiloh. Then Hazel. Then Sammy. Then Bruno, very loud, from under his fort roof. Then everybody, both forts, singing the same song across the empty snow.

When they were done, it was quiet again. But this time it was a good quiet.

"Now," said Mr. Moose from the middle. "Everybody bring one thing. Something that's yours. To give to somebody on the other side."

Benji came out of the Wishing Tree fort first, holding a carrot he'd been saving. Shiloh came out of the rock fort, holding his favorite stone, the flat gray one shaped just like a heart. They met in the middle, right next to the Truce Moose, and they traded.

"For you," said Benji. "From me."

"For you," said Shiloh. "From me."

Then they hugged, and Benji's ears went pink.

Bruno came out with his honeycomb and gave a big piece to Hazel. Hazel gave him a shiny red apple. Sammy

zipped across with an acorn for Dottie. And Ricky came out last, holding something round and clear.

He handed it to Dottie. It was a jar.

Dottie looked at it. "What's it for?"

Ricky thought about it. "I don't know," he said. "I just have a lot of them."

"Ha! Ha!" barked Dottie, and she held it up so the sun shone through it anyway.

Sammy zipped back and forth across the middle with her acorns, giving one to everybody on both sides, so fast that she got all mixed up and stopped in the middle, right next to the lumpy snowman.

"Wait," said Sammy. "Which side am I on?"

"There's only one side now," said Shiloh softly.

Nobody had to say "You started it." Nobody had to say anything at all. The gifts said it.

And then, because everybody was out in the middle now anyway, Mr. Monkey looked at the two forts. One on one side. One on the other side.

"What if we put them together?" he said.

So they built a long tunnel of snow across the empty middle, from the rock fort all the way to the Wishing Tree fort, so the two forts turned into one big fort. Bruno patted the walls. Hazel and Dottie carved windows. Ricky put one of his jars in every window, with a candle inside, lit from the third candle by the fire. And Benji and Shiloh crawled through the tunnel back and forth, back and forth, giggling, until they were too tired to crawl anymore. Bruno tried to crawl through too, and got stuck halfway, with his front half in one fort and his back half in the other.

"I'm in both forts," said Bruno. "Haw haw haw!"

That night, the big fort glowed in the middle of Sunny Square, with little lights in every window.

"What a day!" said Mr. Monkey. "There were two forts, and everybody was cold and grumpy. Dottie thought a truce was a moose, so Mr. Moose went out in the middle and became the Truce Moose, and a snowball landed on his head. Bruno's roof fell on him. We sang, and both forts sang back. Everybody brought something from their side. And now there's only one fort."

And Mr. Monkey whistled again, and Mr. Moose hummed again, and together they sang it one more time:

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

And in the middle of Sunny Square, one long snow fort glowed with little lights from end to end, and two sets of small footprints, a bunny's and a sheep's, going in and out of the tunnel, side by side.

Let's Talk

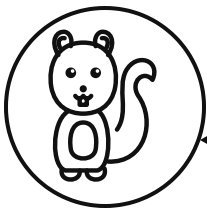
- 1 Benji gave a carrot, and Shiloh gave his heart stone. What were they telling each other with their gifts?
- 2 What could you give to say “we’re okay” to someone?

Your Turn

Draw a peace gift: something you could give to make things right.

My peace gift is _____.

SAMMY'S JOKE

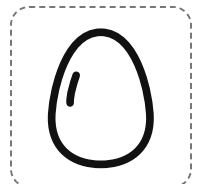


What did the egg say to the frying pan?

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



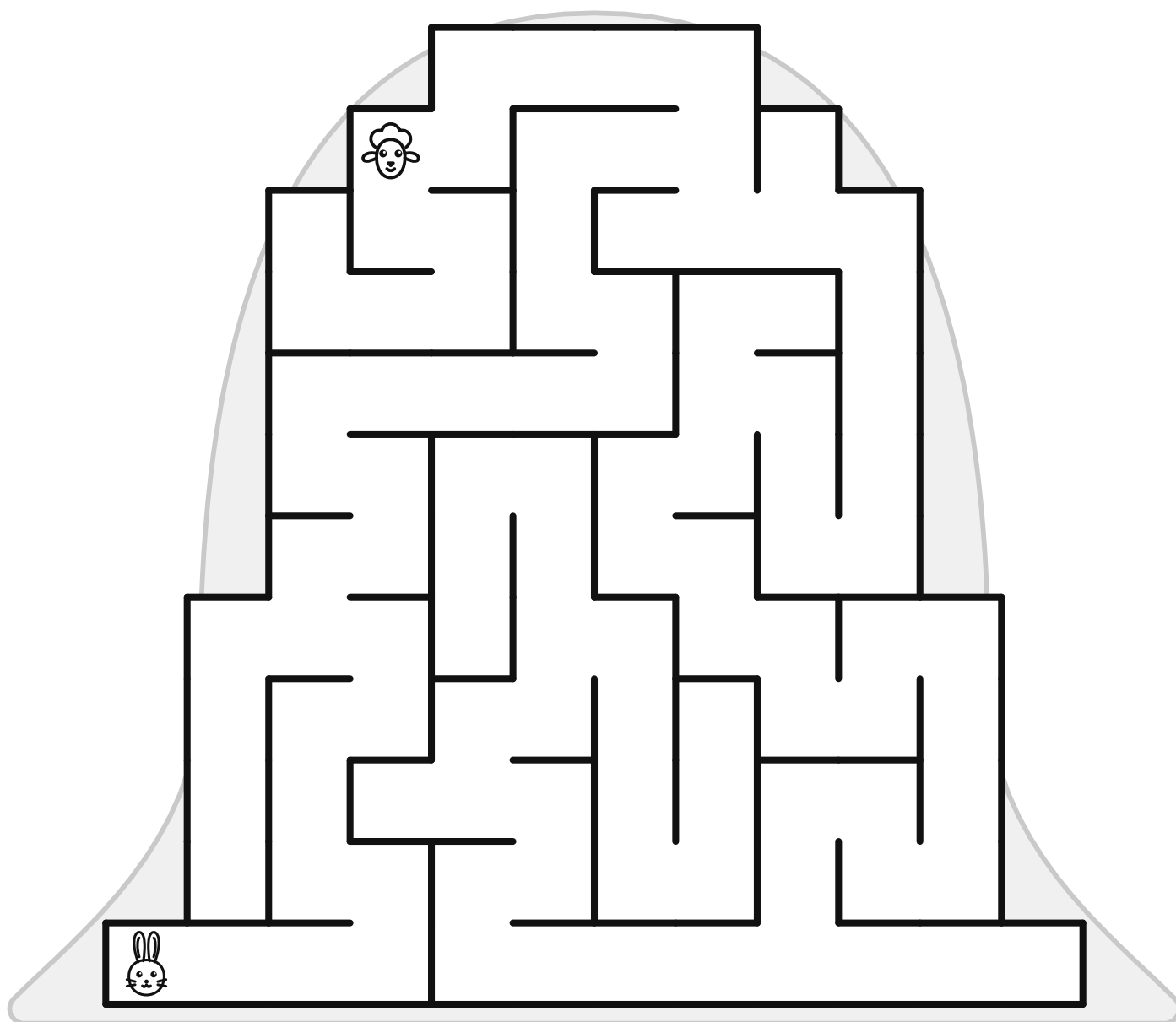
CLUE



You _____ me up!

☆ Through the Tunnel

Help Benji crawl through the snow tunnel to Shiloh. Start at Benji Bunny.



 Read With Me

DRAW THE STORY

 **and**  is in this camp.  is in that camp.

They want to be pals, but they are stuck.

 steps up and stands still.

Plop! A clump hits him on the top! Ha!

 has a gift for .  has a gift for .Then  and  hug. They are pals.

PICTURE WORDS



Benji



Shiloh



Mr. Moose



Color a star each time you read it.

My Gift

Trace the dark word. Then trace or write the light words. What did you give, and who got it?
Fill in both spaces.

I gave

to

Song Day: Mystery Picture

Today's song is "Silent Night." Sing or listen while you color each space by its number.

① yellow ② brown ③ green ④ dark blue ⑤ red ⑥ orange

