

The Longest Night

 COLOR THE PICTURE



The sun went down early. Very early. It slid behind the hills in the middle of the afternoon, and the sky turned purple, and then dark blue, and then black, and the stars came out one by one over the snow, even though it was still the middle of the afternoon.

"It's the longest night," said Tessie. "It will be dark... for a long... long... time."

"Then we keep every light lit," said Mr. Monkey. "All night long."

So that's what everybody did. Ricky made a list of every light in the woods, of course. It was so long that he had to roll it up and carry it under his arm, and it dragged behind him in the snow like a tail. And the friends went from home to home, all evening, checking.

The Moose home: lit, with the gold candle on the table. The treehouse: lit. The three candles by the fire in Sunny Square: lit. The long snow fort, with a light in every window: lit. Mama Hedgehog's snow lantern at the bottom of the littlest trail: lit. And way up at the very top of Everest's cliff, the little squash lantern: lit, and steady.

"Check, check, check," said Ricky, marking his list.

Then they came to the river, to the old crow's branch.

His light was lit, too. A little snow lantern sat at the bottom of his tree, glowing, the one they had left on the night of the doors. And the old crow was up on his

branch, wearing the woolly mitten they'd left him like a little hat.

"Hee hee," went Benji softly. "He's still wearing it."

But the old crow wasn't happy. He was sitting very still, all hunched up, looking across the river at the dark trees on the other side.

Mr. Monkey felt it right away. Everybody else in the woods was together tonight. Families in their homes. Friends in their forts. But the old crow was all by himself on the longest night of the year.

"Mr. Crow?" called Mr. Monkey. "Are you okay?"

The old crow looked down. "It's a long night," he said, in his scratchy voice. "Long nights are lonely."

Mr. Moose was thinking. Why was the crow looking across the river? What was over there?

"Mr. Crow," he asked gently, "who lives on the other side of the river?"

The old crow was quiet for a long time. Then he said, "My son."

Everybody looked across the river.

"He's grown up now," said the old crow. "He has his own nest, over in those trees. A long time ago, when he was young, we had a fight. A silly fight, about a nest. And I said something unkind to him. I told him, 'Fine! Go build your own!' And he did. He flew across the river." The old crow tucked his head down into the mitten. "We haven't

talked since. Not one word."

Nobody said anything for a moment. Then Mr. Monkey asked the plainest question in the world.

"Why don't you just call to him?"

"What if he doesn't answer?" said the old crow quietly. "What if he's still angry?"

Mr. Monkey thought about it. "Then at least you'd know," he said. "Right now you don't know anything. You just sit here."

The old crow looked at Mr. Monkey for a long time.

"I haven't called across the river in a long time," he said. "I don't know if my voice still goes that far."

Mr. Moose had an idea. "Then we'll help you be loud," he said. "We'll all call together. And then you call, and your voice will be right at the front."

They all lined up on the riverbank, in the light of the old crow's snow lantern, facing the dark trees across the water.

"Ready?" said Mr. Monkey. "One, two, three!"

Everybody called at once. Mr. Monkey hooted. Hazel neighed. Dottie howled, "AROOOOOO!" Benji thumped his foot. Shiloh baaed. And Bruno, who was trying very hard to sound like a crow, took the biggest breath he could and went:

"MOOOOOOOOOOO."

Everybody turned and looked at Bruno.

"That was a cow," said Ricky.

"I was trying to be a crow," said Bruno. "It came out a cow."

"Haw haw haw!" went Bruno.

"Hee hee hee!" went Mr. Monkey. "Bruno's a CROW-COW!"

Even the old crow made a little noise in his throat, *kuk-kuk-kuk*, which was how crows laughed.

Then it was quiet. And the old crow stood up on his branch, and took the mitten off his head, and opened his beak, and called out across the river, all by himself, as loud as he could:

"CAAAAW!"

It went out over the water. Into the dark. Into the trees on the other side.

Nothing came back.

Everybody waited. The river went *gurgle-gurgle* under its ice. The stars twinkled. It was the longest night, and it felt like the longest wait.

The old crow's feathers drooped.

And then, from the dark trees on the other side of the river, small and far away, came an answer.

"Caaaw."

The old crow's head shot up.

Something black came flapping across the river, low over the ice, into the light of the little snow lantern. A young crow, big and glossy, landed on the branch right

next to the old crow. And for a moment, the two of them just sat there, side by side, not saying anything at all.

Then the old crow said it.

"I shouldn't have said that to you. 'Go build your own.' I'm sorry. I won't ever say anything like that to you again. How can I make it right?"

The young crow looked at his father for a long time.

"Yeah, I didn't like that," he said. "But we all make mistakes. Thank you for apologizing. I forgive you."

Then he scooted over, close, so close that their feathers touched.

"You could start by coming over for supper," said the young crow. "I have a family now. You have grandchicks. Three of them."

The old crow made a sound nobody had ever heard him make before. It was half a caw and half a laugh and half something else, and that's too many halves, but that's how it sounded.

Mr. Monkey grabbed Mr. Moose's leg and held on. He was so happy he could hardly stand still.

The two crows flew off together across the river, into the dark trees on the other side. And a minute later, a little light came on over there, in a nest nobody had ever noticed before. Then the old crow came flying back, just for a second, and picked up his snow lantern, and carried it across too. So now there were two lights in that tree.

"That one's lit now too," said Ricky softly, and he added it to his list.

All the rest of the longest night, the lights stayed on. The Moose home. The treehouse. The three candles. The long fort. Mama Hedgehog's lantern. The crows' tree across the river. And the little light at the top of the cliff, shining steady beside Everest. Mr. Moose and Mr. Monkey watched them from Mr. Moose's window until their eyes closed.

And when they woke up, the sun was coming back over the hills. Starting today, every day would last a tiny bit longer.

"What a day!" said Mr. Monkey at breakfast. "It was the longest night. Ricky's light list dragged in the snow like a tail. The old crow was all alone, and he told us about his son. I asked why he didn't just call him. Bruno tried to caw and mooed instead, and he's a crow-cow. Then the old crow called, and his son called back, and he said sorry, and his son forgave him. And now there's a light across the river, too."

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

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

And over Wonderful Woods, after the longest night of the year, the morning came back a little bit early, and found every single light still burning.

Let's Talk

- 1 What did the old crow say to his son? What did his son say back?
- 2 Is there someone you need to say sorry to, or forgive?

Your Turn

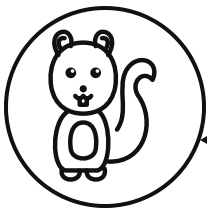
Write or draw a sorry note. A grown-up can help you write.

Dear _____ ,

I shouldn't have _____. I'm sorry. How can I make it right?

Love, _____

SAMMY'S JOKE



What kind of shoes do sleepy feet wear?

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



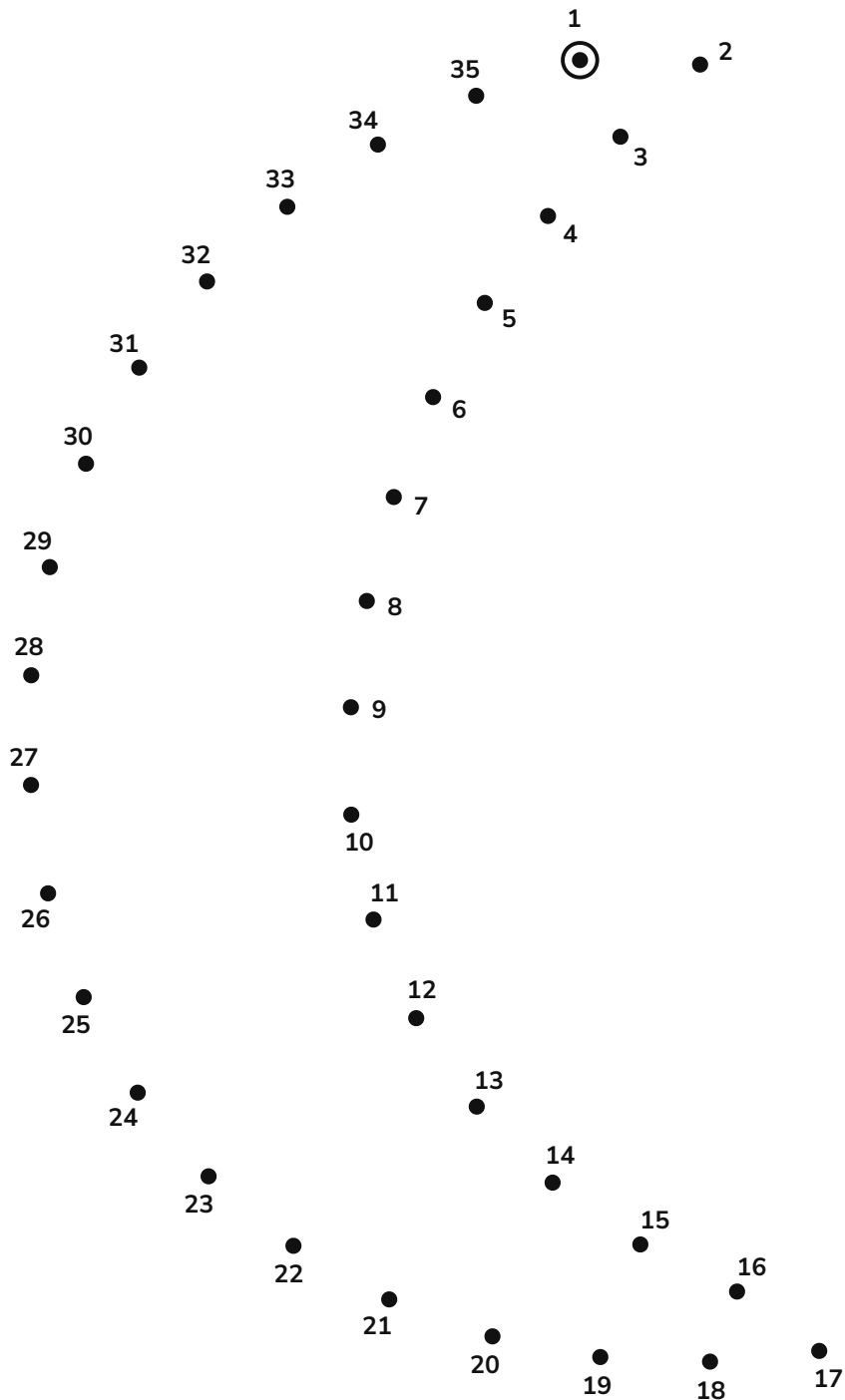
CLUE



_____pers!

 Connect the Dots

Connect the dots to find what shines on the longest night. Start at 1 (the circled dot) and count up to 35. Then join the last dot back to 1, and color it!



 Read With Me

DRAW THE STORY

Call Him!

It is dim and still. The dad is sad.

His kid has a nest past the bend. They do not chat.

“Call him!” says .

The pals call. The dad calls and calls.

Then a call gets back!

The kid lands next to his dad.

“I was bad to you. I am sad. Can I fix it?” says the dad.

“Yes. Then let us be pals,” says the kid.



My Gift

Trace the dark word. Then trace or write the light words. Who do you need to say sorry to? Write their name on the line. Then say it to them.

I am sorry.

How can I make it right?

☆ Movie Bingo: Home Alone

Watch it with a grown-up. Color a square the first time you see each thing. Three in a row is Bingo!

 snow	 a window	 a shovel
 a candle	 Free!	 singing
 a tree	 a hug	 a star

For grown-ups: Home Alone (1990) is rated PG for slapstick violence and some language. Watch the Christmas Eve choir scene, when Kevin meets old Marley, and the ending.

WEEK DONE!



Turn back to this week's map. Color any stones you missed.



Ladybugs I found in this week's storybook pictures: _____