



**When the
Lights Go Out**



Rufus Mouse scurried through the snowstorm. Brrr. It was cold and dark and the wind blew loudly in the tree branches. He pulled his scarf tighter.

Rufus was lonely. He wanted to be somewhere warm and safe.

Wait! What was that up ahead? It looked like a house!

But it was all dark. No lights from inside or outside. Was anybody home?

Rufus walked faster. He needed to find out!

Inside the house, Josie Bear was snuggled in a sleeping bag on the floor having a sleepover with her cousins, Felix and Fern Fox.

Mr. Bear was going through the drawers with a flashlight looking for the candles.

“It’s kind of scary with the lights off, what happened to the electricity?” Josie asked.

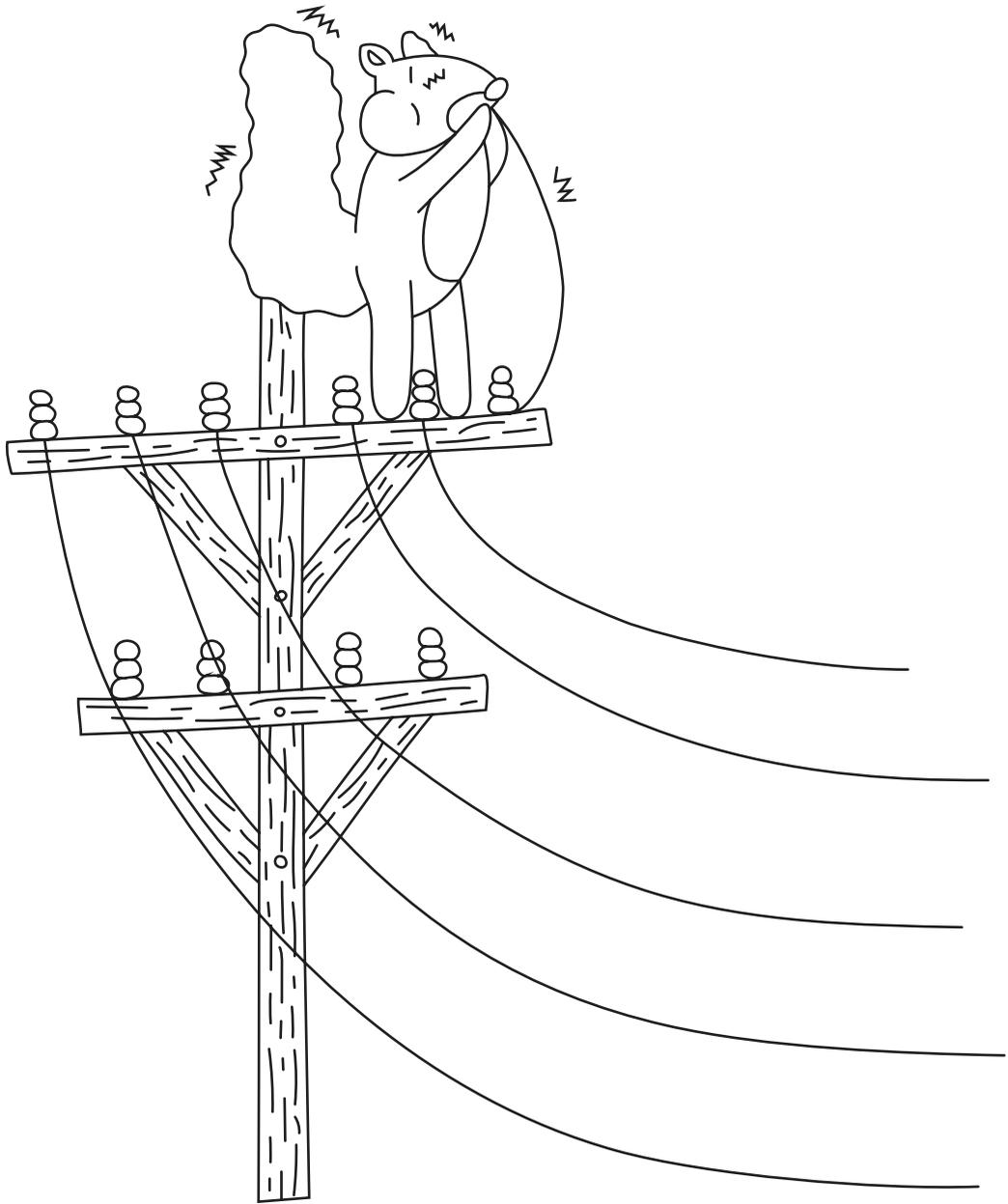


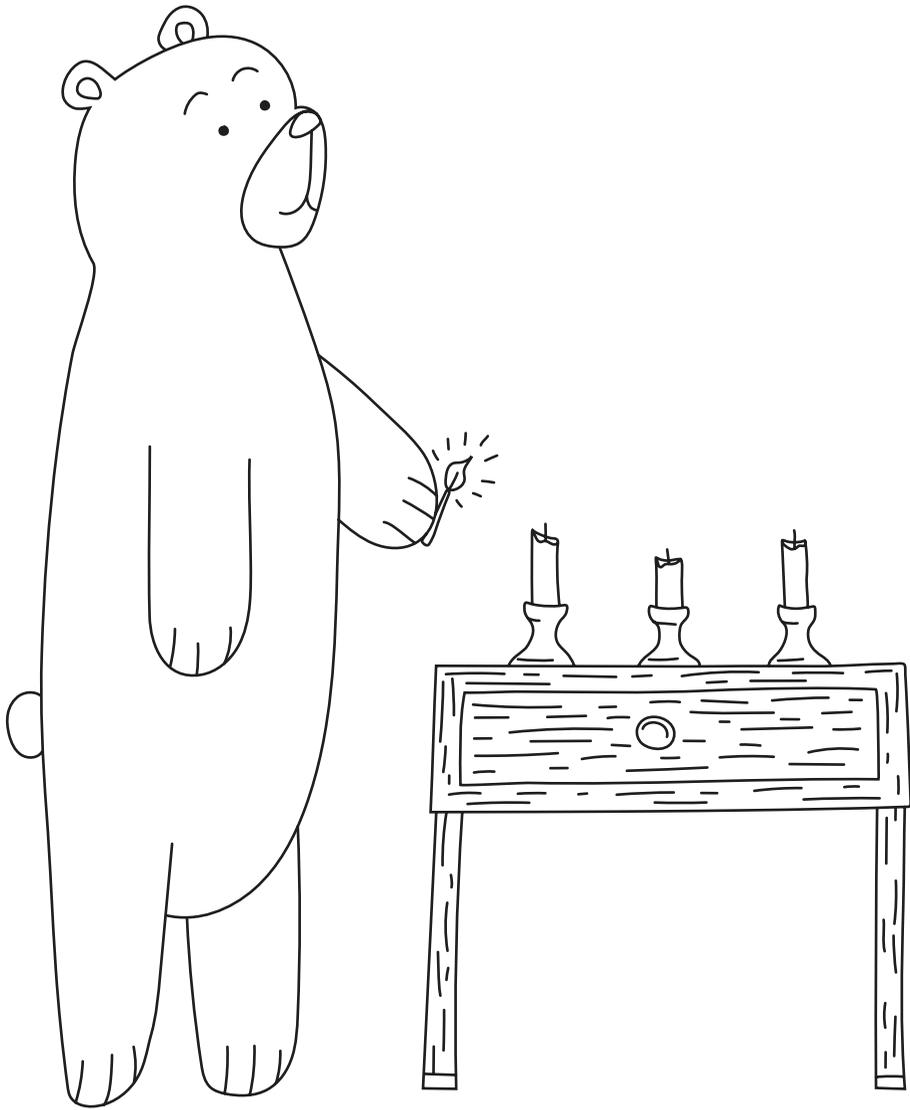
“With all this wind, I bet a tree fell over and hit a power line,” Mr. Bear answered.

Fern said, “One time I heard that a whole town lost its electricity because a squirrel chewed the wires!”

“What?” said Felix. “That can’t be true.”

“I read it on the internet,” Fern said.





Mr. Bear opened another drawer. “Aha!” he said, and held up three candles and a box of matches. He struck a match, and as the wicks caught fire, a soft flickering light filled the room.

Outside in the snow, Rufus suddenly saw light in the window. It wasn’t completely dark after all! Rufus trotted faster. He was so cold and tired.

Inside Felix watched the flames flicker. “Are those the only candles?”

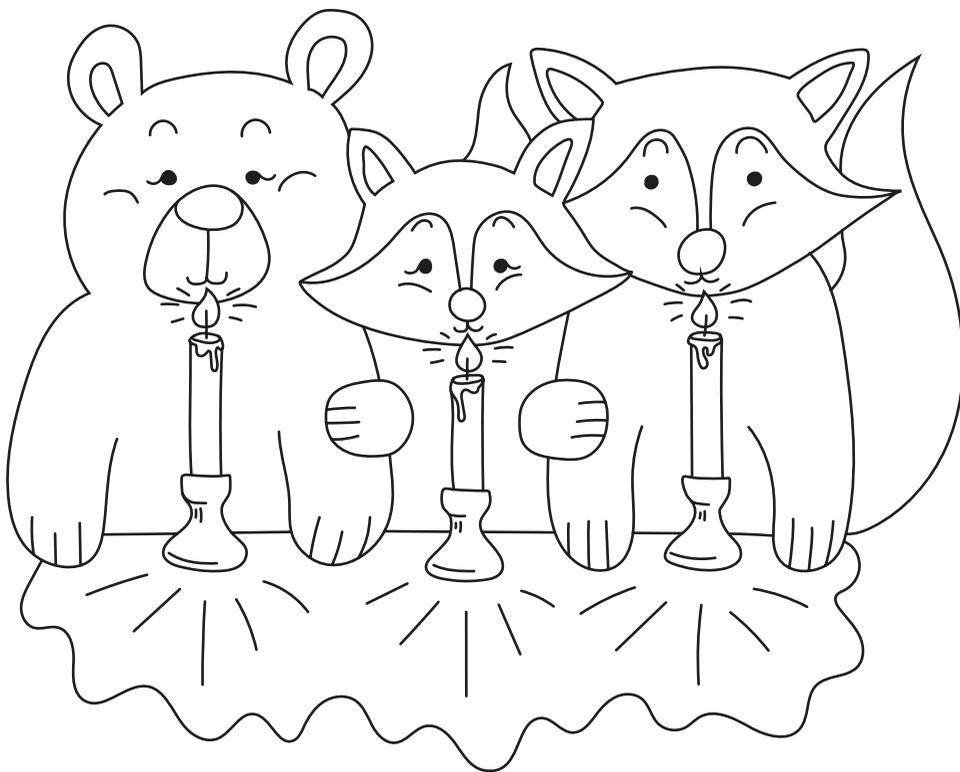
“Yep,” Mr. Bear said.

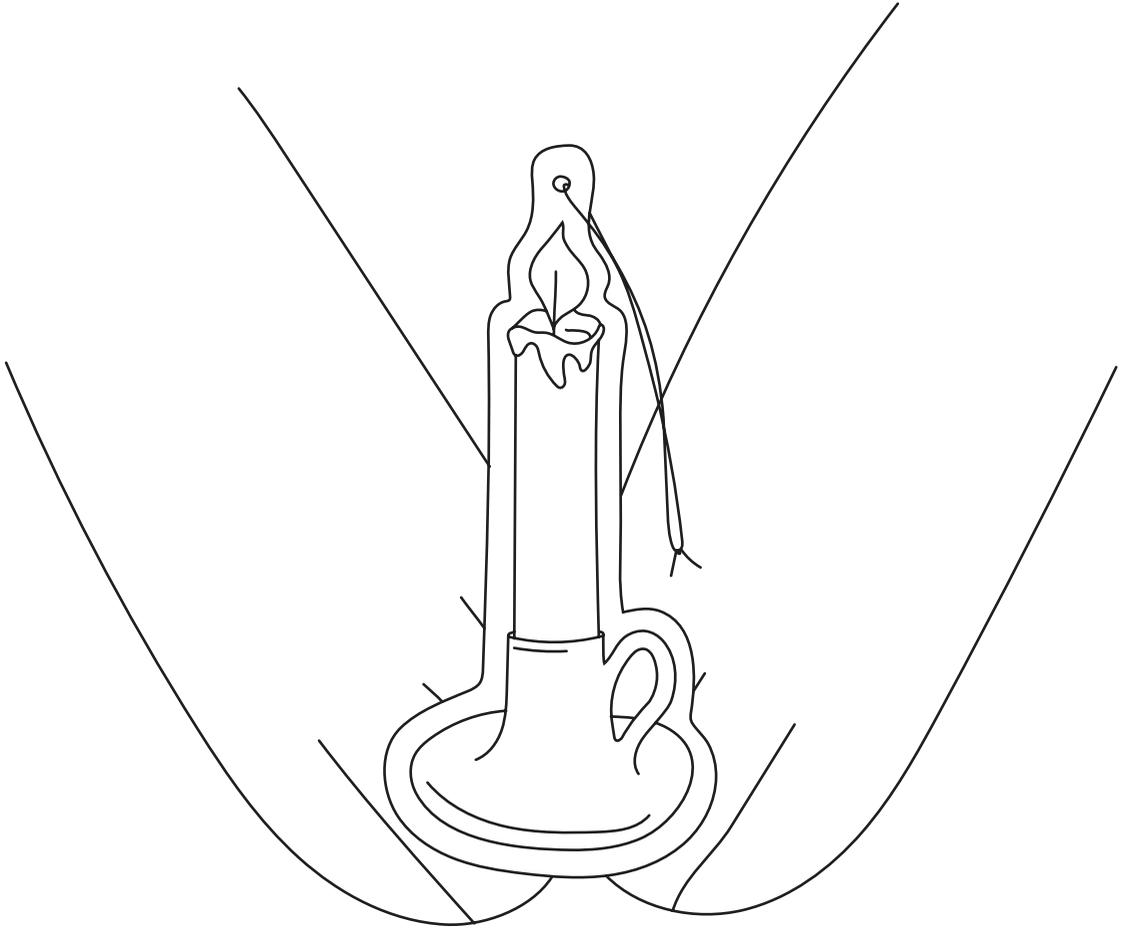
Felix looked over at the Christmas tree. “It’s too bad we don’t live in the olden days. Then the tree would be covered in candles instead of lightbulbs and you could light those, too!”

“Wait, candles on trees! Why did they do that?” Fern asked.

“That sounds like a fire hazard,” said Josie.

“Remember: only you can prevent forest fires!”





“I read that Christmas tree candles were a tradition to remember Jesus as the light of the world,” Felix said.

Josie got up and grabbed something from the Christmas tree. “Yeah, look! We even have a Christmas candle ornament. See, it says: ‘Jesus is the Light of the World.’”

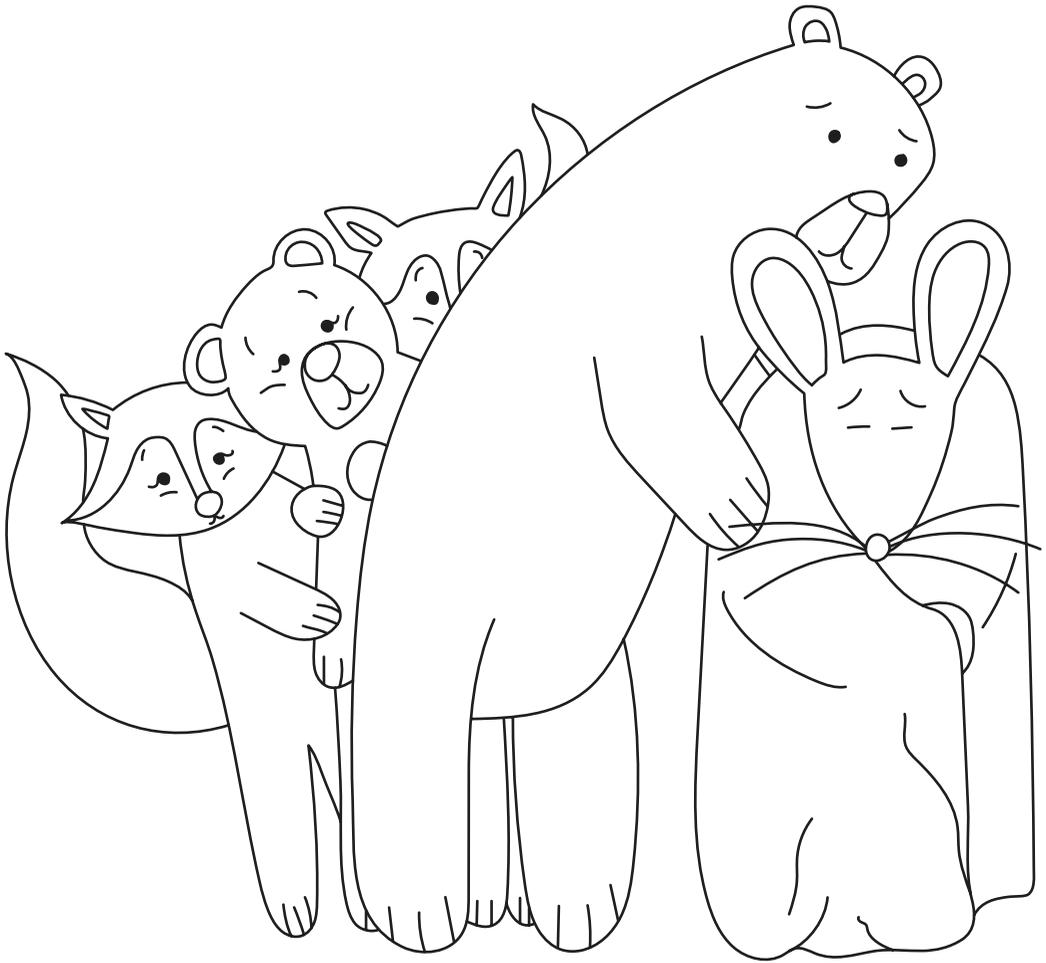
“I hear that every year: ‘Jesus is the Light of the World,’ but I don’t really know what that means,” Fern said.

Before anyone could answer Felix said, “Shh, what’s that noise!?”

Everyone listened closely. Then Josie jumped up. “Someone’s at the door!” She grabbed Mr. Bear’s flashlight and cracked the door open. The beam of light caught the snow glistening on Rufus’s whiskers.

“Hello, I’m Rufus,” he said, through chattering teeth.





“Come in, come in,” said Mr. Bear. “You must be freezing!”

Mr. Bear wrapped Rufus up in a blanket. “Josie, would you make some hot cocoa?” he asked.

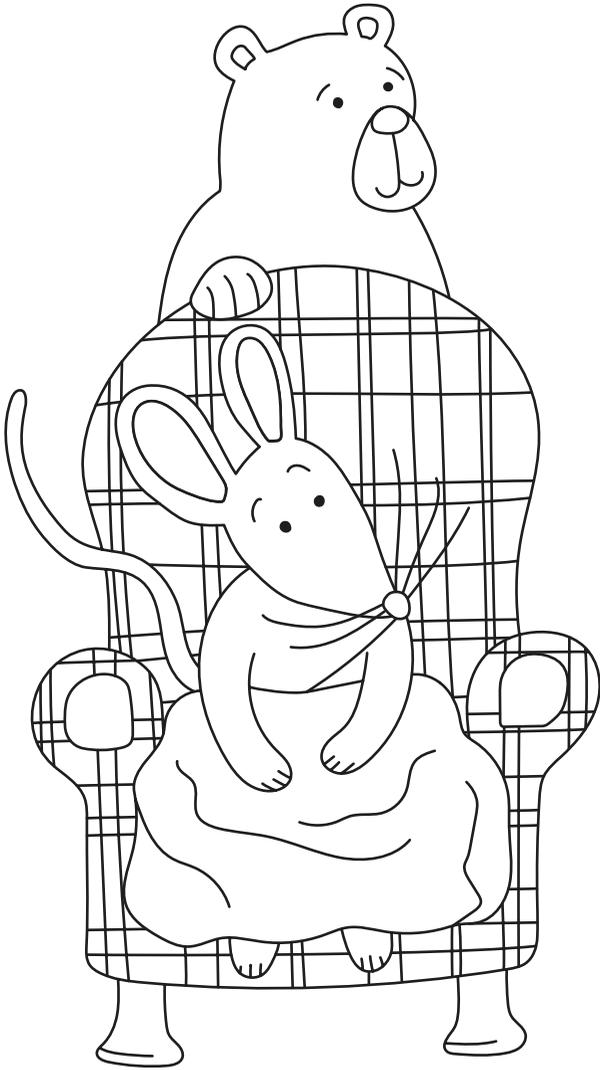
“How did you get here? Did you see our light?” Felix asked.

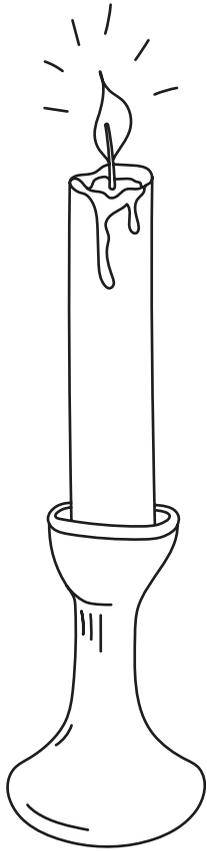
“Yes, I did!” Rufus said. “I got lost in the woods—I’m a city mouse, you see—but as soon as I saw your light, I knew I would be alright!”

Josie handed Rufus a mug of hot cocoa.

“That’s good. When it’s dark I feel scared and cold and lonely. A light makes me feel safe and warm and less lonely.”

Fern picked up the candle ornament. “What if the reason we call Jesus The Light of the World is because he makes our hearts safe and warm and less lonely?”





Mr. Bear said, “I think that’s a good idea. The Bible tells us that Jesus is the light that shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot put his light out.”

“That makes me feel kind of good inside,” Felix said.

“Me, too!” Fern said.

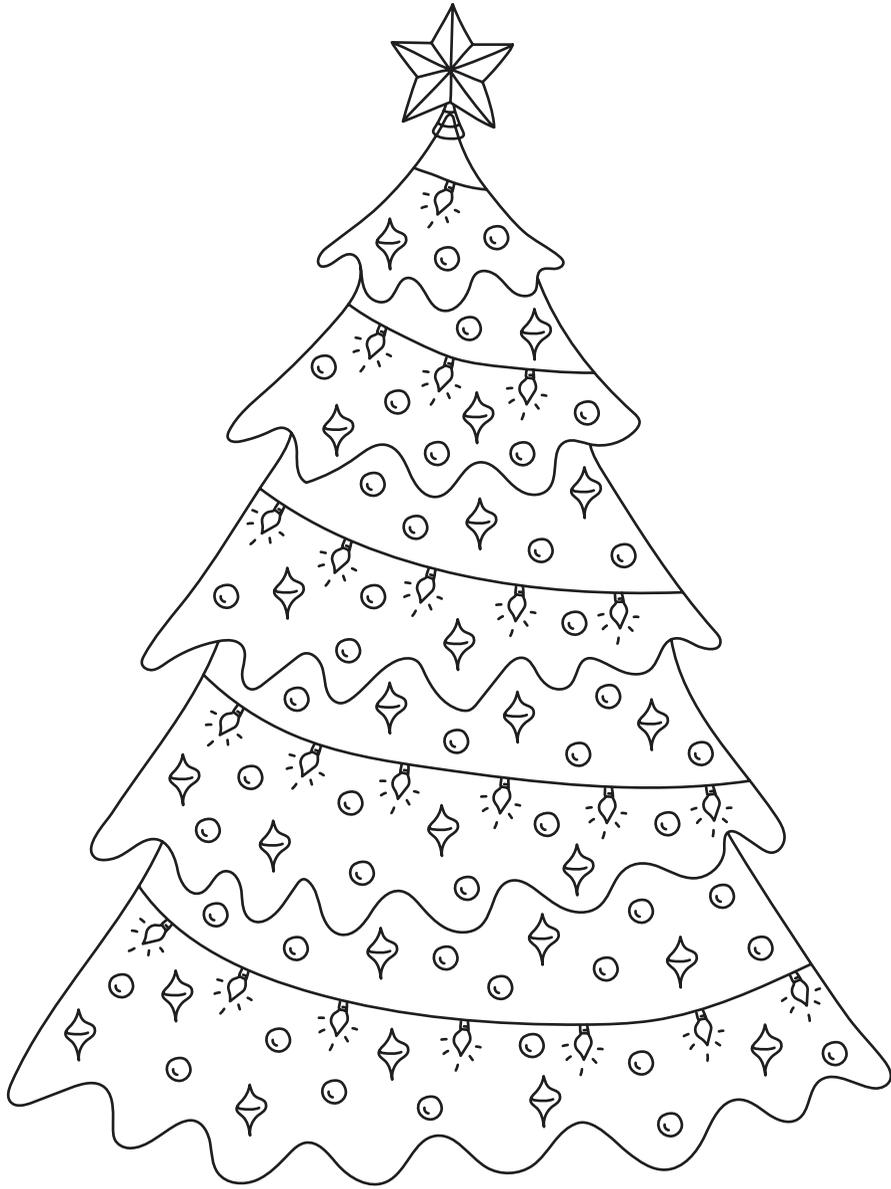
Just then the electricity came back on.

The cousins squealed and blew out the candles. Now the room was filled with just the glowing lights of the Christmas tree.

“This light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can’t put it out!” Fern shouted.

“And neither can a squirrel,” added Felix.

That night was special for everyone. The candle light helped Rufus find a warm, safe place, and gave the Bear and Fox families a brand new friend! It was a very happy Christmas, indeed.





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