

How Far It Came



The sky over Sunny Square was bright and windy, and fat white clouds were racing each other over the treetops. Under the Wishing Tree, Ricky had built a measuring table out of a flat stump, with a pinecone sitting right in the middle.

"Line up!" he called. "Bring your Swap presents! Every present has to be pinecone-size! Rule two!"

The friends lined up. Bruno brought a honeycomb wrapped in a leaf. Ricky held it up to the pinecone. "Pinecone-size! Next!" Dottie brought a stick. It was much longer than a pinecone. Ricky looked at it. Dottie wagged so hard her whole back end went sideways. Ricky sighed and wrote *Rule 2 (sort of)* on his list. "Next!"

Then, very slowly, from the far side of Sunny Square, came Tessie Turtle.

She was carrying something in her mouth. Step. Step. Step. It took her a long, long time to cross the grass. When she finally reached the measuring stump, she set it down very carefully.

It was a stone. A tiny, round, smooth stone, the color of a sunset, with a little stripe of white around the middle.

"For the Swap," said Tessie.

Ricky held it up next to his pinecone. It was much, much smaller. About the size of a blueberry.

"That's too small," said Ricky. "That doesn't count. Rule two."

Tessie's face didn't change, because Tessie's face never changed very fast. But she was quiet for a long time. Then she said, "Oh," very softly, and she turned around and started walking slowly away.

Mr. Monkey felt it go right through him, the way a cold wind goes through your fur. Tessie had walked all that way. And Ricky had said it didn't count.

"Tessie, wait!" he said. "Where did you find that stone?"

Tessie stopped. "Whispering Water Way," she said. "Where the water is fastest. I found it on Saturday morning."

"Saturday?" said Mr. Moose. "Today is Tuesday."

"Yes," said Tessie. "I walked."

Mr. Moose's ears went up. He looked at the tiny stone. He looked at the pinecone. Then he looked up the river, all the way toward Whispering Water Way, so far away you couldn't even hear it from here.

"Ricky," said Mr. Moose slowly. "You measured how big the present is. But what if you measured how far it came?"

Ricky blinked. "How do you measure far?"

"With pinecones," said Mr. Monkey, who didn't know yet what Mr. Moose meant, but liked it already.

So that's what they did. They walked all the way from the Wishing Tree to Tessie's sunning rock at Whispering Water Way, and every time they took one big moose step, they put down one pinecone.

Bruno carried a whole basket of pinecones on his head.

Mr. Moose took the steps, nice and even. And Mr. Monkey put down a pinecone at every single one. *Plip. Step. Plip. Step. Plip.*

Dottie came along to help. She helped by picking up the pinecones and bringing them back.

"Dottie," said Mr. Moose. "The pinecones have to stay there. That's how we measure."

Dottie looked at the long line of pinecones going all the way back to Sunny Square. Her eyes were shining. "But there are SO MANY to fetch," she whispered.

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

"Ha! Ha!" Dottie laughed too, and she bravely sat on her paws so they wouldn't fetch anything.

Halfway there, Bruno ran out of pinecones.

"Uh-oh," said Bruno, looking into his empty basket.

They looked around. Then Mr. Monkey scrambled up a tall pine and shook the branches as hard as he could. *Ka-ploonk! Ka-ploonk! Ka-PLOONK!* Pinecones rained down everywhere. They filled Bruno's basket. They filled it to the top. They piled up over the top, and around Bruno's shoulders, and up to his ears, until all you could see was a big pile of pinecones with two round bear ears poking out of it.

"I'm okay," said the pile.

"Haw haw haw!" it laughed. "I'm a pine-BEAR!"

Along the way, Sammy zipped past, going the other direction. "What are you doing? Is it a race? Who's winning? Hey, what do you call a turtle who takes pictures?"

She zipped off down the path. Then she zipped back up. "A SNAPPING turtle!" And she was gone.

Mr. Monkey made his hands into a little box, like a picture frame, and held it up to his eye. "Snap," he said, pointing it at Mr. Moose. "Snap. Snap."

"Hee hee hee!" he added.

The river got louder. *Rusha-rusha, plisha-plisha.* And at last, they came to Tessie's warm, flat sunning rock at Whispering Water Way. Mr. Monkey put down the very last pinecone.

Then they all turned around and looked back.

There was a line of pinecones on the ground. It went past the willow. It went around the bend. It went over the little hill, and through the ferns, and all along the river, farther than they could see, all the way back to Sunny Square.

Ricky's mouth fell open. "That's... how far she walked?"

"With her short legs," said Mr. Moose. "At Tessie speed. That's why it took her three whole days."

Ricky counted, in his head, the way he counted everything. He gave up after a hundred. "It's the biggest present in the whole Swap," he said quietly. "It's... it's a hundred pinecones big. More."

Then Ricky's ears went down flat. He looked at the ground. He was quiet for a while. Then he walked slowly

back along the line of pinecones, the whole way, until he found Tessie, still walking home.

Mr. Moose and Mr. Monkey followed him.

"Tessie," said Ricky. "I shouldn't have said your present didn't count. I'm sorry. I won't say that again. How can I make things right?"

Tessie stopped walking. She looked at Ricky for a long, slow time. Then she said, very slowly, the same way she said everything:

"Yeah, I didn't like that. But we all make mistakes.

Thank you for apologizing. I forgive you."

Ricky's whiskers stood back up.

"Tessie," said Mr. Monkey, "can we carry you back to the Wishing Tree? So you don't have to walk all that way again?"

"That," said Tessie, "would be lovely."

So Bruno carried Tessie on top of his head, in the empty pinecone basket, like a queen. Tessie looked out at the woods going by faster than she had ever seen them go.

"Wheeeeeee," she said. Very slowly.

"Heh... heh... heh," laughed Tessie.

Back at the measuring stump, Ricky took out his list. He crossed out *Rule 2* very carefully. Then he wrote a new rule underneath it.

"Rule thirty-six," he read out loud. "The size of a present is how far it came."

He looked at Bruno's honeycomb. "Where did this come from?"

"From under my bed," said Bruno.

Ricky thought about it. "That's okay too," he said.

That evening, Mr. Monkey put a new leaf in the basket and tied a twig to it. "This one's for Tessie," he said. "The twig is three days of walking."

Mr. Moose looked at the twig. "It should be a longer twig," he said.

So Mr. Monkey found the longest twig in Sunny Square. It was longer than the leaf. It was longer than the basket. It stuck out of the top like a flagpole.

"That's better," said Mr. Moose.

"What a day!" said Mr. Moose on the way home. "Tessie walked three days to bring a tiny stone. We measured how far it came with pinecones, and Dottie wanted to fetch them all. Mr. Monkey made it rain pinecones on Bruno. Ricky said sorry, and Tessie forgave him. And Tessie rode home on Bruno's head."

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

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

And all along Rainbow River, a long line of pinecones lay in the moonlight, stretching all the way from the Wishing Tree to Whispering Water Way.

Let's Talk

- 1 Tessie's stone was tiny. Why did Ricky say it was the biggest present in the whole Swap?
- 2 Who gave up something to help you this year?

Your Turn

Think of someone outside your house who stopped doing something to help you. Draw what they stopped doing, then what they did for you.

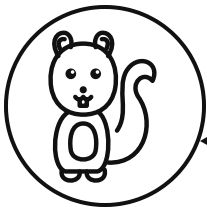
WHAT THEY STOPPED DOING...

...SO THEY COULD DO THIS FOR ME




Who? _____

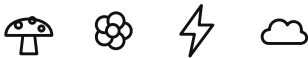
SAMMY'S JOKE



What has lots of needles but can't sew?

Crack Sammy's code! Find each picture in the key and write its letter on the line.

A _____ tree!

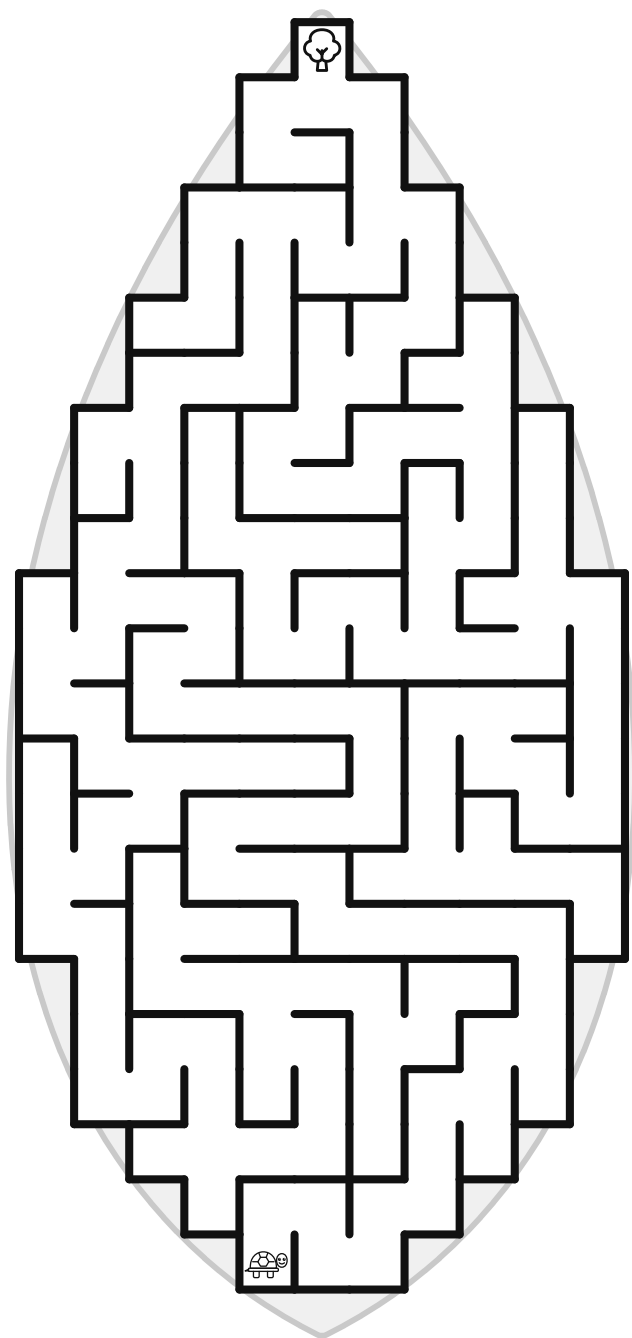


KEY



☆ The Long Walk

Help Tessie carry her stone all the way to the Wishing Tree. Start at Tessie Turtle.



Read With Me

DRAW THE STORY

It Is Not Big

 set it on top.

Is it big? It is not big.

“It is not big,” said .

 is sad.

 sat.  got it.

“It is big, big, big!” said .

PICTURE WORDS  Tessie  Ricky



Color a star each time you read it.

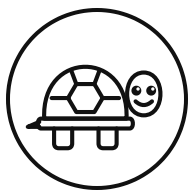
♥ My Thank-You

Trace the dotted words. Write their name on the line, or draw a tiny face. Read it to them!

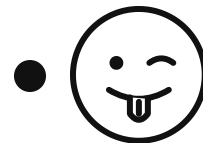
Thank you
for making me feel valued.

♥ Feelings Match

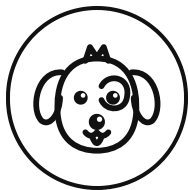
How did they feel? Draw a line from each friend to the face that matches. One face will be left over.



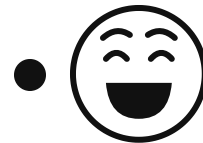
Tessie, when Ricky said her stone didn't count



silly



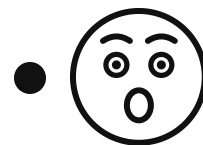
Dottie, looking at all those pinecones to fetch



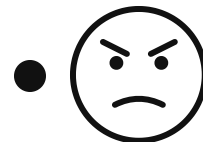
excited



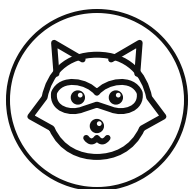
Bruno, under a pile of pinecones



surprised



angry



Ricky, when he saw how far Tessie walked



sad