

You Made It, Tessie!

 COLOR THE PICTURE



The sky over Wonderful Woods was clear and blue, and the snow was crunchy on top, *crunch, crunch*, the kind you can walk on without sinking in. Up on the hilltop, Lookout Ledge shone white in the morning sun.

Tessie stood at the bottom of the back way, the easy way, with her seeing glasses on, looking up.

"When I was very small," she said, "I climbed to the top of Lookout Ledge. Just once. You can see the whole woods from up there." She pushed her glasses up her nose. "I'd like to see it again. With every light lit."

Everybody looked up at the hill. For a moose, or a monkey, it was a short walk. For Tessie, it was very, very far.

"It will take me... all day," said Tessie.

"Then we'll walk with you all day," said Mr. Moose.

So they all started up the back way together. Mr. Moose and Mr. Monkey, Bruno and Hazel and Dottie, Benji and Shiloh and Ricky, and Percy, who brought along one shiny button for luck.

Tessie walked. And walked. Very, very slowly.

By the time the sun was over the treetops, they had gone as far as the first big rock.

Percy kept dropping his lucky button. It fell off the trail and into the snow, and everybody had to stop and dig for it. Bruno dug. Dottie sniffed. Hazel kicked snow everywhere, and most of it landed on Ricky. Nobody could find it.

"There it is," said Tessie, looking down through her seeing glasses. "Right by your foot... Percy."

It happened four more times. Every single time, Tessie found it first.

"Hee hee hee! Tessie has the best eyes in the whole woods now!" said Mr. Monkey.

By lunchtime, they had gone as far as the second big rock. Bruno ate his lunch, and then he ate his snack, and then he ate Ricky's snack, after asking first, and Ricky said yes.

"Are we halfway?" asked Mr. Monkey.

Ricky checked. "We're one-tenth of the way."

"Hee hee hee! Only one-tenth!"

Sammy zipped by, all the way to the top of the hill and back down again, three times, just while Tessie took one step.

"Sammy, how can you be so fast?" called Mr. Monkey.

"I don't know how to be slow!" Sammy called back, already halfway up the hill again. "I tried it once and fell asleep! Ha-ha-ha-ha!"

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

All afternoon, they kept going. Tessie never stopped. Step, and step, and step. To keep everybody going, they sang the old song from the Story Stone, *Sing, little river, sing, tall tree*, over and over, slow enough that Tessie could take one step for every word. It was the slowest song anybody had ever sung, and by the end of it, Bruno

was asleep on his feet, until Dottie licked his nose and he woke up with a snort.

But by the time the sky started to turn pink, Tessie was very tired. They were almost at the top. Just one last steep part left. Tessie looked up at it, and she stopped. She closed her eyes. Her legs were shaking.

"I don't know... if I can," she said quietly.

Mr. Monkey felt it in his tummy, all at once. Tessie had walked all day. All the way. And she was so close. He couldn't stand it if she stopped now, right before the top.

"Mr. Moose," he whispered. "She's almost there. But she's so tired."

Mr. Moose looked at the last steep part. He thought about the windy ridge, when they'd said "Ten more steps" over and over. He thought about the old crow calling across the river. He thought about Shiloh, louder and louder at every house. Words, said out loud, had helped every time.

"Tessie needs to hear it," he said. "What we see. Out loud. Loud enough that she can't miss it."

But before they could say anything, a tiny voice spoke up from behind them. It was Benji. Benji, who almost never spoke up.

"You can do it, Tessie," said Benji. Very small.

Tessie opened her eyes.

Then Mr. Monkey said it, louder. "You can do it, Tessie! We watched you walk ALL DAY!"

Then Mr. Moose. "You didn't stop once, Tessie. Not one time!"

Then Shiloh, very loud, because Shiloh knew how to be loud now. "TEN MORE STEPS, TESSIE!"

And then everybody, all at once, cheering, as loud as they could: "GO, TESSIE! GO, TESSIE! GO, TESSIE!"

And Tessie went.

She went faster than anybody had ever seen Tessie go. Her little legs went *pat-pat-pat-pat* up the steep part. It was the fastest she had ever gone in her whole life. It was still very slow. But it was the fastest slow anybody had ever seen.

"Hee hee hee! Look at her GO!" shouted Mr. Monkey. "She's Turbo Tessie!"

"TURBO TESSIE! TURBO TESSIE!"

And Turbo Tessie took one last step, and she was standing at the very top of Lookout Ledge.

"YOU MADE IT!" shouted Mr. Monkey.

"YOU MADE IT!" shouted everybody, jumping up and down in the snow, so hard that Bruno jumped himself right into a snowdrift. "Haw haw haw!" came Bruno's voice, from somewhere inside the drift.

Benji ran over and hugged Tessie's shell. "I watched you the whole way," he said. "You made it."

Tessie looked around at all of them, through her seeing glasses, with her eyes very shiny. "Thank you... dears," she said. "I couldn't have... done that last part... without hearing you."

Just then, a great shadow swept over the top of the hill. Everest Eagle came gliding past, so low that the wind from his wings ruffled everybody's fur. He tipped one wing down toward Tessie, slowly, as he went by, and then he soared away toward his cliff.

Then everybody turned around, and looked out.

The sun was going down, and below them, the whole of Wonderful Woods was starting to light up. The Moose home. The treehouse. The long fort. Percy's shiny nest. The crows' tree across the river. Mama Hedgehog's lantern at the bottom of the littlest trail. And high on Everest's cliff, the little squash lantern, shining steady. Hundreds and hundreds of little lights, all through the trees.

"I'll remember this winter," said Tessie softly, "for the rest of my life."

Mr. Moose was looking too. He was looking at all the lights, one at a time, the way he looked at everything. And then he saw it.

Way out past the edge of the woods, past the bramble patch where nobody ever went, there was one more little home. They had never been able to see it from down below. Now they could.

And it was dark.

"Mr. Monkey," said Mr. Moose quietly. "Whose home is that?"

Mr. Monkey looked. Everybody looked. Nobody knew. Not even Tessie.

"It's the only one," said Mr. Monkey softly. "The only dark one."

They stood together at the top of the hill and looked at it for a long time.

They went back down the easy way in the starlight, with Tessie riding on Bruno's back, fast asleep.

"What a day!" said Mr. Monkey, at the bottom. "Tessie climbed Lookout Ledge, all day long, and Bruno ate Ricky's snack, after asking. Sammy went up and down three times in one Tessie step. Tessie almost stopped, but Benji said 'You can do it,' and then we all cheered, and she turned into Turbo Tessie and made it! Bruno jumped into a snowdrift. And from the top, we saw one more home. A dark one."

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

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

And from the window of the Moose home that night, Mr. Moose looked out past all the glowing homes of Wonderful Woods, toward the far, dark place he couldn't see from down here, and thought about it until he fell asleep.

Let's Talk

- 1 Tessie almost stopped. What helped her get to the top?
- 2 Who did something hard this year? Tell them, "You made it!"

Your Turn

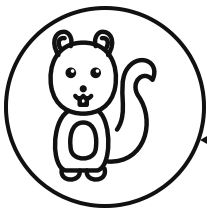
Write or draw a note. A grown-up can help you write.

Dear _____,

You made it! I saw you _____, and I'm so glad for you because _____.

Love, _____

SAMMY'S JOKE

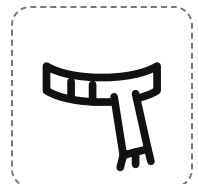


What did the scarf say to the hat?

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

g a h n

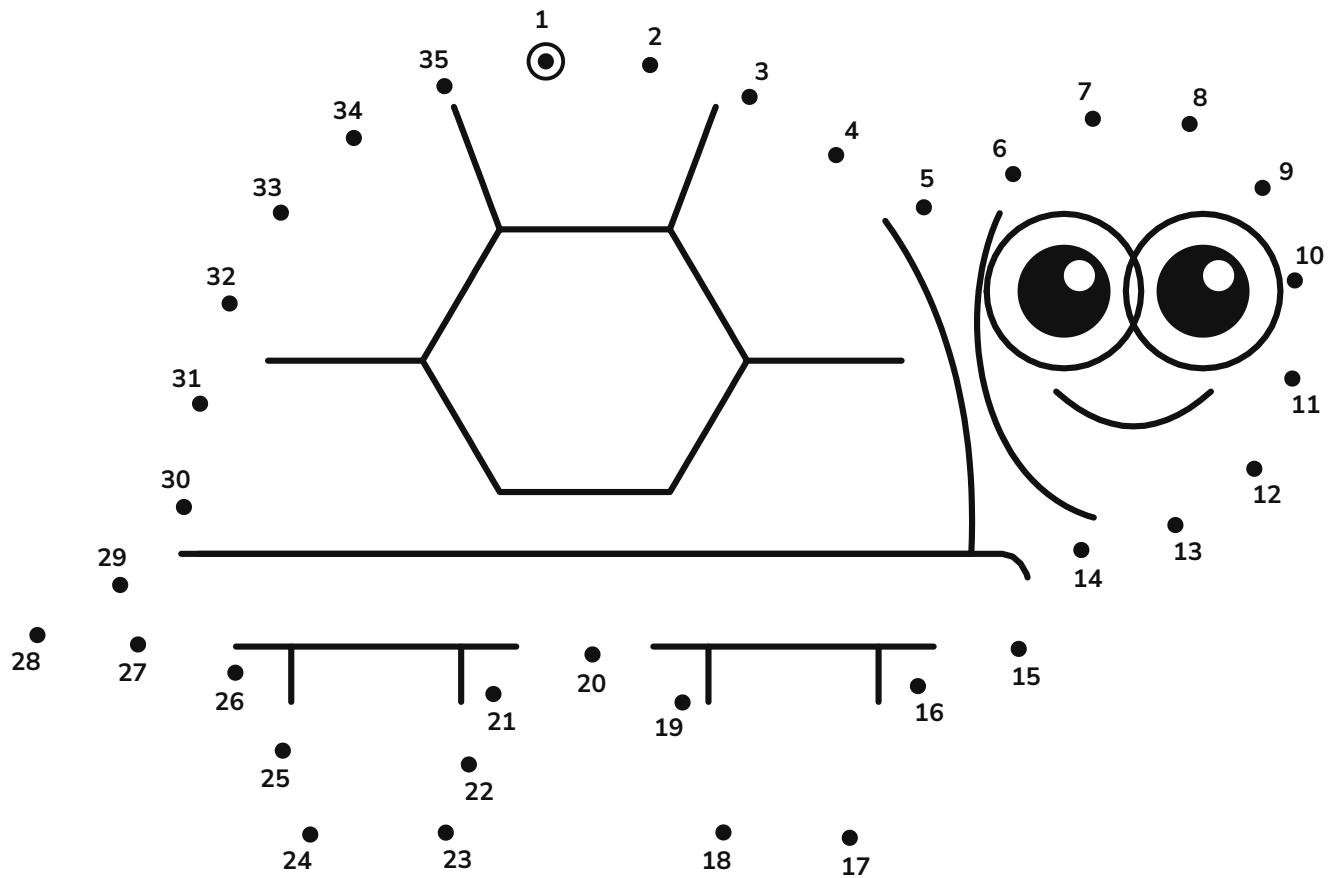
CLUE



You go on ahead. I'll _____ around!

 Connect the Dots

Connect the dots to find Turbo Tessie! 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

You Did It, ! wants to get to the top of the hill. It is a long trip!

Step... step... step.

 zips up and back, up and back.At the end,  stops. “I can not,” she says.“You can, !” says .Then the pals yell, “GO, ! GO!” steps fast! She is at the top!

From the top, the pals see a hut. It is not lit.

PICTURE WORDS  Tessie  Sammy  Benji

For grown-ups: New words to learn by heart: she.



Color a star each time you read it.

 My Gift

Trace the dark word. Then trace or write the light words. Who finished something hard?
Write their name on the line. Then say it to them!

You made it.

★ **Movie Bingo: Elf**

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

 a sleigh	 snow	 singing
 an elf hat	 Free!	 a star
 a gift	 a tree	 a hug

For grown-ups: Elf (2003) is rated PG for mild rude humor and language. Watch the last part, from the sleigh crash in Central Park to the singing. Santa is a story character here; talk about him the way your family does.

WEEK DONE!



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



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