

The Long Way Up

COLOR THE PICTURE



The morning was bright and blue, and the snow was so crunchy that every step went *crumpf, crumpf, crumpf*. Icicles hung from the edge of the treehouse roof, and when the sun hit them, they dripped, *plink... plink... plink*, onto the snow below.

Ricky untied the hedgehog leaf from the Wishing Tree. "The hedgehogs live past the little waterfall," he said. "It's a long, long way."

"We'll all go," said Mr. Monkey.

Then he looked up. At the very top of the Wishing Tree hung the leaf with no name, the one for the sunrise. Next to it hung the birch leaf for the spring, with its front still empty, too.

Orion had asked about the sunrise leaf, back when they first pulled it up there: "Who will take it down?" Nobody had taken it down. Nobody knew where it should go.

Mr. Monkey climbed all the way to the top, untied them both, and tucked them into his basket. "Just in case," he said. "In case we find out whose they are."

So they set off, up the river: Mr. Moose, Mr. Monkey, Ricky, Bruno, and Shiloh. They walked past the willow. They walked past the long row of little bumps in the snow where the pinecone line was hiding. They walked past Whispering Water Way, which was half frozen and went *tinkle-tinkle-rush* under its ice. They crossed the river on top of the beaver dam, one careful step at a time, and the beavers popped their heads out of the water and waved.

Then they heard a long, low sound, *shhhhhhhhhhh*, and came around a bend to the little waterfall.

Shiloh stopped. His eyes went wide. "The water FELL?"

"It's a waterfall," said Ricky.

"Oh no," said Shiloh. "Is it okay?"

He ran right up to the edge, where the water was spilling over the rocks, and tried to catch it in his mouth, to help it. He got a big mouthful. But the water kept on falling. He caught some more. It kept on falling.

"It's STILL falling!" said Shiloh, with water dripping off his chin. "It's falling all the time!"

"Hee hee hee!" went Mr. Monkey. "Shiloh, I think it likes falling."

Shiloh looked at the water, tumbling and splashing and singing over the rocks. He thought about it. "It does look happy," he said.

Past the waterfall, the path got smaller and smaller, and the trees got closer and closer together, until they came to a little clearing at the foot of Lookout Ledge, under a big old oak.

"Here," said Ricky. "The hedgehogs live right around here."

Bruno looked. "Where?" He walked across the clearing. "I don't see it." He turned around and walked back. "Where is it?" He turned around again, and walked across again.

"Bruno," said Mr. Moose. "Look down."

Bruno looked down. Right between his two big feet was a tiny round door, in a tiny round log, almost buried in the snow. He had walked right over it three times.

"Oh," said Bruno. "It's small."

"Haw haw haw!" he laughed, and stepped back very, very carefully. Then he bent down to look, and his big black nose covered the whole tiny door.

From inside came a tiny voice. "Mama! The door has a NOSE!"

"Hee hee hee!" went Mr. Monkey.

Bruno backed away, and Ricky knocked. *Tap-tap*. The tiny door opened, and out came Mama Hedgehog, and then three little hedgehogs, one, two, three, round and prickly, with tiny black noses.

"Ricky!" said Mama Hedgehog. "From the Swap!"

"I have something for you," said Ricky. "It's not from the Swap. It's from me." And he held out the leaf.

The hedgehogs turned it over, all four of them, their little noses close. On the back was a hedgehog family walking along a long, long path, with a present on top of their spines.

"That's us," whispered the smallest one. "Walking to the Feast."

Mama Hedgehog looked at it for a long time. "It's such a long way," she said softly. "We got there late, and we left early. We didn't think anybody even saw us come."

"I saw you," said Ricky.

Then the three little hedgehogs were so happy that they curled up into balls and rolled around and around in the snow under the oak, and when they uncurled, they had dry oak leaves stuck all over their spines. Three round, walking leaf piles.

"Hee hee hee!" went Mr. Monkey. "You're Hedgie-Wedgies!"

"Hedgie-Wedgies!" squeaked the little hedgehogs, and rolled some more.

When it was time to go, everybody waved goodbye and started down the path toward home. The walk was long, and the sun was already starting down the sky. Bruno was thinking about supper. Shiloh was thinking about the waterfall. Ricky was thinking about the hedgehogs' faces.

But Mr. Monkey was looking into his basket.

The two leaves with no names were still in there. The sunrise leaf, and the spring leaf. They had come all this way, and they were going right back home again, still in the basket.

Mr. Monkey stopped walking. Every single morning the sunrise came, all gold over the hills, whether anybody asked for it or not. Every single day the spring bubbled up out of the ground. And nobody had ever said thank you where it could reach.

"Mr. Moose," he said. "These haven't gotten where they're going."

Mr. Moose stopped too. He looked at the leaves. Then he remembered what he had said, back when they pulled the sunrise leaf to the top of the Wishing Tree: that it should go as high as it could go, the closest place to where the sunrise comes from.

He looked up. Right above them, high and rocky and white with snow, was Lookout Ledge.

"This is the highest place we can get to," said Mr. Moose.

"And we're already here."

So they turned around.

They climbed Lookout Ledge together, step by careful step. Mr. Monkey went first, finding the way between the rocks. Mr. Moose came after, slowly, putting each hoof where Mr. Monkey's feet had been. Ricky and Shiloh came next, and Bruno came last, so he could catch anybody who slipped. Nobody slipped.

At the top, the whole of Wonderful Woods spread out below them, white and quiet in the evening light. They could see the river winding through the trees like a long silver ribbon. They could see the beaver dam, and Whispering Water Way, and the little waterfall. And way, way down in Sunny Square, they could see one tiny golden light, the squash lantern, glowing on the Wishing Tree.

The wind was blowing up here, cold and strong, right up the side of the ledge toward the sky.

Mr. Monkey held up the two leaves. The wind tugged at them.

"Do we let go?" he whispered.

"I think so," said Mr. Moose.

Mr. Monkey let go.

The wind took the leaves straight up. Up and up they went, turning over and over, the empty fronts and the painted backs, gold and then gray and then gold, higher than the ledge, higher than the trees. Then the wind went quiet, and the leaves began to flutter down.

And out of the sky came Everest Eagle.

He came out of the clouds so fast and so smooth that nobody even heard him. He swept past the falling leaves, and with one great foot, he caught them, both at once. Then he turned, and with three slow beats of his enormous wings, he carried them up, up, up, past the clouds, all the way to the top of his high gray cliff.

The highest place in the whole woods.

Nobody said anything. Mr. Moose looked at the top of the cliff for a long, long time.

"He took them higher than we could," whispered Mr. Monkey.

"All the way to the top," said Mr. Moose.

They climbed down in the blue dusk and walked the long way home, following the river and the little golden light.

"What a day!" said Mr. Monkey when they got back to Sunny Square. "Shiloh tried to catch the waterfall. Bruno walked over the hedgehogs' door three times. The hedgehogs rolled in the leaves and turned into Hedgie-Wedgies. We turned around and climbed Lookout Ledge, and we let go of the leaves with no names. And Everest Eagle caught them and took them all the way up to the top."

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

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

And high above Wonderful Woods, on the very top of the highest cliff, two small leaves lay side by side in the snow, under the first stars.

Let's Talk

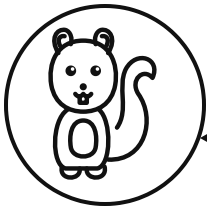
- 1 The hedgehogs said, "We didn't think anybody even saw us come." How did Ricky's leaf make them feel?
- 2 Who can we give a thank-you to in person today?

Your Turn

With a grown-up, carry a thank-you (a leaf, a card or a drawing) to someone's door. Draw who you gave it to.

I gave it to _____.

SAMMY'S JOKE

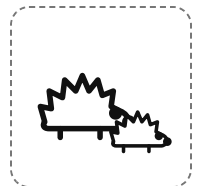


What did the little hedgehog say to the cactus?

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



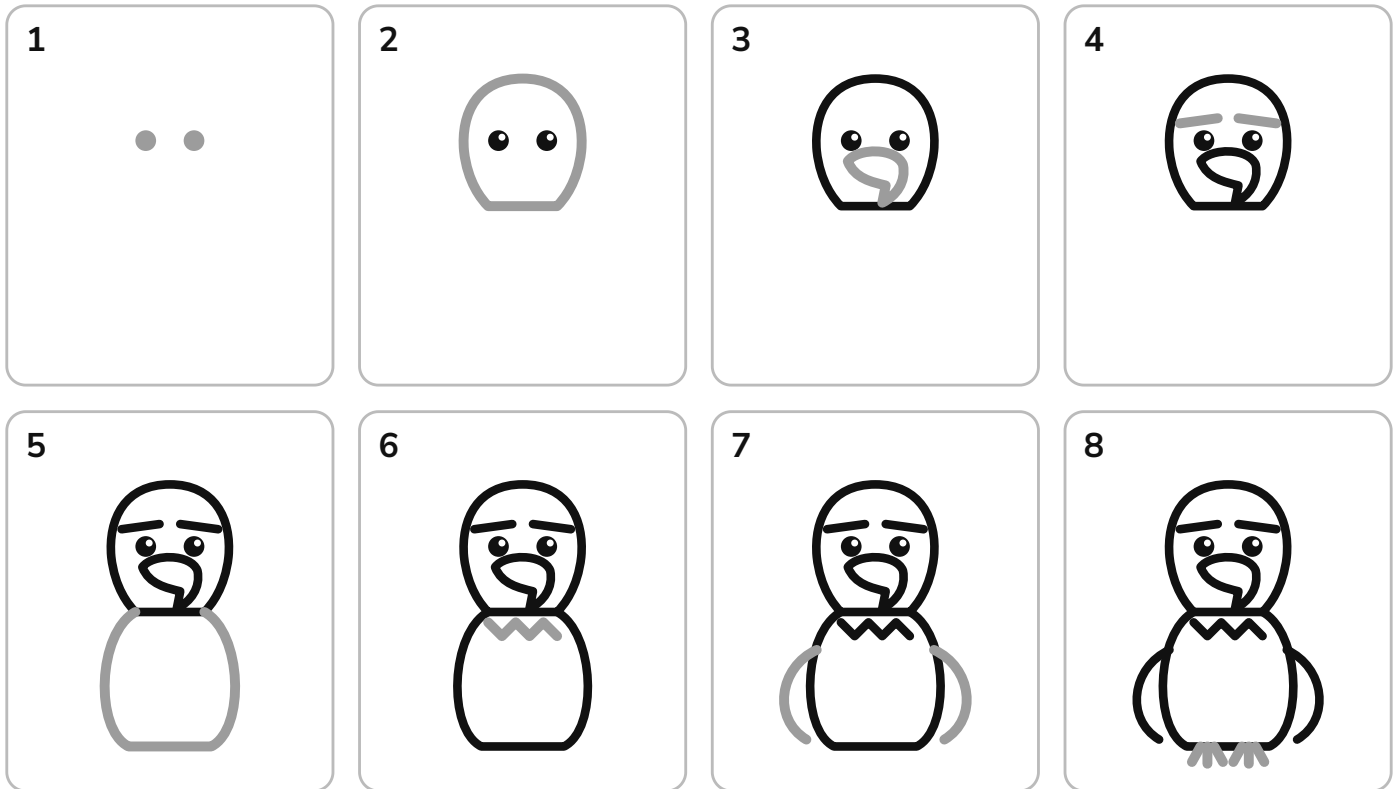
CLUE



Is that you, _____?

 Draw Everest Eagle!

The gray parts are new. Draw them in!



MY EVEREST EAGLE

 Read With Me

DRAW THE STORY

Up, Up, Up!

Up, up, up!  and  get to the top.

The wind is fast.

 lifts it up. The wind gets it!

Up, up, up it went.

 grabs it!

 sets it on top.

PICTURE WORDS



Mr. Moose



Mr. Monkey



Everest



Color a star each time you read it.

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

♥ My Thank-You

Trace the dark word, then the light words. Who did you give your thank-you to? Write their name on the line.

I gave my thank-you
to

📖 What Happened First?

Write 1, 2, 3, 4 in the circles to put the story in order.

