



THE NIGHT TRAIN TO ANYWHERE · BOOK 1

The Station of Falling Stars

A story where YOU choose the way

STORYBRANCH

Books that branch. Minds that grow.

Meet Your Fellow Travelers

Every journey on the Night Train is better with friends. Here's who is riding with you tonight — and how each one sounds when you read them aloud:

Rowan — The hero of every journey — curious, brave, and wearing the orange coat. Rowan's choices belong to YOU.

The Conductor — Keeper of the timetable and the wisdom. Read him slow as syrup, in your deepest, sleepest rumble.

Tick the Ticket Mouse — Punches the tickets, panics the loudest. Read him fast-fast-FAST, squeaky and tremendously official.

Pip — A fallen star no bigger than a teacup, with hiccups made of sparks. Read him small and shimmery — hic! — with a wobble of wonder.

Maren the Star-Keeper — She watches the whole sky and misses nothing — eventually. Read her soft and mysterious, like someone telling secrets to the stars.





Rowan hated bedtime because absolutely nothing exciting ever happened in the dark. But tonight, the valley was empty one second, and the next—poof!—a train appeared out of thin air, a shimmering dragon of green steel, puffing clouds of silver steam.

Suddenly, the sky blinked and a star zipped past Rowan's window and crashed beyond the hills like a dropped spark.

“Tickets! Wait—EMERGENCY! Major star disaster!” squeaked Tick, the ticket taking mouse in a giant officer's cap, who tumbled straight off the train step.

Rowan raced out the door and down to the platform just as the Conductor stepped into the moonlight. “Pay no mind to my panicked little friend—the night is long, but the sky has indeed lost a star,” the Conductor smiled softly. “And I have a feeling you’re just the brave thinker we need to help us put it back.”

The train is waiting. Turn the page.



FALLING STARS

The little station's sign above the train read FALLING STARS in letters that glowed faintly with moonlight.

Rowan and the Conductor followed a trail of twinkling, star-sparks over the hill, and into the dark woods that were lit with a bright yellow light. There, nestled in a crater of glowing moss, sat a tiny star no bigger than a teacup.

"I fell!" the star hiccuped, its light flickering like a candle. "I'm Pip—I was holding my spot in the sky and I sneezed, and - hic- now I can't remember where I belong!"

Rowan looked up and saw that one patch of the night sky had a dark and empty gap in it, just like a missing tooth. Getting Pip home would take some work. What should they do?

★ How should Rowan find Pip's place in the sky?

- **Climb to the Star-Keeper's observatory:** *If you choose the observatory, the great sky map may show exactly where Pip belongs — but the spiral stairs are long, the night is short, and maps only help the ones who read them slowly. → turn to page 5*
- **Retrace Pip's fall through Glimmer Meadow:** *If you choose the meadow, Pip's sparkle-trail could lead right back to the fall — but trails fade fast in the creeping mist, and one wrong noise could lose the path completely. → turn to page 19*
- **Ride the Night Train up Skyhill:** *If you choose the train, Skyhill's summit is the closest place to the sky in the whole land — but the track is steep and rattly, and being close is not the same as knowing the way. → turn to page 33*



The observatory stairs wound up the hillside like a giant, sleeping snake. Rowan climbed higher and higher; Pip rode in the crook of one arm, hiccuping tiny sparks, while Tick clung tightly to Rowan's earlobe like a terrified thrill-seeker.

At the top, a round brass door swung open with a mysterious creak. “I saw you coming,” whispered Maren, the Star-Keeper. She was tall and quiet, with hair that spun into swirling galaxies of purple and silver, and a long cloak stitched with shimmering constellations.

Behind her, the room glowed with hanging charts, a brass spyglass as big as a whale, and a massive sky map showing every single star in the universe.

“The sky map remembers every star and the spyglass sees where they belong,” Maren whispered. “Which tool do you choose to help find Pip's home?”

★ **Which tool should Rowan use first?**

- **Study the great sky map slowly:** *If you choose the map, tracing Pip's constellation point by point could reveal the exact empty spot — but slow, careful looking is hard when the night is draining away like bathwater. → turn to page 9*
- **Grab the spyglass and scan the sky right now:** *If you choose the spyglass, one lucky sweep might spot the gap in a heartbeat — but a spyglass swung in a hurry sees a hundred things, and not one of them slowly enough to matter. → turn to page 7*



— The Wobbly Moon —

Rowan grabbed the giant spyglass and spun it across the night sky—way too fast! Whoosh! Stars zoomed past the lens in a wild, blurry smear.

Rowan stopped, held a breath, and spotted a giant glowing circle! “I found it!” But wait... it wasn't Pip's spot. It was just the yellow moon, wobbling on the reflection of the duck pond between two very sleepy ducks. Tick slapped his paws over his eyes, and Pip's light flickered with worry. They were no closer to Pip's spot than when they started.

“Slow down, little traveler,” Maren said gently, turning the spyglass right side up. “A magic tool only works if you use a smart plan first.”

↻ **Go back to page 6 and choose again.**



Rowan planted both feet, took a deep breath, and looked at the giant map the way you look for your favorite toy in a messy playroom—slowly, corner by corner.

The night sky was enormous! There were bear-shaped stars and boat-shaped stars, stars that looked like crown jewels, and stars spilling like shiny rivers.

Rowan searched and searched until—aha!

Rowan's eyes stopped on a constellation shaped just like a tiny soup ladle, right between a swan and a kite. The very bottom star was completely gone, leaving a blank spot exactly Pip's size.

“The Little Ladle!” Pip gasped, wiggling with joy. “That’s my home! I’m the bottom of the handle! I scoop the sky!”

Maren traced the ladle with her glowing star-wand. “It swings low tonight, right over Great Pine Hill before dawn,” she whispered. “Low enough to reach—if you have a clever plan and a rope.

Gather what you'll need. Turn the page.



They packed up like a team of secret superhero helpers. Maren coiled her silver moon-rope over Rowan's shoulder, and Tick grabbed his spool of bright red kite string—"for emergencies, and also regular-gencies!" Maren handed Rowan a thermos of warm starlight to keep Pip's glow bright, and off they rushed into the night.

Outside, the wind had woken up. It roared through the trees with giant whooshes, blowing so hard that Pip flickered like a candle flame.

Halfway up the trail, a giant gust of wind snatched Tick right off Rowan's shoulder! Rowan gasped, reached out, and caught the little mouse by his tiny tail, dangling him upside down.

Tick adjusted his giant cap, crossed his tiny arms, and huffed, "I MEANT to do that. I was just testing the wind speed."

By the time they reached Great Pine Hill, the Little Ladle was sliding down the sky, bright and slow, like a giant spoon lowering into a bowl of soup.

The hill is close. Turn the page.



END OF YOUR FREE SAMPLE

Does Pip get home?

The hill is close, the Little Ladle is sliding down the sky, and the hardest choice of the night is waiting on the next page.

Chose the meadow on page 4, or the Night Train up Skyhill? Those paths are in the full book too: 9 choices, 3 friendly dead ends and 7 different endings, so it's a new adventure every time you read it.

Start the series — \$49/month

A new adventure every month · parent guide included · shipping included (US & Canada)

Or get just Book 1 for \$59. Pause or cancel anytime.

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Next in this file: The Grown-Up's Ticket, your parent guide to Book 1.

Books that branch. Minds that grow.

A star has fallen out of the sky — and it can't remember where it belongs.

Tonight, the Night Train has stopped outside Rowan's window, and every choice belongs to YOU. Study the Star-Keeper's great map? Follow the sparkle-trail through the misty meadow? Ride the rattling cog-car to the top of the sky?

Storybranch books are parent-guided choose-your-own-adventure-style stories for kids 3–8, made to be read together. You read, they choose — and every fork in the story builds the core skills of smart thinkers for the next AI revolution.

- ★ Read together · ages 3–8
- ★ 9 choices · 7 endings · a new adventure every night
- ★ Book 1 of 30 in The Night Train to Anywhere series

THE SKILLS IN THIS BOOK

Every Storybranch adventure practices two of the seven skills of smart thinkers. This book builds Think First, Then Ask — Rowan's best paths all begin with a pause and a plan — and Learn From Every Outcome — every wrong turn teaches exactly what to try next.

Storybranch

Books that branch. Minds that grow.

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★ ADMIT ONE GROWN-UP ★

The Grown-Up's Ticket

Your guide to reading *The Station of Falling Stars* together

Tonight, a young star tumbles out of the sky and can't remember its place. Your child — as Rowan — will meet a sparkly, hiccuping little star named Pip, and the fastest way to help will almost never be the best one. That's on purpose. This whole adventure is rigged in favor of the kid who pauses, looks, and thinks before leaping.

And here's the fun part: **your job isn't to teach.** You're the Conductor — you set the pace, do the voices, and ask one good question at the forks. Your child drives. This guide gives you everything you need: the two skills hiding inside the story, two signature "parent moves," a few tricks for making every choice feel like an event, a tracker for the nights ahead, and an observation log for noticing how the thinking grows.

★ PRIMARY SKILL

Think first, then ask

Forming your own idea *before* reaching for help — the anchor habit that keeps kids the authors of their thinking instead of passengers of whatever a tool (or a wizard) suggests first.

✦ SECONDARY SKILL

Learn from every outcome

Treating every result — especially the flops — as information. First tries are rough drafts; the skill is asking "*what did that just teach us?*" and adjusting the next attempt.

9

CHOICES TO MAKE

7

DIFFERENT ENDINGS

3

FRIENDLY DEAD ENDS

∞

WAYS TO READ IT AGAIN



The one golden rule: never pick for them. Ask, then wait — even when the silence stretches, even when they're clearly about to pick the "wrong" one. The pause is where the thinking happens, and the wrong turns are where the learning happens. Everything in this book is safe to get wrong.



PRIMARY

Think first, then ask

The habit: my own idea comes before anyone's menu.

Machines are getting very good at answering. The children who thrive alongside them will be the ones who can do what comes *before* the answer: look around, form a hunch, and decide what they actually want. In this story, every good path begins with a pause — and every dead end is what happens when acting outruns thinking. At ages 3–8 this skill looks wonderfully simple: a beat of quiet before the grab, a "wait, let me look" before the leap.

PARENT MOVE №1

The Blind Pitch

When a problem appears in the story, **cover the choices with your hand** before reading them aloud. Ask: **"If you were standing right there, what's the very first thing YOU would try?"** Let them pitch their own plan — then reveal the options and see if the book thought of it. Their idea comes first, before anyone's menu can bias it. (This one move is the whole skill in miniature. Use it at least once a night.)

✓ TRY SAYING

"What might happen if we pick this one?"

"What do we know so far?"

"Why that one?" — asked after every choice, good or bad

✗ INSTEAD OF

"I think we should take the map."

"Remember what the Conductor said?" (a hint in disguise)

"Are you suuure?" — kids crack that code instantly

SECONDARY

Learn from every outcome

The habit: a flop is feedback, not a verdict.

This book contains three dead ends, and we'd like to let you in on a secret: **they're the best pages in it**. Each one shows exactly what a skipped pause costs, then warmly sends you back to choose again. A child who hits all three isn't reading it wrong — they're collecting the full set of data. Your reaction at a dead end teaches more than the page does: if you groan, failure is bad; if you grin, failure is interesting.

PARENT MOVE №2

The Dead-End Post-Mortem

When a choice goes wrong, **resist flipping back right away**. First: **"Ooh — we found a wrong turn! Before we go back ... what was the story trying to warn us about?"** Ten seconds of detective work, then flip back with full ceremony. Try keeping a running count out loud — **"that's dead end number two! One left!"** — so wrong turns become treasure, not embarrassment.

Showtime: making every choice a moment

THE GROWN-UP'S TICKET

A choice page is a tiny stage play, and you're the stage manager. You don't need all six of these — pick two that fit your kid and make them *yours*. Rituals are the point: by Book 3, your child will be doing them to *you*.

1 The Conductor's Whistle

When a choice is coming, give a long, low, sleepy "**whooooo...**" — the signal that a Big Decision is pulling into the station. Slow everything down. Decisions get drama; page turns don't.

2 The Finger Hover

One finger hovers over each option while you think out loud together — but **no touching until the choice is made**. The hover makes the pause physical (and very hard to rush).

3 The Ticket Punch

Decision made? Your child "punches the ticket": two firm taps on the chosen option and a squeaky "**Tickets, please!**" No punch, no page turn — Tick the Ticket Mouse insists.

4 Freeze the Picture

On each full-page painting, stop before reading on: "**What do you see? What's about to happen?**" Predict, then read, then check. Wrong guesses are cheered — that's a scientist at work.

5 Ask the Cast

Stuck between options? "**What would the Conductor do? What would Tick do?**" (Tick's plan is always panic — which is exactly why it's useful. Even a 3-year-old can spot a bad plan when a mouse is shouting it.)

6 Swap the Chooser

On re-reads, flip the roles: you choose, your child holds **veto power** — but a veto must come with a reason. Or let a stuffed animal choose, and audit its judgment together. (Be a deliciously bad chooser. Getting overruled is the goal.)

THE VOICES — YOUR FIVE-MEMBER CAST

Rowan

Warm and wondering — but mostly, Rowan speaks with your child's voice. When Rowan decides, hand the line over: "*what do we do?*"

The Conductor

Slow as syrup, deep and sleepy, with looong pauses. The easiest voice in children's literature — and the one they'll beg for. "*No hurry... no hurry at all...*"

Tick the Ticket Mouse

Fast-fast-FAST, squeaky, tremendously official. Sit up straight when he speaks. He is very busy and everything is an emergency.

Pip, the fallen star

Small and shimmery with spark hiccups — *hic!* — and a wobble of wonder. A whisper with glitter in it.

Maren the Star-Keeper

Soft and mysterious, like someone telling secrets to the stars. Slow blinks. Knows more than she says.

Performance note: you need exactly *one* voice you love — the Conductor is the beginner's choice — and the Train needs no voice at all: whistles, hums and rumbles are your child's job. Consistency beats talent. Nobody is grading you, and the reviews in that bedroom are already five stars.

Punch your ticket: the re-read tracker

THE GROWN-UP'S TICKET

One night is one path — but this station holds **seven endings and three secret dead ends**, and no single read finds them all. Keep this page by the bed. After each ride, check off where you landed and give the ending a name of your own invention. Completing the whole card usually takes a week or two of bedtimes ... which is rather the idea.

★ THE SEVEN ENDINGS

☐ Ending 1 _____	☐ Ending 2 _____
☐ Ending 3 _____	☐ Ending 4 _____
☐ Ending 5 _____	☐ Ending 6 _____
☐ Ending 7 _____	

Write the name YOU gave each ending on the line.

• THE THREE DEAD ENDS — A BADGE OF HONOR, NOT A RECORD OF FAILURE

☐ Wrong turn 1 _____	☐ Wrong turn 2 _____
☐ Wrong turn 3 _____	

What did each one teach you? Jot the lesson.

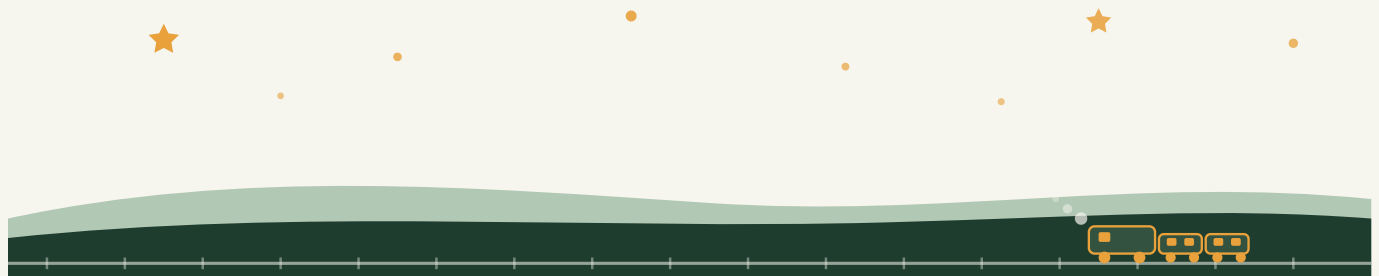
AFTER THE LAST PAGE — THREE LIGHTS-OUT QUESTIONS

1. "Which choice was the hardest tonight — and what made it hard?"
2. "What went wrong that ended up helping us?"
3. "If we ride the Night Train to that station again, what will we do differently?"

Sixty seconds, lights low, no quiz energy. If you only have time for one, ask the second — it's the whole book in a single question.

Same station, different night.

Every reader who boards makes different choices — which means the book your child read tonight isn't quite the book they'll read tomorrow. When you've collected every ending, leave the card in the book: it's the story of how your child learned to think, one fork at a time. Next month, a new station.



The observation log: what you noticed tonight

Page 4 tracks **where the story went**. This page tracks **how your child thought** along the way — the part that carries over to homework, playgrounds and every station still to come. After each read, take a quiet minute to score the six behaviors below. It isn't a test, and "not yet" is honest, useful information: over a few weeks, the *pattern* is what matters.

0 Not yet tonight 1 With a nudge from you 2 On their own *Write the date in the top box of each read.*

WHAT TO WATCH FOR	READ 1	READ 2	READ 3	READ 4	READ 5	READ 6
DATE						
Paused before choosing Waited, thought, or offered an idea before picking an option.						
Went back after a dead end Chose to return to the fork and try a different path.						
Named what went wrong Could say, in their own words, why a wrong turn was wrong.						
Accepted an outcome they didn't want Stayed with the story after a disappointing turn, without a meltdown or a demand to undo it.						
Kept track across pages Remembered something from earlier in the story and used it at a choice.						
Stayed with the story Attention held from the first page to the ending, without needing a break.						
Found choosing stressful tonight Tick if the forks felt like pressure rather than fun. If this gets ticked often, read one path straight through and choose only at the final fork — fewer decisions, same story.						

NOTES — ONE LINE PER NIGHT

READ 1

READ 2

READ 3

READ 4

READ 5

READ 6

Scores aren't grades, and no single night means much. What you're collecting is a picture of a growing mind at work — the same six behaviors, book after book, station after station. Keep the page with the book and compare it to next month's.

