

THE NIGHT TRAIN TO ANYWHERE · BOOK 8

The Snow Globe Village

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 — and tonight, humming the Midwinter tune.

Grandmother Tansy — Winter-Keeper and builder of the Great Globe. Read her warm and wise — and, through the glass, as a muffled mmff-mmff with lots and lots of nodding.

Bramble — The apprentice reindeer who wants to fix everything at once. Read him loud, eager, and slightly out of breath, with a big GULP before every big plan.





The Night Train came on the longest night of the whole year, hissing to a stop in snow so deep and blue that the world looked like it had been tucked into bed.

Rowan wiped a circle in the frost on the window and saw it at once: far off on a hilltop, something enormous and round and glowing, like a lamp the size of a hill. And snow was falling INSIDE it. Only inside it!

“Alllll aboard,” came the Conductor's slow, warm voice from down below. “No hurry... no hurry at all... but it's Midwinter's Eve at the Snow Globe Village, and I'm told the village has gone and got itself sealed in. Key's snapped. Snow's rising. And it's a long, long way to morning.”

A village inside a snow globe? Rowan grabbed the orange coat, two mittens, and a scarf, and was down the stairs before the third button was done up.

The train is waiting. Turn the page.



It really **WAS** a snow globe. A glass dome as big as a hill sat on a carved wooden base, with a brass winding key on its side as tall as a door—snapped off short. Inside the glass, a whole village of little cottages glowed in the endless falling snow, and tiny villagers in knitted hats waved from doorsteps that were already half-buried.

“It’s **SUPPOSED** to snow in there,” said a small reindeer in a red scarf, skidding up in a hurry. “That’s the whole point! Grandmother Tansy built the Globe to keep the village snug through the Long Blizzard. You wind it, it snows, everyone’s cozy. Then you open it up for Midwinter morning.” He gulped—a big gulp. “Except tonight the key snapped mid-wind, and the snow won’t stop, and by dawn it’ll be over the chimneys. I’m Bramble. I’m the apprentice. I’ve never actually opened it.”

Behind the glass, an old white hare in a blue shawl held up a broken key and mouthed something nobody could hear. “Mmff,” said the glass. Tick pressed one ear to it. “I think,” he reported, “she said mmff.”

★ **A village sealed in a snow globe! Where does Rowan start?**

- **Look at the snapped key and the base:** *If you choose the base, the Globe is a machine, and machines can be understood — but the works inside are a tangle of brass and gears, and Bramble wants to grab all of it at once. → turn to page 5*
- **Talk to Grandmother Tansy through the glass:** *If you choose to talk, the one hare who knows how the Globe works is right there — but the glass is thick, her voice is a mumble, and every question has to fight its way through. → turn to page 19*
- **Climb the Globe and look for a way in at the top:** *If you choose to climb, there’s a brass cap at the very top that might be a door — but the glass is curved and slippery, and the cap wears a collar of frost as thick as a pillow. → turn to page 33*



A little panel in the wooden base swung open under Bramble's hoof—creak—and there were the works: a brass drum bristling with hundreds of tiny pins, a steel comb with teeth like a harp, a nest of gears, a coiled spring as thick as a rope, and the stump of the snapped key, still stuck fast.

“A music box!” said Rowan. “The whole Globe is a music box.”

“It plays the Midwinter tune while it snows,” said Bramble. “And when the tune ends, the lid unlatches. But it STOPPED.” He rolled up his sleeves. “Right. It's one big machine that's stuck, so we do one big thing: we rock the Globe till it shakes loose! Simple. I'll push, you push—”

Inside the glass, Grandmother Tansy had gone very, very still, and was shaking her head so hard her spectacles slipped down her nose.

★ One big shake — or one small piece at a time?

- **Take the works apart, piece by piece:** *If you choose the pieces, a stuck machine is really a lot of small parts, and one of them is the problem — but there are a great many parts, and Bramble is already leaning on the glass. → turn to page 9*
- **Rock the whole Globe till it shakes loose:** *If you choose the shake, it's fast, it's simple, and it's what everyone does with a snow globe — though something inside has stopped, and shaking a stopped thing mostly just makes it noisy. → turn to page 7*



— The Big Shake —

Bramble put his shoulder to the glass and HEAVED. Rowan heaved. The Great Globe rocked once on its base—and inside it, a blizzard woke up.

Snow that had been drifting down like feathers went sideways, then UP, then everywhere at once. WHOOSH! Cottages vanished to their windows. A villager mouse rolled past a lamppost like a snowball with ears. The clock tower's lanterns swung, and swung, and went out.

And the music box did not go pling. It did not go anything.

When the whirling stopped, the village was buried a whole story deeper than before, and Grandmother Tansy stood on the other side of the glass with both paws held up flat. STOP, the paws said. Then she pointed—not at the Globe, but at the little open panel in the base—and held up one claw. One.

“One thing,” Rowan translated slowly, looking at the tangle of brass. “Not the whole Globe. One piece. She wants us to find the ONE piece that's stuck.”

Bramble lowered his shoulder. “Big shake, bigger problem,” he said, in a very small voice. “Noted.”

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



So they took it apart—not smashing, not shaking, but UN-building, the way you'd untie a knot.

Rowan spread a cloth on the snow and set a lantern at each corner. Bramble handed out the pieces one at a time, and Rowan laid each one down in its own spot and said its name out loud: “Gear. Gear. Gear. Comb. Spring—” The spring uncoiled with a BOING and had to be sat on. Seven gears in a row. One comb. One spring. And last of all, the heavy brass drum, prickly with pins, held up to the lantern light.

Spread out like that, the terrifying machine turned out to be eleven ordinary things—and only ONE of them was the problem!

“Gears turn,” said Rowan, spinning each one with a finger. “Comb's fine. Spring's fine. So it has to be—”

The drum. Rowan turned it slowly, and it turned, and turned, and STOPPED, with a tiny bright click, at the exact same spot every time.

Turn the page.



One pin. Out of hundreds! Bent sideways so it snagged on a tooth of the comb, halfway through the Midwinter tune.

“That's IT?” said Bramble, staring. “That's the whole problem? The Globe's been stuck since sunset, and it's—THAT?”

“That,” said Rowan, “is exactly why we couldn't shake it out. You can't shake one pin straight.” Two mittens, one careful squeeze—and the pin stood up in its row like a little soldier who'd been napping.

But a straight pin wasn't the end of it. The lid only unlatched when the tune finished—and the tune was stuck halfway, and the key that turned it was a stump.

Rowan looked at the drum. Then at the stump. Then at Bramble, who was rubbing the little pale nub of antler that reindeer his age carry and shed and grow again, and who said, “What?” and then, “Oh,” and then, brightening like a lamp, “OH!”

Two ways to finish the tune. Turn the page.



END OF YOUR FREE SAMPLE

Will the snow ever stop?

You've reached the end of the free pages, and the biggest choice of the night is waiting on the very next page.

Chose "Talk to Grandmother Tansy through the glass" or "Climb the Globe and look for a way in at the top" on page 4? 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.

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Next in this file: The Grown-Up's Ticket, your parent guide to Book 8.

Books that branch. Minds that grow.

★
The whole village is sealed inside a snow globe — and the snow won't stop!

Tonight, every choice belongs to YOU. Take the great music-box apart, piece by piece? Ask Grandmother Tansy one small question at a time through the glass? Climb the slippery dome to the frozen door at the top? By dawn the snow reaches the chimneys — unless someone finds the small piece that fixes the big problem.

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 8 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 Break Big Problems Down — one pin, one wedge, one street at a time — and Ask Sharp Questions — the kind a nod can answer.

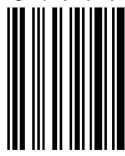
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ISBN 979-8-953259-07-1



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★ ADMIT ONE GROWN-UP ★

The Grown-Up's Ticket

Your guide to reading *The Snow Globe Village* together

Tonight the Night Train stops at a village that has been sealed inside a snow globe the size of a hill — key snapped, snow rising, and the one hare who knows how it works stuck on the far side of very thick glass. Everything about this problem looks too big to touch. That's the point. Your child — as Rowan — is about to discover what every engineer and every good question-asker knows: nothing enormous gets fixed in one heroic shake. It gets fixed one pin, one wedge, one small yes at a time.

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

Break big problems down

Turning one daunting, impossible-looking challenge into ordered, bite-sized steps — the executive-function habit behind every project your child will ever run, with or without AI.

✦ SECONDARY SKILL

Ask sharp questions

Asking questions the size of the answer — the difference between "*how do we fix it?!*" and "*is the way in at the top?*" The quality of every answer your child will ever get depends on the quality of the ask.

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

Break big problems down

The habit: find the smallest piece you can actually do — then do it.

Grand goals are never won in one heroic leap; they're won in ordered, checkable steps. That's the executive-function muscle behind every project your child will ever run — and in a world where machines happily hand over ten-step plans, the child who can *build* a plan still owns it. In this story every winning path is a big thing cut small — a machine unbuilt one part at a time, a collar of frost chalked into pie-wedges, a buried village dug out one street at a time — and every dead end is what happens when the whole job gets attempted in one giant shake, whack, or bellow, then loops back so your child can choose again. At ages 3–8 this looks wonderfully simple: naming the first small piece out loud, doing it, and noticing that the next one is now easier.

PARENT MOVE № 1

The Backwards Map

When the big goal appears, **start from the ending and walk backwards**. Ask: **"We need the whole village out. What would have to be true FIRST? ... And what gets us that?"** Each answer becomes a step; count the steps on your fingers as they name them. Working backwards turns one big impossible wish into a little checkable plan — and fingers make the plan visible. (Use it at least once a night.)

✓ TRY SAYING

"Whoa, that looks HUGE. What's the smallest piece we could start with?"

"What has to be true before that part can work?"

"Which pieces are done? Show me on your fingers."

✗ INSTEAD OF

"Okay, here's the plan: first this, then this." (you just did the thinking for them)

"Just shake it and see!" (one big move for one big problem)

"Hurry — we're almost there!" (rushing erases the list)

SECONDARY

Ask sharp questions

The habit: a question the size of the answer beats a louder one.

Every helper your child will ever meet — teachers, grandmothers behind glass, and one day the machines they'll direct — runs on the same rule: vague in, vague out. In this story the only expert can answer with a nod or a shake, so **"HOW DO WE FIX EVERYTHING?"** comes back as mumble while **"is it frozen?"** comes back as a clear yes. The child who learns to chop a big question into small, answerable ones will get treasure from the very same helpers who hand everyone else mush. At ages 3–8 this looks wonderfully simple: turning one giant "how" into a handful of "is it...?" questions, and writing down each answer.

PARENT MOVE № 2

The "Vague vs. Specific" Upgrade

When the story offers to ask a character for help, **pause before the asking**. Try: **"Wait — what EXACTLY do we need to know? If we shout 'how do we open it?' at the glass, all we'll get back is mmff."** Then upgrade the ask together: shrink it to something a nod could answer. Read what the sharper version earns — then marvel at it, loudly. (Use it at least once a night.)

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 Bramble do?**" (Bramble's plan is always *the whole thing, right now, in one go* — shake the whole globe, whack the whole frost, bellow the whole question. Which is exactly why he's useful. Even a 3-year-old can spot a plan that's just "bigger" and say what's missing: the first small piece.)

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.

Grandmother Tansy

Winter-Keeper and builder of the Great Globe — warm, wise, and patient, with the calm of someone who has wound a village up every winter for forty years. Through the glass she's a muffled "*mmff-mmff*" and a great deal of nodding; do the nods with your whole head.

Bramble

The apprentice reindeer, small and loud, with a toolbelt far too big for him. Read him eager and slightly out of breath, with a big gulp before every big plan — and the plan is always ALL of it, at once, right now.

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.

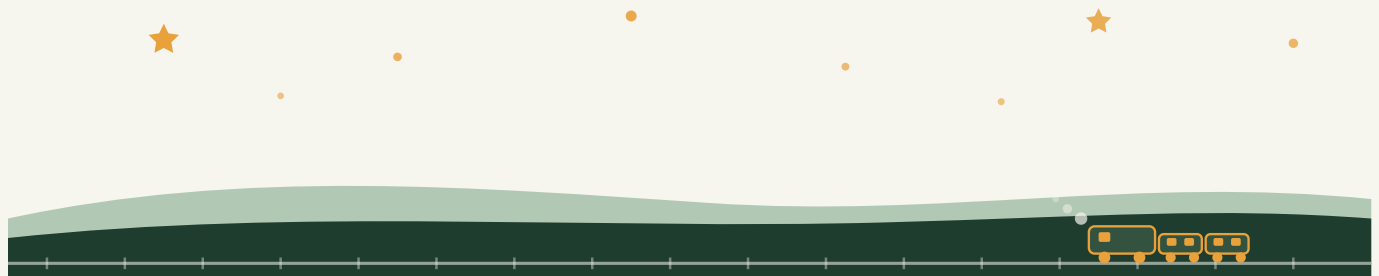
AFTER THE LAST PAGE — THREE LIGHTS-OUT QUESTIONS

1. "Which choice was the hardest tonight — and what made it hard?"
2. "What was the biggest problem tonight — and what was the first small piece we did?"
3. "What was the best question we asked Grandmother Tansy — and why could she answer it?"

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.

