

THE NIGHT TRAIN TO ANYWHERE · BOOK 15

The Giant's Breakfast

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, very sticky with honey.

Chef Parsnip — The cook at Hillfoot Kitchen — a large old pig in a very tall hat who has fed the giant forty times. Read her warm, brisk, and unbothered, with a wooden spoon in every sentence.

Crumb — The piglet apprentice, who has one idea and it's always the biggest one. Read him in a high, breathless squeal — 'ONE TRIP!' — and let him get quieter, and prouder, as he learns to count.





The Night Train came on a night that RUMBLED. Not thunder—slower than thunder, and deeper, like something enormous turning over in its sleep. Rrrrrrrmmmmmm. Rowan's cup rattled on the shelf.

Rowan opened the window. The train stood beside a small stone bakery with every window lit and every chimney smoking, and behind the bakery rose a hill. Except the hill had a FACE. A stone-grey face as big as a barn, with a beard of pine trees, and one eye—just now—beginning to open, and glow.

“Alllll aboard,” said the Conductor. “No hurry. But that's Grumbleton, and he wakes once a year, hungry as a mountain, and if he isn't fed by sunrise his grumbling shakes every chimney in the valley. Chef Parsnip's been cooking all week. The trouble, I'm told, is getting it up the hill.”

A hill that eats BREAKFAST? Rowan's own stomach rumbled in reply, which felt only polite. Coat, boots, go!

The train is waiting. Turn the page.



Hillfoot Kitchen was a yard full of breakfast. One pancake, golden, wide as a pond. A pot of porridge you could take a bath in. A barrel of honey. A HILL of berries. And one small wooden cart.

“Breakfast for a giant,” said Chef Parsnip, a large old pig in a very tall hat, “is all of that. Up there.” She pointed her spoon at a stone stair climbing the giant's mossy chest—a hundred steps to his chin. “The cart carries one basket. And he's waking.”

The giant grumbled. GRRRRUMMMMMBLE. The yard shook. A tiny piglet in a hat too big for him bounced out from behind the pancake. “ONE TRIP!” he squealed. “Roll the pancake up like a wheel!” “That's Crumb,” said Parsnip. “He has one idea. It's always the biggest one.”

Rowan looked at the stair, the cart, and the breakfast, and did a sum that didn't come out. Tick did the same sum and got a different wrong answer.

★ A giant's breakfast and a one-basket cart! Where does Rowan start?

- **Start with the pancake:** *If you choose the pancake, it's what a giant wants first — but it's the size of a pond, and a pond doesn't fit in a cart. → turn to page 5*
- **Start with the porridge — it's what fills a giant:** *If you choose the porridge, it's the thing that stops the grumbling fastest — but the pot weighs more than everyone in the yard together, and porridge goes cold on a long stair. → turn to page 19*
- **Climb up and ask the giant what he wants:** *If you choose to ask, the giant knows his own breakfast — but a hungry giant's answer is usually 'ALL OF IT,' and that isn't a plan. → turn to page 33*



The pancake was warm and golden and ENORMOUS. Rowan walked all the way round it, which took a while.

“Roll it!” Crumb was already up on the edge, trying to lift it with his whole body. “Stand it on its side, like a wheel, and roll it up the stair! ONE TRIP! Then we're done!”

It was, Rowan admitted, a wonderful idea. One trip. A pancake wheel, rolling up a giant!

Tick, who had been measuring the pancake with his tail, cleared his throat. “It's forty tails across,” he said. “The stair is four tails wide. And it goes UP.”

Chef Parsnip said nothing. She was holding a very long knife, and looking at the pancake the way you'd look at a pie.

★ **Roll the whole pancake up like a wheel — or cut it into pieces?**

- **Stand it up and roll it — one trip!** *If you choose to roll it, it's the fastest plan anyone has ever had — though a pancake on its edge is a very tall, very wobbly thing, and the stair goes up. → turn to page 7*
- **Cut it into slices the cart can carry:** *If you choose to slice it, every piece is easy — but there'll be a lot of pieces, and a lot of trips, and the giant is grumbling. → turn to page 9*



— The Pancake Wheel —

It took everyone to stand the pancake on its edge. It stood there, golden and wobbling, taller than the bakery, and for one glorious second it was a WHEEL.

Then Rowan pushed, and it rolled—up three steps, beautifully—and slowed, and stopped, and thought about it, and rolled back down. FASTER. Crumb, who had climbed onto the rim to steer, went round with it, shouting “ONE TRI-I-I-IP” all the way. Rowan jumped. Tick flew. The cart didn’t.

FLUMP!

When the pancake finally lay down in the yard, it was on top of the cart, and the cart was as flat as the pancake.

Grumbleton grumbled. Chimneys shook.

“One trip,” said Chef Parsnip, lifting the pancake edge to look at what had been a cart. “You tried to carry the whole job at once, and the whole job squashed the only thing that could carry it.” She held up her knife. “Big things go up hills in PIECES, dear. Everything does.”

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



Chef Parsnip cut. One long slice across—shhhhk—one down, and the pond became four; four became twelve, and twelve golden wedges lay in the yard like a sunflower.

“Twelve,” said Rowan. Twelve wedges. One wedge fits the cart. Twelve trips, a hundred steps each—Tick did it on his fingers and ran out and started again. “Twelve HUNDRED steps.”

It sounded enormous. But Rowan noticed something: a hundred steps was a thing Rowan could do. Right now! And the second hundred were exactly the same as the first. The job wasn't twelve hundred steps. It was one trip, twelve times.

“One trip,” said Crumb, and then, more quietly, “...twelve times.” He loaded the first wedge himself, and it was nearly as big as he was.

Turn the page.



The first trip taught them the stair. The steps were mossy, and steep, and halfway up there was a flat ledge on the giant's collarbone where you could put the cart down and breathe. Phew!

The first wedge went into the giant's mouth at the top—a cave with a beard—and the giant chewed, CHOMP, CHOMP, and the grumbling got a little less, and Rowan felt the whole hill relax.

Second trip: easier, because they knew about the ledge. Third: easier, because Tick found a shortcut at step forty. By the fourth, Crumb stopped saying “one trip” altogether and started saying “four down!”

Then Chef Parsnip called up from the yard. She had an idea about the stair, and so did Rowan, and they weren't the same idea.

Turn the page.



END OF YOUR FREE SAMPLE

Will the giant get breakfast?

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

Chose "Start with the porridge — it's what fills a giant" or "Climb up and ask the giant what he wants" 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 15.

Books that branch. Minds that grow.

A mountain-sized giant wakes up hungry — and the only safe breakfast goes up the hill in very many small trips! ★

Tonight, every choice belongs to YOU. Roll a pancake the size of a pond up the stair like a wheel? Lift a bathtub of porridge all at once? Pile a whole hill of berries on one small cart? Sunrise is coming, the giant is grumbling, and every chimney in the valley is counting on you.

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 15 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 wedge, one bucket, one step at a time — and Weigh the Trade-Offs, hot or heavy, fast or sure.

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 Giant's Breakfast* together

Tonight the Night Train stops at Hillfoot Kitchen, at the foot of a hill with a face — Grumbleton, who wakes once a year hungry as a mountain, and whose grumbling shakes every chimney in the valley if he isn't fed by sunrise. Chef Parsnip has cooked a pancake the size of a pond, a pot of porridge you could bathe in, a barrel of honey and a hill of berries. The cart carries one basket. The stair up his chest is a hundred steps. Your child — as Rowan — is about to learn that nothing in this yard goes up the hill in one go, and that the job isn't twelve hundred steps; it's one trip, twelve times.

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 job into pieces you can actually carry — a wedge instead of a pancake, a bucket instead of a pot, one step with a stone behind it — and then counting them. The executive-function habit behind every project your child will ever run.

✦ SECONDARY SKILL

Weigh the trade-offs

Seeing what each piece costs: big buckets go cold, small ones take forever; a chain is faster and riskier; honey IN is now, honey ON is noon. There's no free option in this yard — only priced ones.

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: big things go up hills in pieces — find the piece you can carry.

Chef Parsnip says it three times, once at every dead end, and she's right every time: *big things go up hills in pieces, dear*. A pancake wheel rolls back down and flattens the cart. A bathtub of porridge tips at the ledge. A berry mountain becomes an avalanche. Every one of Crumb's "ONE TRIP!" plans is the whole job at once, and every one of Rowan's winning paths finds the piece: twelve wedges, a middling bucket, twenty baskets, one step with a stone behind it — or one helper carrying one thing. At ages 3–8 this looks wonderfully simple: naming the first small piece out loud, doing it, and noticing the second one is exactly like the first.

PARENT MOVE №1

The Backwards Map

When the big job appears, **start from the ending and walk backwards**. Ask: "**We need the giant fed by sunrise. 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 — pancake into wedges, wedge into cart, cart up the stair, stair into a ledge and a shortcut. Working backwards turns one impossible breakfast into a little checkable plan, and fingers make the plan visible. (Use it at least once a night.)

✓ TRY SAYING

"Whoa, that's a LOT of pancake. What's a piece we could actually carry?"

"How many trips is that? Count them with me."

"What does the big bucket cost us? And the small one?"

✗ INSTEAD OF

"Just roll the whole thing up!" (Crumb's plan — and the cart is flat)

"It's too many, forget it." (twelve hundred steps is one trip, twelve times)

"Just grab the biggest!" (cold porridge, grumbling giant)

SECONDARY

Weigh the trade-offs

The habit: there's no free piece — name the price, then pick.

Once the breakfast is in pieces, Rowan still has to choose which pieces, and every choice has a bill attached. The big bucket arrives cold; the small one is four mouthfuls. The chain is quicker but Crumb is a link. Rolling the barrel is what the giant asked for and takes till noon; honey in the bucket is now, and not quite what he asked for. Watch how Rowan handles that last one: by telling the giant why — and a grumbling mountain, told the trade, prefers *now* to *perfect*. That's the second skill: paying the right price on purpose, and saying so.

PARENT MOVE №2

The 15-Second Trade-Off Scan

At a choice page, before anyone picks, **hold up two hands**. Say: "**This hand is what we GET. This hand is what we GIVE UP. Fill them for me — big bucket, what goes in each? Small bucket?**" Fifteen seconds, both hands, every option. Then ask which trade they'd make — and notice, together, when a plan like 'ONE TRIP!' has nothing in the 'give up' hand at all.

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 Crumb do?"** (Crumb has one idea and it's always the biggest one: **"ONE TRIP!"** — which is exactly why he's useful. Even a 3-year-old can look at a pancake the size of a pond and a cart the size of a basket and see that the sum doesn't come out. And watch him learn: the night he starts saying **"four down"** instead is a big one.)

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.

Chef Parsnip

The cook at Hillfoot Kitchen — a large old pig in a very tall hat who has fed the giant forty times and is surprised by nothing. Read her warm, brisk and unbothered, with a wooden spoon in every sentence, and give her **"big things go up hills in pieces, dear"** the same patient tune every time.

Crumb

The piglet apprentice in the hat that's too big for him. Read him in a high, breathless squeal, every plan a shout — and let him get quieter, and prouder, as the night teaches him to count.

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.

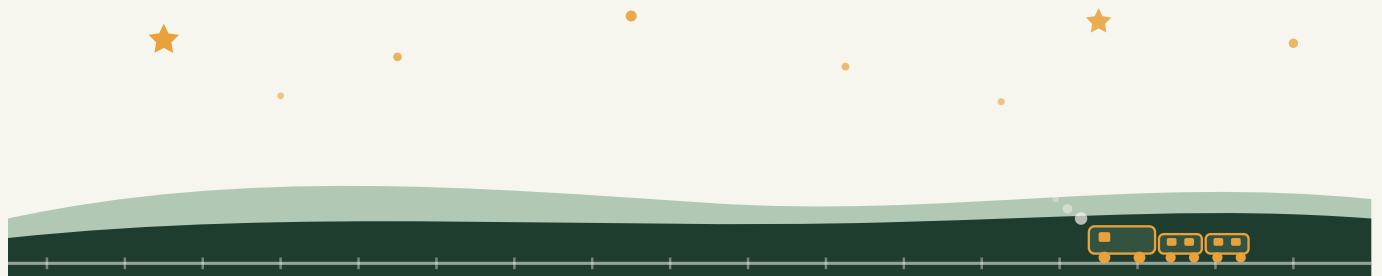
AFTER THE LAST PAGE — THREE LIGHTS-OUT QUESTIONS

1. "Which choice was the hardest tonight — and what made it hard?"
2. "What was the biggest job tonight — and what was the first small piece we carried?"
3. "Which choice cost us something — and what did we get for it? Was it worth 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

THE GROWN-UP'S
TICKET

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.

