

THE NIGHT TRAIN TO ANYWHERE · BOOK 30

Sunrise Junction

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. Tonight, for the last time, they belong to everyone else too.

The Conductor — Keeper of the timetable and the wisdom. Read him slow as syrup, in your deepest, sleepest rumble — and a little softer than usual, because this is the last stop.

Tick the Ticket Mouse — Punches the tickets, panics the loudest — and tonight he has a PLAN. Read him fast-fast-FAST, squeaky and tremendously official: "We'll MISS IT!"

Stationmaster Antler — The enormous old moose who keeps Sunrise Junction, with a brass lantern hanging from one antler and one rule: nobody watches the Lighting alone. Read him deep, slow and unhurried, like a bell a long way off.

The Friends of the Line — Snip the magpie, Pinch the hermit crab, Glide the flying squirrel, Dot the pigeon, Skitter the kangaroo rat, Preen the peacock — and one small star with hiccups. Read each one the way you did on their own night; they'll remember.





The Night Train came on the last night—or so it felt, because the sky behind it wasn't black but the deep, deep blue that comes just before grey. And the train wasn't stopping at a place. It was stopping at EVERYWHERE: lines came in from all sides, dozens of them, and ran together under one enormous glass roof.

Rowan opened the window. Under the roof was a station bigger than any station, full of lanterns and steam and—Rowan sat right up—familiar faces! A magpie. A hermit crab in a striped shell. A flying squirrel hanging off a lamp.

“Alllll aboard,” said the Conductor, softly. “Sunrise Junction. Last stop before morning. Every line on the map ends here, and everyone we ever met is on one of them. They've come for the Lighting. There's a little while yet, and most of them could use a hand.”

EVERYONE? Rowan grabbed the orange coat. Tick grabbed Rowan's pocket. “I would like it noted,” squeaked Tick, “that I have been ready for this for THIRTY NIGHTS!”

The train is waiting. Turn the page.



Sunrise Junction was a hall of iron arches and glass, and at its far end was a window: round, enormous, facing east, dark for now. Under it lay the long east platform, where everyone would stand when the first light came.

Stationmaster Antler met them at the steps—an enormous old moose with a brass lantern swinging from one antler. “The Lighting of the Lines,” he said. “One rule: nobody watches it alone. When the light comes through that window, every lantern goes up together, and it runs down every line out of here at once. It’s a thing to see.”

“THEN WE HAVE TO GO!” said Tick, vibrating like a kettle. “East platform! NOW! Front row! We’ll MISS IT!”

Rowan looked at the platform, and at the hall between—full of friends, every one of them stuck on something small. “Hmmm,” said Rowan.

★ The Lighting is coming! Where does Rowan start?

- **Hurry to the east platform with Tick:** *If you choose to hurry, you’ll be first — and you’ll find out what first is worth.* → **turn to page 5**
- **Go through the hall, friend by friend:** *If you choose the hall, every old friend needs one small thing — and every one is a skill Rowan knows!* → **turn to page 19**
- **Ask Stationmaster Antler what the Lighting needs:** *If you choose the Stationmaster, there’s a job nobody will see — and a front spot on offer.* → **turn to page 33**



Tick ran. Rowan ran after. Past a lamp where Snip the magpie sat on a heap of brass pieces, saying “It was a LANTERN. It came apart on the train!” Past Pinch the hermit crab, wedged between a bucket and a lantern and a tiny shell, going nowhere. Past Glide, upside down on a signpost, asking a pigeon which way was east.

“DON'T STOP!” said Tick. “They'll be fine. They're always fine! If we stop for everybody we'll be LAST!”

Rowan slowed. Snip's lantern was in a LOT of pieces. And there was something about the word ‘last’ that didn't fit a thing everyone was meant to watch together.

★ **Snip's lantern is in pieces and Tick is halfway to the platform! Stop, or run?**

- **Run — get to the east platform first:** *If you choose to run, you'll be there before anyone — and that turns out to be the problem! → turn to page 7*
- **Stop and help Snip with the lantern:** *If you choose to stop, Tick will squeak — and the lantern needs putting together from the end. → turn to page 9*



— The Empty Platform —

They ran the whole hall and out onto the east platform, and Tick was right: they were FIRST! The platform was long and cold and empty, the round window dark, and they stood at the edge and waited. And waited.

Behind them the hall clinked and scraped and asked. Nobody came out. The window went grey, then pink, then the sun came through—and it was just light, on an empty platform, on a mouse and a child.

“Where's the LIGHTING?” said Tick. Rowan looked back through the door. In the hall, lanterns were going up all at once, a long row of faces, and the light ran down the lines—and they were on the wrong side!

Rowan sat down on the cold stone. “What did I try? Getting here first. What happened? I got here first. What would I do differently?” “Not be FIRST?” said Tick, small. “Not be alone,” said Rowan.

“Let me go back,” said Rowan, “and STOP for Snip!”

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



Rowan knelt by the heap. Brass rings, a glass chimney, a little door, a handle, a hook, a hundred tiny screws! Snip had been trying pieces at random, the way you'd do a jigsaw by picking up whatever was shiniest.

“Start from the finished one,” said Rowan. “What does a lantern look like when it's done?” “A... glass bit, with a light in it, and a handle on top.” “So what's the last thing on? The handle. And before that? The lid. And before that—” “The GLASS!” They worked backwards, and then forwards—click, click, click—and it was a lantern!

“You did the puzzle bridge,” said Snip, holding it up. “I did the puzzle bridge,” said Rowan. Tick, at the archway, said something about TIME.

Turn the page.



Pinch was wedged in a doorway between a bucket of sand, a lantern, and one tiny worn shell, trying to hold all three in one claw and going nowhere at all. Wriggle. Wriggle. Stuck!

“The Lighting needs a LANTERN,” said Pinch. “And I brought the KINGDOM. And the shell doesn't leave me. So.” Rowan looked at the bucket of sand. It was a bucket of sand.

“Two hands,” Rowan said, and held them up. “What do you get from the bucket? A bucket. What do you give up carrying it? Both the other things!” Pinch looked at the sand a long time. “It's just SAND,” Pinch said at last. “It comes back.” And put the bucket down, and went, with the lantern in the claw and the shell in the shell.

Turn the page.



END OF YOUR FREE SAMPLE

What does every friend need?

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

Chose "Go through the hall, friend by friend" or "Ask Stationmaster Antler what the Lighting needs" 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.

Start the series — \$49/month

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Next in this file: The Grown-Up's Ticket, your parent guide to Book 30.

Books that branch. Minds that grow.

The last stop before morning — and every friend from the whole line is here, and every one of them needs one small thing! ★

Tonight, every choice belongs to YOU. Race to the platform with Tick and be first? Fix everyone's problem for them, fast? Take the front spot you earned? Sunrise Junction has one rule — nobody watches the Lighting alone — and every wrong turn is a lesson Rowan says out loud before going back.

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 30 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 last book builds Learn From Every Outcome — say what went wrong, then go back — and brings all seven skills together.

Storybranch

Books that branch. Minds that grow.

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★ ADMIT ONE GROWN-UP ★

The Grown-Up's Ticket

Your guide to reading *Sunrise Junction* together

Tonight the Night Train makes its last stop before morning: Sunrise Junction, where every line on the map ends under one glass roof, and every friend from the whole series has come for the Lighting of the Lines. Stationmaster Antler, the old moose with a lantern on his antler, has one rule — nobody watches it alone. Tick has a plan, and the plan is to RUN. And the hall between the train and the platform is full of old friends, every one of them stuck on something small. Your child — as Rowan — is about to use every skill from every night, for other people, in one hour — and to learn the one that runs underneath them all: when a choice goes wrong, say what happened, and go back.

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, and a tracker for the nights ahead.

★ PRIMARY SKILL

Learn from every outcome

Treating every result — especially the misses — as information. Three dead ends, and after each one Rowan says out loud what was tried, what happened, and what to do differently, before turning back.

✦ SECONDARY SKILL

All seven skills

The capstone: every old friend in the hall is stuck on one small thing, and each snag is one of the seven skills in miniature — Rowan has done every one before, on some other night.

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

Learn from every outcome

The habit: a miss is a lesson only once you've said what it was.

This is the skill the whole series has been running on. Every book had three dead ends and a way back; this one makes the way back the point. On the empty platform, Rowan sits down on the cold stone and does the sums: *what did I try? Getting here first. What happened? I got here first. What would I do differently?* — and 'not be first' turns into 'not be alone.' The same three questions turn 'doing it for them' into 'theirs,' and 'the best view' into 'stand in the row.' The Conductor says it plainly on page 44: the trick was never not being wrong. It was going back. At ages 3–8 this looks wonderfully simple: *"that one missed — what did it teach us?"*

PARENT MOVE № 1

The Dead-End Post-Mortem

When a page snaps shut, **resist flipping back right away**. First: *"Ooh — that one missed! Before we go back ... what did Rowan try? What happened? What would we do differently?"* Ten seconds of detective work, then flip back with full ceremony. Count out loud — **"lesson number two, collected!"** — so misses become clues, not embarrassment. Tonight, notice that Rowan does it on the page, word for word. (Use it at every dead end.)

✓ TRY SAYING	✗ INSTEAD OF
"If we're first on the platform — who's there to watch it with?"	"Front row! NOW! We'll MISS IT!" (an empty platform, and the light on the wrong side)
"If we fix it for them — whose answer is it?"	"I'll fix EVERYONE. Fast. Done, done, done." (a lantern upside down, a bucket instead of a shell)
"Best view of the window — or of the Lighting?"	"Take the front spot — you EARNED it." (the sun in your eyes, and not one face)

SECONDARY

All seven skills

The habit: which friend is this — and what did Rowan learn with them last time?

Every snag in the hall is a skill from an earlier night, in miniature. Snip's lantern goes together backwards from the finished one (Break Big Problems Down). Pinch's bucket of sand is two hands: what do we get, what do we give up (Weigh the Trade-Offs). Glide has to look at the arrows before she asks (Think First, Then Ask). Dot's 'everyone knows' gets 'who's everyone?' (Spot What's Not True). Skitter's 'when?' becomes 'how many lamps?' (Ask Sharp Questions). Preen's front spot goes to the hedgehog (Choose What's Right). And all three dead ends are the seventh. Rowan doesn't learn anything new tonight — Rowan uses everything.

PARENT MOVE № 2

The Roll Call

When an old friend turns up, **stop and name them**. Ask: *"Who's that? ... Which night was that? ... What did Rowan figure out with them? ... Is that what they need again?"* Let your child be the one who remembers — then read on and see whether Rowan reaches for the same skill. If you've read the earlier books, this page is theirs.

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?**" (For once, the foil is Tick. His answer at every fork is the fast one — "**RUN!**" "**I'll fix everyone!**" "**Take the front!**" — and it's loud and certain and loyal, which is exactly why it's useful: even a 3-year-old can hear a plan with no looking in it. And watch him learn: he holds the spot alone for a very long time in one ending, and in another counts three lanterns and calls it loads, and is right.)

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.

Stationmaster Antler

The enormous old moose who keeps Sunrise Junction, with a brass lantern hanging from one antler and one rule: nobody watches the Lighting alone. Read him deep, slow and unhurried, like a bell a long way off — he says what the Lighting needs, and lets Rowan decide what that means.

The Friends of the Line

Snip the magpie, Pinch the hermit crab, Glide the flying squirrel, Dot the pigeon, Skitter the kangaroo rat, Preen the peacock — and Pip, the small star with hiccups from the very first night. Read each one the way you did on their own night. If you don't remember, that's fine: read them small, and sure, and stuck.

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. "Rowan reached three dead ends tonight and went back from every one. What did Rowan say each time before going back? What's a wrong turn we took today — and what did it teach us?"
3. "Which old friend did you remember best? What did Rowan learn with them on their own night — and was it what they needed again tonight?"

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.

