

Bedtime stories about Thanksgiving.

3 stories to read aloud at bedtime, each with its own picture and a calm, sleepy ending. Written for ages 3 to 8.



A Place for Cousin Ren

about 3 min

The Drawings on the Doorsteps

about 3 min

After the Big Dinner

about 3 min

Reading times assume a slow bedtime pace of about 110 words a minute. Every story is also free to read online at pimlo.app/bedtime-stories/thanksgiving.



A Place for Cousin Ren

On Thanksgiving morning, Abe counted the chairs. There was Mom's chair, Grandpa's chair, his own chair and two chairs for the neighbors who were coming over. That made five. But there should be six, because his cousin Ren was coming too. Her plane was landing late, after dinner had started.

"Ren will be hungry when she gets here," said Abe. Grandpa found the little stool from the kitchen, and Abe pulled it up to the corner of the table. He folded a napkin into a triangle. He chose a plate with a blue rim, because blue was Ren's favorite color, and he made a name card from the back of a cereal box: REN, in big green letters, with a drawing of an airplane.

Dinner started. Everyone passed the dishes around, the potatoes and the green beans and Grandpa's famous cornbread, and talked about their year. Every so often, Abe looked at the little empty place in the corner. Mom saved a spoonful of everything on the blue plate and covered it with a cloth to keep it warm.

It was dark by the time the doorbell rang. Ren came in with her backpack and her coat still on, yawning, and her dad behind her carrying the bags. "There's a place for you," said Abe, and he showed her the stool, the triangle napkin and the name card with the airplane. Ren smiled a sleepy smile. "You drew my plane," she said.

Ren ate her dinner on the stool while everyone else had pie, and Abe sat next to her and told her everything she had missed. Then it was late, later than Abe had ever stayed up. Ren slept on the camp bed in Abe's room, with the name card propped on the windowsill. "Glad you came," whispered Abe. But Ren was already asleep, and soon Abe was too.

The end. Goodnight.



The Drawings on the Doorsteps

On Larkin Street, the week before Thanksgiving, Grace and her dad had an idea. "Let's draw something we liked about the street this year," said Dad, "and leave the drawings on people's doorsteps." Not big things. Ordinary things. The kind you notice only if you're paying attention.

Grace drew the bench outside number four, where old Mr. Halloran sat every morning with his newspaper and said good morning to everyone who walked by. Dad drew the streetlight on the corner, the one that came on just as they walked home from school. They drew the cat who slept on the wall, and the blue door that had been painted in the spring.

They tucked the drawings into envelopes and left them on doorsteps, quietly, at dusk. Then they went home and had soup and forgot all about it. But the next evening, there was an envelope on their own doorstep. Inside was a drawing of their window, with Grace's paper leaves hanging in it. Underneath, someone had written: We liked seeing these every evening.

The day after, there was another one: a drawing of Grace and her dad walking past with their umbrella, both of them laughing. And another, in wobbly crayon, of the cat on the wall, from the twins at number seven. By Thanksgiving, every house on Larkin Street had a drawing in its window, and people walking past stopped to look.

On Thanksgiving night, Grace looked out at the street from her bedroom. The streetlight was on. The bench was empty, with a little frost on it. In the windows all along the street, the drawings glowed in the lamplight, each one of an ordinary thing that someone had liked. Grace pulled up her blanket, looked at the drawing of her own window, which now hung in her window, and fell asleep.

The end. Goodnight.



After the Big Dinner

Thanksgiving had been big and loud and full. Luca's house had held his two moms, his grandparents, three cousins, a baby, two neighbors and a very excited dog. There had been turkey and squash and two kinds of pie, and a game of charades that made Grandpa laugh so hard he had to sit down.

Now the front door had closed behind the last guest, and the house went quiet all at once, like a balloon slowly letting out its air. "Right," said Mama, rolling up her sleeves. "Tidy time." Luca's job was the napkins. He collected them from every chair and from under the table, and one from the dog's bed, and put them all in the basket.

Mom washed the big dishes and Luca dried the small ones. Mama put the leftover pie in the fridge, on the top shelf, where it would be waiting for tomorrow.

Together they folded the long tablecloth, walking toward each other until the corners met, and put the extra chairs back in the hall closet: one, two, three, four.

Then the house was itself again. The table was its everyday size. The dog was asleep in his own bed. The kitchen smelled of soap and a little bit of cinnamon. "Our ordinary house," said Luca, and somehow it felt cozier than ever.

Upstairs, bedtime went the way bedtime always went. Teeth, pajamas, one story and two kisses, one from each mom. The hall light stayed on a little crack, the way Luca liked it. He could hear the dishwasher humming downstairs and the wind

outside. He thought about the cousins, the charades, Grandpa laughing and the pie waiting on the top shelf. Then he closed his eyes and let the big day settle into a quiet night.

The end. Goodnight.