A FREE PRINTABLE FROM PIMLO · DECEMBER 1 TO 24

Our Bedtime Story Advent Calendar

One bedtime story for each night, all in this printable after the calendar. After the story, tick or color that night's circle.

1 ○ **The First Snowflake** winter	**2** ○ **Hazel's Bed of Leaves** forest animals	**3** ○ **Big Bear's Winter Goodnight** winter	**4** ○ **The Cat Who Counted Stars** cats
5 ○ **Barley Chooses a Book** bears	**6** ○ **The Snowman Who Wasn't Cold** winter	**7** ○ **The Elves and the Shoemaker** fairy tales	**8** ○ **The Chick Who Knew the Call** penguins
9 ○ **The Tailor Who Mended the Night** magic	**10** ○ **The Paper Bakery** baking	**11** ○ **The Smoothest Stone** penguins	**12** ○ **Grandmother Clementine's Lullaby Hat** magic
13 ○ **Waiting for the Bread to Cool** patience	**14** ○ **Theo and Nana's Snowy Night Walk** winter	**15** ○ **Little Flip and the Sky Lights** penguins	**16** ○ **Sharing the Moon with Nonno** grandparents
17 ○ **The Dry Seat** kindness	**18** ○ **The Stitch-by-Stitch Picture** patience	**19** ○ **Ava and the Sleeper Train** trains	**20** ○ **The Piano Tuner's Last Note** music
21 ○ **Tinsel, the Littlest Reindeer** Christmas	**22** ○ **Goodnight, Christmas Tree** Christmas	**23** ○ **Rowan the Robin's Christmas Eve** Christmas	**24** ○ **The Quietest Christmas Eve** Christmas

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DECEMBER 1 · WINTER · ABOUT 2 MIN TO READ ALOUD

The First Snowflake

High up in a gray cloud, a tiny snowflake was getting ready to fall. It was the very first snowflake of winter, and it wondered where it would land.

It let go of the cloud and drifted down, slowly, slowly, turning and twirling in the cold air. It floated past a tall pine tree, past a sleeping crow, and past the chimney of a little house where smoke curled up into the sky.

At the window of the little house, a girl named Ivy was looking out in her pajamas. "Look," she whispered. "The first snowflake!" The snowflake landed on the glass, right in front of her nose.

Then another snowflake came, and another, and another, until the air was full of them, falling softly over the garden, the road and the rooftops. Soon everything was covered in a quiet white blanket.

Ivy's mom tucked her into bed. "In the morning," she said, "the whole world will be white." Ivy closed her eyes, thinking of the first little snowflake on her window, and outside the snow kept falling, soft and slow, all through the night.

The end. Goodnight.

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Hazel's Bed of Leaves

When the autumn evenings grew cool, a little hedgehog named Hazel knew it was time to make her winter bed. She trundled through the wood with her nose to the ground, looking for the very best leaves.

She found red leaves from the maple, yellow leaves from the birch and crunchy brown leaves from the old oak. One by one, she carried them back to her hollow beneath the hawthorn hedge.

"That's a lot of leaves for one small hedgehog," said a squirrel, peering down. "Would you like some help?" Soon the squirrel was dropping leaves from above, and a mouse was dragging soft moss for a pillow.

By the time the stars came out, Hazel's bed was round and deep and soft. She thanked her friends, who scampered off to their own beds. Then she stepped inside and turned around three times.

Hazel curled into a tight, prickly ball, warm in her nest of red and yellow and brown. Outside, the leaves rustled softly as the wind settled down for the night. Inside, a little hedgehog was already dreaming.

The end. Goodnight.

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Big Bear's Winter Goodnight

The leaves had all fallen, the air was crisp and cold, and Big Bear felt sleepier than he had all year. "It's time for my long winter sleep," he yawned. "But first, I must say goodnight to my friends."

He found Squirrel burying her very last acorn. "Goodnight, Squirrel. See you in spring." "Goodnight, Big Bear," said Squirrel. "I'll keep an acorn for you."

He found the geese by the lake, ready to fly somewhere warm. "Goodnight, geese. Have a good journey." The geese honked goodbye and flew off in a long, neat line across the sky.

He found Hare in her new white winter coat. "Goodnight, Hare." "Goodnight, Big Bear," said Hare. "I'll tell you all about the snow when you wake up."

Then Big Bear lumbered home to his den, where he had made a deep bed of leaves and moss. He turned around three times and lay down. Outside, the first snow began to fall, covering the den like a soft white blanket, and Big Bear fell into a long, cozy sleep, dreaming of spring.

The end. Goodnight.

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The Cat Who Counted Stars

Biscuit was a very old cat with orange fur and long white whiskers. Every night, when the family went to bed, she jumped onto the windowsill to do her most important job. Biscuit counted the stars.

She started with the brightest one, high above the chimney. "One," she purred. Then the little twinkly one near the tree. "Two." Then a pair that sat side by side like sleepy eyes. "Three, four."

The more she counted, the slower she went. Five was over the garden gate. Six was behind a cloud, so she waited for it. Seven, eight and nine were very faint, and Biscuit had to blink to see them.

Her eyes were getting heavy now. The window was cool, but her cushion was warm, and the house was full of quiet breathing. She found the tenth star, tiny and far away. "Ten," she whispered.

And that was as far as Biscuit ever got. Her chin sank onto her paws, her tail wrapped around her nose, and the stars kept shining over the sleeping house, waiting for her to count them again tomorrow.

The end. Goodnight.

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DECEMBER 5 · BEARS · ABOUT 2 MIN TO READ ALOUD

Barley Chooses a Book

It had been raining all day in the wood, so Barley the bear put on his yellow raincoat and went to the library. The woodland library was inside a hollow tree, and it was run by a very old badger with half-moon glasses.

"I need a book for bedtime," Barley told the badger. "The best one." The badger smiled. "Then take your time," she said.

Barley looked at a book about rockets. Too exciting. He looked at a book about a dragon. Too roary. He looked at a book about counting beetles. Too many beetles. He looked at a very big book about the history of honey. Too long, even for a bear.

At last, on the bottom shelf, he found a small blue book with a picture of a bear on the cover, a bear in a raincoat, just like him. It was about a little bear who went for a walk in the rain and came home to a warm bed. "This one," said Barley.

He walked home through the rain with the book tucked inside his raincoat to keep it dry. At bedtime, his dad read it to him, and Barley listened to the rain on the roof of their den, just like the rain in the story. By the last page, Barley was fast asleep.

The end. Goodnight.

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DECEMBER 6 · WINTER · ABOUT 2 MIN TO READ ALOUD

The Snowman Who Wasn't Cold

Felix built a snowman in the yard. It had a carrot nose, pebble eyes and two stick arms. When the sky grew dark, Felix's mom called him in for bed.

But at the door, Felix stopped. "Won't the snowman be cold out there all night?" he asked. "Should we bring him a blanket?"

Mom smiled. "Snowmen love the cold," she said. "Cold is what keeps them happy. A warm blanket would make him melt." Felix thought about that. "Then I'll give him something else," he said.

He ran out and wrapped his old striped scarf around the snowman's neck. "That's not to keep you warm," he told the snowman. "It's so you know someone is thinking of you." The snowman seemed to smile.

Then Felix went inside, put on his warm pajamas and climbed into his warm bed. Outside, the snowman stood in the cold, starry night, as happy as can be in his striped scarf. Felix fell asleep warm, and the snowman stayed perfectly, wonderfully cold, until morning.

The end. Goodnight.

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DECEMBER 7 · FAIRY TALES · ABOUT 3 MIN TO READ ALOUD

The Elves and the Shoemaker

Once upon a time, there was a shoemaker who worked very hard, but he and his wife were poor. One evening, he had only enough leather left for one last pair of shoes. He cut out the pieces, laid them on his workbench, and went up to bed, too tired to sew them that night.

In the morning, he came downstairs and could hardly believe his eyes. There on the bench stood a pair of finished shoes, so neat and fine that every stitch was perfect. A lady came into the shop that very morning and bought them for a good price. With the money, the shoemaker bought leather for two more pairs. He cut them out and left them on the bench, and in the morning, they were finished too.

Night after night, it happened again. "Who could be helping us?" said his wife. So one evening, they hid behind the curtain and watched. At midnight, two tiny elves climbed in through the window. They had no shoes and no coats, only little scraps of cloth. They sat at the bench and sewed and hammered, quick and quiet, until all the shoes were done. Then they slipped away into the night.

"They've helped us so much," said the shoemaker's wife, "and they have nothing warm to wear." So she sewed two tiny shirts, two tiny coats and two pairs of tiny trousers, and the shoemaker made two pairs of tiny shoes. That night, they laid the presents on the bench instead of leather.

At midnight, the elves came in and found the little clothes. They put them on, buttoned their coats, laced their shoes and danced around the workshop with joy. Then they waved and skipped out into the night, warm at last. The shoemaker and his wife smiled at each other and went up to bed, and the little shop was quiet and happy, all night long.

The end. Goodnight.

DECEMBER 8 · PENGUINS · ABOUT 3 MIN TO READ ALOUD

The Chick Who Knew the Call

On the ice, there were thousands of penguins. They all had black backs and white tummies. They all waddled and shuffled and huddled. To anyone else, they all looked exactly the same.

Wisp was a fluffy gray chick, waiting in the crèche, the big group where the chicks huddle together while their parents go fishing. As the sun went down, the grown-ups began to come back from the sea, hundreds of them at once, all calling.

Wisp listened. There was a deep call, like a trumpet. That wasn't hers. There was a high, wobbly call. That wasn't hers either. There was a call that went up and down, like a song. Not that one.

Then, from far across the ice, she heard it: two short notes and one long one, a little bit scratchy at the end. Wisp knew it straight away. It was her mother. Every penguin family has its own call, and Wisp had known this one since before she hatched.

Wisp called back with her own small squeak, and waddled as fast as her little legs would go. Her mother bent down and tucked her under her warm tummy, out of the wind. Wisp snuggled into the soft feathers and closed her eyes. Of all the thousands of penguins on the ice, this was the only one who sounded like home.

The end. Goodnight.

The Tailor Who Mended the Night

At the top of a winding staircase in a very old town lived a tailor named Mr. Thimble. By day he mended coats and sewed on buttons. But at night, he mended something much bigger.

Every evening Mr. Thimble climbed onto his roof with a silver needle and a spool of moonlight thread. He looked carefully across the night sky for any little tears in the dark.

Tonight he found one, just beside the moon, where a tiny bit of daylight was peeping through. "We can't have that," he said kindly. "Everyone needs a proper dark to sleep in."

In and out went his needle, in and out, slow and neat. Wherever a stitch went through, a tiny star appeared. When he had finished, the tear was gone, and in its place was a brand-new little cluster of stars.

Mr. Thimble smiled at his work, packed his needle away and climbed back down to his cozy room. He put on his nightcap, blew out his candle and fell asleep beneath the smooth, dark, starry sky.

The end. Goodnight.

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DECEMBER 10 · BAKING · ABOUT 3 MIN TO READ ALOUD

The Paper Bakery

It was too rainy to go out, so Bo and Uncle Joe made a bakery. They used a shoebox for the shop and a strip of cardboard for the counter. Uncle Joe cut a little door that opened and closed, and Bo painted a sign above it: BO'S BAKERY, OPEN.

Then they made the cakes. Bo rolled tiny loaves out of brown paper. Uncle Joe folded white paper into little cupcake cases, and Bo colored the tops pink and yellow, with dots for sprinkles. They made a paper pie with a crisscross top, a long paper baguette and a birthday cake with a straw for a candle.

The customers lined up across the rug: a teddy, a toy giraffe, a plastic dinosaur and a knitted mouse. "Next, please," said Bo. Teddy bought a loaf. The giraffe bought a cupcake and had to bend right down to reach the counter. The dinosaur wanted the whole birthday cake, because it was his birthday, he said, and Uncle Joe sang a very small birthday song.

The knitted mouse was last. She was very small and couldn't decide. Bo showed her everything, slowly: the loaves, the cupcakes, the pie. In the end she chose a single crumb, a tiny ball of paper, because that was just right for a mouse. Bo wrapped it in a scrap of tissue and gave it to her for free.

Outside, the rain had stopped and the sky was getting dark. "Closing time," said Uncle Joe. Bo turned the sign over. On the back he had written CLOSED, GONE TO BED. They put the paper cakes in the shoebox and lined the customers up on the windowsill, each with their shopping. Then Bo went to bed too, and the paper bakery stayed closed until morning, with one very small mouse holding one very small crumb.

The end. Goodnight.

DECEMBER 11 · PENGUINS · ABOUT 3 MIN TO READ ALOUD

The Smoothest Stone

Every evening, the penguins on Stony Beach gathered by the big rock, and everyone brought a stone. Penguins love stones. They build their nests with them, and the smoothest stones are the most special of all.

Wobble was a young penguin, and tonight he wanted to bring the smoothest stone on the whole beach. He waddled along the shore, looking. Here was a gray stone, but it was rough. Here was a white stone, but it had a sharp edge.

At last, right at the edge of the water, he found it: a small, round, black stone, polished so smooth by the waves that it shone like a drop of night. Wobble picked it up in his beak, very proudly, and waddled back toward the big rock.

On the way, he passed old Mrs. Feathers, who was building her nest all alone. Her nest was very small, with only a few stones. She was too slow, now, to waddle all the way down to the water.

Wobble stopped. He looked at his beautiful stone. Then he set it gently in Mrs. Feathers' nest. "For you," he said. Mrs. Feathers ruffled her feathers happily and settled down on it. Wobble went to the gathering with no stone at all, but he didn't mind. He huddled with the others by the big rock, and fell asleep feeling warm all the way through.

The end. Goodnight.

Grandmother Clementine's Lullaby Hat

Grandmother Clementine was a witch who lived in a cottage full of jars and herbs and sleeping cats. Her favorite thing in the whole world was a tall, soft, purple hat that could sing.

It didn't sing loudly. It only hummed, very softly, the gentlest lullabies anyone had ever heard. And whoever wore it fell into the most peaceful sleep.

One night there was a knock at the door. It was a little goblin from the woods. "I can't sleep," he said. "My head is too full of thoughts. They keep buzzing around like bees."

"I know just the thing," said Grandmother Clementine. She placed the purple hat on the goblin's head. It was far too big and came right down over his ears. Then it began to hum, a slow, low song like a stream in summer.

One by one, the buzzing thoughts settled down, like bees going home to their hive. The goblin's eyes closed. Grandmother Clementine tucked him up by the fire with the sleeping cats, and the hat hummed softly all night long.

The end. Goodnight.

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DECEMBER 13 · PATIENCE · ABOUT 2 MIN TO READ ALOUD

Waiting for the Bread to Cool

Wilf and his grandpa had baked a loaf of bread. They had mixed the flour, kneaded the dough and waited for it to rise. Now it was out of the oven, golden and crusty, and the whole kitchen smelled wonderful.

"Can we eat it now?" asked Wilf. "Not yet," said Grandpa. "It needs to cool down, or it'll be too hot and squishy inside. About half an hour." Half an hour! Wilf stared at the bread. It just sat there, steaming.

"If you stare at it," said Grandpa, "it'll take even longer. That's the rule." Wilf laughed. "That's not a real rule." "It feels like one," said Grandpa. "Come on. Let's do something else while we wait."

So they did a jigsaw puzzle of a lighthouse at the kitchen table. Wilf found all the edge pieces, and Grandpa found the tricky sky pieces. They got so busy that Wilf forgot about the bread altogether, until Grandpa said, "I think it's ready."

Grandpa cut two warm slices and spread them with butter, which melted into little golden puddles. It was the best bread Wilf had ever tasted. That night, in bed, he said, "The waiting went faster when we did the puzzle." "It usually does," said Grandpa. And Wilf fell asleep, full of bread.

The end. Goodnight.

DECEMBER 14 · WINTER · ABOUT 5 MIN TO READ ALOUD

Theo and Nana's Snowy Night Walk

It had snowed all afternoon, and after supper the snow finally stopped. "Put on your boots," said Nana. "Let's go for a snowy night walk before bed." Theo pulled on his coat, his hat, his mittens and his big red boots, and they stepped outside together.

Everything was white and quiet. The snow sparkled under the streetlamp, and when Theo walked, it went crunch, crunch, crunch under his boots. He turned around and looked at the path behind them. There were two lines of footprints: big ones for Nana and little ones for him.

At the garden gate they found some other footprints, small and close together. "A rabbit," said Nana. "She came by to look for something to eat." They followed the rabbit's footprints a little way, until they disappeared under the hedge. "She's gone home to bed," said Nana.

They walked down the lane to the field. The field was one big white blanket, smooth and perfect, with not a single footprint on it. The trees along the edge wore snow on every branch, like white sleeves. Somewhere in one of them, an owl called softly: hoo, hoo.

"Is the owl going to bed too?" asked Theo. "No," said Nana. "The owl is just waking up. She'll keep watch over the field while everyone else is asleep." Theo liked that. He waved at the trees, just in case the owl was watching.

They came to the pond. It was frozen hard and covered in snow, and the reeds around it stood stiff and still. "The fish are asleep under the ice," said Nana. "They go slow and quiet all winter, and wait for spring." Theo whispered, "Goodnight, fish," so he wouldn't wake them.

Then Nana pointed up. The clouds had drifted away, and the sky was full of stars, more than Theo had ever seen. Their breath made little white clouds in the cold air. They stood still for a long time, just looking. It was so quiet that Theo could hear the snow settling on the branches.

"My nose is cold," said Theo at last. "Then it's time to go home," said Nana. They followed their own footprints back up the lane, big and little, all the way to the front door.

Inside, the house was warm and smelled of cocoa. Theo pulled off his boots and his hat and his mittens, and drank his cocoa in his pajamas by the fire. His cheeks glowed pink. Then Nana tucked him into bed, under his thickest quilt.

"Goodnight, rabbit," whispered Theo. "Goodnight, owl. Goodnight, fish." Outside the window, the stars shone over the quiet white field, and a few new snowflakes began to fall, gently filling in the footprints. And Theo fell asleep, warm and cozy, dreaming of snow.

The end. Goodnight.

Little Flip and the Sky Lights

Little Flip had heard about the sky lights. "Sometimes, on a clear night," his grandfather told him, "the sky turns green and pink, and the colors dance." Little Flip wanted to see them more than anything.

So one clear, cold evening, Grandpa Flip and Little Flip waddled to the top of a snowy hill, away from the noisy colony. They huddled together, Little Flip tucked against his grandfather's warm side, and they waited.

The sky turned from blue to dark blue to black. The stars came out, one by one, then all at once. The snow sparkled under them. It was very quiet, except for the soft sound of the sea far below.

Then, slowly, a pale green ribbon of light appeared across the sky. It rippled, like a curtain in the wind. Then came another ribbon, pink this time, and they swayed together, slow and silent, above the ice. "Oh," breathed Little Flip. "Oh, Grandpa."

They watched until the lights faded and Little Flip's eyes grew heavy. Grandpa Flip led him back down the hill and tucked him in among the family huddle, warm and close. Little Flip fell asleep with green and pink lights still dancing behind his eyes.

The end. Goodnight.

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DECEMBER 16 · GRANDPARENTS · ABOUT 3 MIN TO READ ALOUD

Sharing the Moon with Nonno

Noah's grandfather, Nonno, lived very far away, in a different country, across a whole sea. Noah could only visit him in the summer. But every evening, just before bed, they had a video call.

Tonight, Nonno's face appeared on the screen. He had a big gray mustache and a twinkle in his eye. "Buonasera, Noah!" he said. "Is your moon out tonight?" Noah went to the window and pulled back the curtain. There it was, round and silver over the rooftops.

Noah held the tablet up to the window. "Look, Nonno! It's full!" Nonno laughed and turned his own screen around. And there, over the hills and an old stone wall, was the moon. The very same moon. "It's my moon too," said Nonno.

"How can it be the same moon, if you're so far away?" asked Noah. "There's only one moon," said Nonno. "Everybody shares it. When you look at it tonight, I'm looking at it too. That way, we're never really far apart."

They looked at the moon together, Noah from his window and Nonno from his, for a long, quiet moment. Then Nonno said, "Buonanotte, Noah. Sleep well." Noah climbed into bed and left the curtain open a little, so he could see the moon. Far away, Nonno was looking at it too. And with the moon watching over both of them, Noah fell asleep.

The end. Goodnight.

The Dry Seat

It was raining hard, and the bus was full of damp people with dripping umbrellas. Hana and her mom had found the very best seat: the one by the heater, dry and warm. Hana snuggled into it and watched the rain on the window.

At the next stop, an old man climbed on. His coat was soaked, his hat was dripping, and he was carrying two heavy shopping bags. He looked along the bus. Every seat was taken, and the only empty ones were wet from people's umbrellas.

Hana looked at the old man. Then she looked at her warm, dry seat. She thought about it for a moment. Then she climbed onto her mom's lap. "You can sit here," she said. "It's dry."

The old man smiled a big, crinkly smile. "Thank you," he said, and he sat down with a happy sigh, and set his bags at his feet. One of them had oranges in it. At his stop, he gave Hana an orange. "For the kindest person on the bus," he said.

That night in bed, Hana could still smell the orange on her fingers. She thought about the old man, warm and dry on his way home. It made her feel warm inside too. She pulled her blanket up to her chin and listened to the rain, and soon she was asleep.

The end. Goodnight.

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The Stitch-by-Stitch Picture

On a rainy weekend, Mom brought out a big square of cloth stretched in a wooden hoop. On it, she had drawn a pencil outline of their house, with a tree and a sun. "We're going to stitch it together," she said. "Everyone takes turns."

Arjun went first, because he was the youngest. He chose yellow thread and made three big stitches for the sun. Then he wanted to do more. "It's Leela's turn now," said Mom. Arjun sighed. Waiting was hard.

So while Leela stitched the green tree, Arjun sorted the threads into colors: reds, blues, greens, yellows. When it was Dad's turn, Arjun chose the next color he wanted, purple, ready for his go.

Round and round they went: Arjun, Leela, Dad, Mom, and Arjun again. The sun got rays. The tree got apples. The house got a red door and a purple chimney, which Arjun said was the best kind of chimney.

By bedtime, the picture was finished, with everyone's stitches in it, big and small, neat and wobbly. Mom hung it on the wall above Arjun's bed. "We all made it," said Arjun sleepily, "even the waiting parts." And he fell asleep under the stitched-up sun.

The end. Goodnight.

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Ava and the Sleeper Train

Ava had never slept on a train before. But tonight she and her dad were taking the sleeper train all the way to Grandma's house by the sea.

Their cabin was tiny, with two bunk beds, a little window and a lamp shaped like a shell. Ava took the top bunk. She pressed her nose to the window as the city lights slid past and slowly disappeared.

Clickety-clack, clickety-clack went the wheels. Outside, the world turned dark and quiet: a field, a river, a station with nobody on the platform, a village fast asleep.

"How will we know when we're there?" asked Ava. "We won't," said Dad, "because we'll be asleep. The train knows the way. It will carry us there all night long."

Ava snuggled under her blanket. The bunk rocked gently, and the wheels kept up their steady song. Clickety-clack, clickety-clack. Somewhere far ahead, Grandma's house was waiting. And Ava, rocked by the train, fell fast asleep.

The end. Goodnight.

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DECEMBER 20 · MUSIC · ABOUT 3 MIN TO READ ALOUD

The Piano Tuner's Last Note

Once a year, Mr. Pell came to tune the piano in Winnie's living room. He had a black bag full of strange tools, a tuning fork that hummed when he tapped it, and very good ears. Winnie sat on the arm of the sofa and watched. It was nearly bedtime, but this was a special night.

Mr. Pell lifted the lid of the piano, and Winnie saw inside for the first time: rows and rows of strings, and little felt hammers waiting to tap them. He played one note, listened, and gently turned a pin with his tool. "Can you hear the wobble?" he asked. Winnie listened. There was a little wah-wah-wah in the note. He turned the pin once more, and the wobble went away.

He worked slowly along the whole piano, from the deep low notes that rumbled like thunder far away to the high ones that sounded like raindrops. One note, listen, turn. One note, listen, turn. Outside, the sky went dark and the streetlights came on. Winnie's mom brought Mr. Pell a cup of tea, and it went cold because he was too busy listening.

At last he closed the piano and played a few soft chords, warm and round, to check his work. The piano sounded the way the living room felt on a winter night, with the lamp on. "One more," said Mr. Pell. "Let's listen to the last note all the way to the end."

He pressed one key in the middle, just once, and kept his finger down. The note rang out across the room, past the bookshelf, past the window, past the sleepy cat on the rug. Then it grew softer, and softer, and softer still, until Winnie couldn't tell whether she was hearing it or only remembering it. "Gone," whispered Winnie. "Gone to bed," said Mr. Pell, and smiled. And Winnie went up to bed too, humming that one note very quietly to herself until she fell asleep.

The end. Goodnight.

Tinsel, the Littlest Reindeer

Tinsel was the littlest reindeer at the North Pole. On Christmas Eve, the big reindeer stood in a line, ready to pull the sleigh, and Tinsel stood at the very end, standing as tall as he could.

"You're too small for the sleigh this year," said the kind old stable keeper. "But I have an important job for you. Will you keep the stable lantern glowing, so everyone can find their way home?"

So Tinsel stood by the lantern while the sleigh rose into the snowy sky. He watched until it was only a tiny twinkle among the stars. Then he looked after the lantern, keeping it bright and warm.

The night was long and quiet. Snow fell softly on the stable roof. Tinsel's eyes grew heavy, but he kept watching, and the lantern kept glowing.

Just before morning, he heard sleigh bells. The big reindeer landed one by one and followed the lantern's light straight into the stable. "Thank you, Tinsel," they said. Tinsel curled up in the warm straw beside them, and he was asleep before the last bell stopped jingling.

The end. Goodnight.

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Goodnight, Christmas Tree

It was the week before Christmas, and the tree stood in the corner of the living room, twinkling with little lights. When it was time for bed, Elsie wanted to say goodnight to it.

"Goodnight, little glass bird," she whispered to the bird on the lowest branch. "Goodnight, wooden train. Goodnight, paper snowflake I made at school."

"Goodnight, silver bell," said Elsie, and she touched it so it rang very softly: ting. "Goodnight, pinecone. Goodnight, star at the very top." Her dad lifted her up so she could see the star up close.

Then Dad switched off the tree lights, and the room went soft and dark. But through the window, the stars outside were twinkling just like the tree had.

"The sky has Christmas lights too," said Elsie sleepily. Dad carried her up to bed and tucked her in, and Elsie fell asleep thinking of the glass bird, the silver bell and the star, all waiting quietly downstairs for morning.

The end. Goodnight.

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DECEMBER 23 · CHRISTMAS · ABOUT 5 MIN TO READ ALOUD

Rowan the Robin's Christmas Eve

Rowan was a little robin with a bright red chest who lived in a holly bush at the edge of the village. It was Christmas Eve, the snow was falling, and Rowan decided to fly around the village one last time before bed, to see that everyone was ready for Christmas.

First he flew to the bakery. Through the steamy window he saw the baker taking the very last tray of gingerbread stars out of the oven. She set them on the counter to cool, wiped her floury hands on her apron and yawned a great big yawn. "Goodnight, baker," sang Rowan, and the baker smiled at the little bird on her windowsill before she switched off the lights.

Next Rowan flew to the tall house with the blue door. Inside, a family was hanging the very last decoration on their tree: a little felt robin with a red chest, just like Rowan. The smallest child pointed at the window. "Look! A real one!" Rowan puffed up his feathers proudly, sang a short song and flew on.

He flew over the frozen pond, where the ducks were tucked up together on the bank with their heads under their wings. He flew past the clock tower, where the big clock said it was almost bedtime for everyone. He flew along the lane, where the snow had covered every footprint and made the whole village soft and white.

At the very end of the lane was a small cottage with one lit window. Inside, an old man sat alone in his armchair by the fire. There was no tree in his room, only a small sprig of holly on the mantelpiece. He looked a little lonely, Rowan thought.

So Rowan landed on the windowsill and sang his very best song, the one he saved for special days. The old man looked up. He came slowly to the window, and his face crinkled into a smile. "Well, hello," he said softly. "Happy Christmas, little robin." He opened the window just a crack and set a few crumbs from his supper on the sill.

Rowan ate the crumbs and sang one more song. The old man listened with his eyes closed, smiling. "My grandchildren are coming tomorrow," he told Rowan. "I'll tell them a robin came to sing for me on Christmas Eve." Then he yawned, closed the window and went to bed, still smiling.

Rowan flew home through the falling snow. The bakery was dark. The tall house with the blue door was dark. The ducks were asleep, and even the clock tower seemed to be resting. The whole village was quiet and ready for Christmas.

Rowan tucked himself deep inside his holly bush, where the snow couldn't reach. He fluffed up his feathers until he was round and warm like a little ball. "Goodnight, village," he whispered. "Happy Christmas." And as the snow fell softly all around, Rowan the robin closed his eyes and fell asleep.

The end. Goodnight.

The Quietest Christmas Eve

On Christmas Eve, Sam was much too excited to sleep. He lay in bed with his eyes wide open, wondering about the morning. Grandpa came and sat on the end of his bed.

"Let's listen," said Grandpa. "Christmas Eve is the quietest night of the year. See what you can hear." So Sam lay very still and listened.

He heard the clock ticking slowly downstairs. He heard the cat padding along the landing. He heard snow falling so softly against the window that he could hardly hear it at all.

"I can hear you breathing, Grandpa," whispered Sam. "Slow and sleepy." Grandpa smiled. "Can you breathe like that too?" Sam tried: in, slow, and out, slow. His blanket felt warm and heavy.

"What else can you hear?" asked Grandpa. But Sam didn't answer. He was fast asleep, and outside the snow kept falling quietly over the sleeping town, all the way to Christmas morning.

The end. Merry Christmas, and goodnight.

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