

TONIGHT'S STORY

For the nights when someone you love is far away



*Owen and the Train
That Carries Love*



A bedtime story for Owen, age 6

Owen was six years old, and his daddy was very far away.

Daddy had to fly somewhere for work. Owen knew this. Daddy had explained it carefully, with a map and everything. But knowing something and feeling something are not the same thing, and tonight, Owen felt the missing.

His sister Maya was already asleep in the next room. The house was very quiet.

Owen got into bed and looked at his bookshelf, where his dinosaur figures stood in a long, careful row. Then he looked at his model train, sitting on its tiny tracks.

“Daddy got me that train,” Owen said, to no one in particular.

He closed his eyes.

In his dream, Owen was standing on a small wooden platform at the edge of a forest. It was nighttime, and the stars looked like someone had spilled them out of a jar. A train was pulling up to the platform. It was a red

train, with a friendly chimney, and steam puffing out the top.

“All aboard!” called the conductor. The conductor was an enormous, friendly Tyrannosaurus rex wearing a tiny conductor’s hat. (In dreams, this is a perfectly reasonable thing.)

“Where does this train go?” Owen asked.

“This is the Love Express,” said the T. rex. “We carry love from people who miss someone, to the someone they miss. We have a delivery to make tonight, and we could use a hand.”

“To who?” Owen asked.

“Your daddy,” said the T. rex.

Owen climbed aboard.

The train chugged through the forest. The trees were tall and quiet. Out the window, Owen could see fireflies blinking, like little signals saying hello and hello back.



“Does Daddy know I miss him?” Owen asked.

“Oh, certainly,” said the T. rex. “We’ve been carrying his love to you all day. That’s how it works. The train goes both ways. You felt a little warm in your chest after lunch?”

“Yes,” said Owen, surprised.

“That was him,” said the T. rex. “He was thinking about how you laugh.”

Owen sat with that for a moment.

The train climbed up a great hill. At the top of the hill was a station, and at the station, a crowd of people were waiting with little glowing packages. Each package had a name on it.

“What are those?” asked Owen.

“Letters of love,” said the T. rex. “Some are from kids, like you, missing their grown-ups. Some are from grown-ups, missing their kids. Every one gets delivered.”



The T. rex handed Owen a glowing package with his daddy's name on it.

“You wrote this?” Owen asked.

“You did,” said the T. rex, “by missing him. Missing someone is just love, taking a train.”

Owen held the package carefully. It felt warm in his hands.

“Where do I put it?” he asked.

“Right here,” said the T. rex, opening a little hatch in the side of the train. Owen placed the package inside. The hatch closed, and the package zoomed off down the tracks toward the place where Daddy was.

Out the window, in the distance, Owen saw another package zooming back the other way. It had his name on it.

He smiled.

“Time to head home,” said the T. rex. “But the train runs every night. As long as you miss him, the train



keeps running. And when he's home, it'll still run — because love doesn't stop. It just gets to be in the same room.”

Back on the platform, Owen waved goodbye. The train chugged away into the starry forest.

When morning came, Owen woke up and looked at the model train on its tracks. He gave its little red engine a gentle tap.

“Hi, Daddy,” he whispered.

Somewhere, far away, Daddy was waking up too, and he felt a little warm in his chest.



A question for after the story



*Who else loves Owen, even when they're far away?
Who loves you, even when they're not in the room?*

(no right answer — just a soft thing to wonder about together)

