

THE MOONLIT PAGE

Room for the Lighthouse



Omar had left the red roof beside the puzzle.

Its space was easy to find. There were three white walls, a chimney and a roof-shaped absence.

Anyone passing through the common room could finish that little house without committing to the rest of the harbour.

He had put a card beside the board saying that anyone was welcome to join in. Then he went upstairs to answer his messages.

When he came down, the red roof was still there.

Dev was standing by the windowsill, turning a piece between his fingers.

"That one goes over here," Omar said, pointing to the house.

"This isn't the roof."

It wasn't. It had a black stripe on it.

"I like the lighthouse," Dev said. "Have you found any more of it?"

Omar had found several pieces of lighthouse. He had also found an excellent reason to leave them alone: each narrow black stripe looked much like the next narrow black stripe.

He showed Dev the small pile.

"Can I borrow that tray?" Dev asked.

Omar tipped its loose sky pieces into the box. Dev carried the empty tray to a table where the light fell from the side, and began laying out the striped pieces.

Omar worked on the little house. He put the red roof in. It fitted immediately, which was less entertaining than he had expected.

Across the room, Dev was making slow progress and appeared to be enjoying it.

After a while, he brought the tray back.

The lighthouse stood in a separate patch of rock and water. It was not joined to anything else, but its stripes ran in the right order, and a tiny painted figure waited by its door.

"I'd put this over there," Dev said, pointing.

Omar consulted the picture on the box.

Dev was right. The lighthouse belonged farther out than Omar had imagined. Between it and the house was a considerable stretch of unfinished water.

"We'll need the sea," Omar said.

"I've noticed that about harbours."

They cleared a space on the board and carefully slid the little section from the flat tray. Omar steadied one edge while Dev supported the other.

Two pieces separated; they fitted them back without ceremony.

Omar pulled the box of loose pieces towards them.

He had been saving the boats for himself. There was a green one he particularly wanted to find. Instead he began sorting the small grey waves that would connect the lighthouse to the rest of the picture.

Dev found a piece with both grey water and a trace of green.

“Boat?”

“Possibly.”

They turned it one way, then the other. It did not fit yet.

They left it between them, right side up, while the empty tray waited on the table for whatever part someone wanted to try next.

To remember

1. Omar leaves one easy red-roof piece beside an openly shared harbour puzzle to invite a small contribution.
2. Dev chooses the difficult lighthouse instead and borrows a flat tray to assemble it in better side light.
3. They locate and transfer that separate section onto the main board, refitting two pieces that separate during the move.
4. Omar changes from saving the boats for himself to finding connecting water with Dev; a possible green-boat piece and the empty tray remain ready for further work.