Anouk and the Missing Last Piece

Slow looking can solve a little mystery.





Anouk had nearly finished her garden puzzle. Flowers filled the corners. A red-breasted bird perched on a branch. Only one little space remained beneath its feet.



She reached into the box. Nothing. She shook it gently. Still nothing. "The last piece is missing!" she called. Dad came over and looked at the almost-finished picture.



Anouk searched under the table. She searched beneath a cushion. She even checked inside her slippers. The piece was not in any of those places. Her face grew hot.



"Someone must have moved it," she said. Dad sat beside her. "Maybe. Let's work out what happened first." Anouk took a breath. The room seemed very full of hiding places.



They began with the box. This morning, Anouk had poured the pieces onto the table. She had turned the ones with pictures facing down. Then she had built the edges.



"What happened after that?" Dad asked. Anouk remembered stopping for lunch. She had moved the box to make space for her plate. The lid had gone on the sofa.



They looked on the sofa. No piece. Under the sofa? Only a crayon and a little dust. Anouk brought the crayon back to its pot. The mystery remained.



Then she remembered tidying after lunch. She had stacked two books, folded the blanket, and put the puzzle lid beside the box. Dad pointed. "Let's look at each thing slowly."



The books were clear. The blanket was clear. Anouk lifted the teal lid. Something clicked against the cardboard. A small piece had slipped inside its folded edge.



"There you are!" She eased it out with gentle fingers. The piece showed a green leaf and a little yellow flower. It fitted perfectly into the waiting space.



Anouk smiled at the whole garden. Nobody had taken the piece. It had travelled with the lid while she tidied. "I nearly blamed someone," she said. Dad nodded gently.



Before putting the puzzle away, Anouk checked the lid's edges. Then she closed the box. Next time something went missing, she knew where to begin: one slow step at a time.



The end

What helped Anouk remember?

Where had the piece been hiding?

What could you do before blaming someone?

Little adventures. A kinder tomorrow.

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