

101 Lighthouse

Dad isn't sleeping. Neither is Zakhar. It's late at night. The sky is full of stars, and there is no light in the windows.

There is a single window flashing with light in the block of flats opposite to Zakhar's house. That building reminds Zakhar of a lighthouse.

Zakhar is staring at the squares of windows.

And imagines his friend Leo sleeping a floor below.

Maybe, it is that Leo is hugging his cat Punch. And the cat keeps purring to him the whole night. Or is it sleeping at the foot of the bed as Zakhar's Gran's cat likes to do? Or it may be sleeping on Leo's breast just like Zakhar's aunt's?

Zakhar imagines his mom sleeping. One leg hanging down from the bed, and one hand lying under the pillow. It looks as if mom is hiding a surprise for Zakhar there. Sure, Zakhar is not against that at all. He loves surprises.

Zakhar is not going to sleep because his dad is still awake. He's got a lot of work to do. He has put his papers on the desk in front of him and is making a design of new modern high rise buildings. It'll take a whole year to build them. That's going to be a new city district.

Zakhar imagines how the lights will go on and off in all those buildings. They will be like lighthouses. Hey-hey!

Zakhar is eager to tell his dad about that. Dad will like it for sure. But he is busy working...

Zakhar gets his flashlight and takes a scheme of a lighthouse off the wall. The scheme was drawn by dad when they made a trip to Kyiv Reservoir outside Vyshhorod.

The lighthouse is built so that ships could get to the point of their destination. It's because Kyiv Reservoir may be quite stormy.

Zakhar follows the scheme with his fingertips. His favourites are the light chamber and the optical device.

Clicking his flashlight on and off, Zakhar imagines a flashing lighthouse.

– Not sleeping? – his dad enters the room.

– You aren't sleeping either, – Zakhar folds the picture.

– But I'm so sleepy... – and dad yawns wide.

– May I? – and without waiting for the answer, dad dives under the blanket. Zakhar turns off his flashlight. – That's it, good night my dear, – and dad gives Zakhar a hug. – Let's sleep!

Zakhar listens to his dad breathing. Fallen asleep? He wishes there could be a few more words!

– Daddy. – Zakhar gently touches dad on the shoulder, – I can't get asleep. Please, don't tell me to count the sheep.

– What? The sheep? No-no-no, – Dad's voice is sleepy. – Let's count... say – the lighthouses.

– The lighthouses? Well, let it be the lighthouses. One lighthouse, two lighthouses... three... four ..., – Zakhar murmurs. – Daddy, can you hear me?

– Well, a little.

– The fifth lighthouse, the sixth ... Daddy?

– I can hear you, sonny, – Dad is sniffing leisurely.

When Zakhar counts up to a hundred lighthouses,

Dad is sound asleep; he's even snoring a little.

– A hundred lighthouses, – whispers Zakhar.

And he notices how the lights in the opposite window go off.

– And the one hundred first one is gone now.

Zakhar's eyelids are getting heavier and heavier, and the sleep is getting closer and closer.

It's OK dad had fallen asleep earlier than Zakhar finished counting.

Tomorrow there'll be a late night again. And there will be the same stars in the sky. Somewhere, the light of a hundred and one lighthouses will be shimmering.

And dad and Zakhar will be able to count more of those.

Many more...