The last blank square

Read, hear exact words or use your usual text access. Choose a moment that changes something.

A1. By Thursday, the tiny cardboard city had a bakery, a bridge and a library with a roof that opened. The last square on the base was empty. Mira had saved it for a tower. From the tower, a paper traveller would be able to see everything.

A2. Otis set a folded card beside the square. “A garden,” he said. “Somewhere to stop.” Mira looked at the buildings crowding the base. The city had taken them three afternoons. An empty square looked, to her, like something they had forgotten.

A3. Earlier that week, Otis had moved the bridge so a boat could fit beneath it. Mira had objected until the boat passed through. Now she held her tower above the final square. Its shadow covered the bakery door.

A4. “What if we leave this part for whoever visits?” Otis asked. Mira nearly said that visitors would not know what to do. Instead, she placed the tower on the table beside the city. It could wait there without being thrown away.

A5. They wrote a tiny card: MAKE SOMETHING THAT BELONGS HERE. When the room opened, their first visitor folded a bench. The next made a winding path. Neither thing was Mira's tower or Otis's garden. Otis moved his garden card to the edge, where it became a sign for the path.

A6. Mira watched a paper traveller sit on the bench. Then she put her tower beside the library, off the base, and drew a door between them. The city was less tidy than her first plan. There was somewhere in it that she had not imagined.

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