



Elara and the Twilight Market's Secret Door

Putut Hanggono



Elara loved the magical time when the sun dipped low, turning the sky into a tapestry of orange and purple. She often heard tales of the secret Twilight Market that appeared only at dusk, deep within the Whispering Woods. Today, driven by a strange curiosity, she decided to find it, stepping past the ancient oak trees.



The forest grew dimmer, and a cool breeze guided Elara deeper. Soon, soft lights glimmered ahead like trapped stars among the branches. Pushing through a thicket, she found herself at the edge of a clearing filled with colorful tents, hanging lanterns, and the sweet smell of spun sugar and exotic spices.



It was indeed the Twilight Market, buzzing with activity. Curious folk traded glowing crystals, talking books, and maps to forgotten places. Elara watched in wonder as small sprites danced around string lights, and vendors with colorful cloaks called out their wares.



An old gnome with a bushy beard sat behind a stall covered in intricately carved wooden toys that seemed to twitch and breathe. He smiled warmly as Elara approached, asking her if she sought something special among the enchanted objects. She told him she was looking for true magic.



The gnome chuckled and pointed toward a large glass tent at the far end of the market. He advised her to look not only at what she saw, but what was hidden. Intrigued, Elara thanked him and made her way through the happy crowds toward the sparkling structures.



The glass tent was filled with bottles of swirling colors and whispering winds. Near the back, tucked behind a tall, dusty mirror that reflected unexpected sights, she found an old, wooden door built into a thick stone wall covered in strange, glowing symbols. This was no ordinary entrance.



There was no handle or keyhole on the mysterious door. Elara remembered the gnome's advice and touched one of the symbols that pulsed slightly warmer than the others. With a soft click, the heavy wooden door creaked open, revealing a soft, radiant light from within.



Stepping through, she found herself not in another stall, but in a breathtaking hidden garden. Luminescent flowers that only bloomed under moonlight lined winding paths, and small streams mirrored star constellations. The air felt calm and filled with ancient magic.



In the center of the garden was a still, glowing pool. As Elara peered into its waters, she saw fleeting reflections of childhood dreams and forgotten wonders. She dipped her fingers into the cool water, feeling a surge of pure joy and hope. This was the true magic.



After exploring the garden, Elara felt her heart light. She returned through the secret door to the now emptying market, holding a tiny glowing stone given by the garden's spirit. As dawn began to break and the market faded into mist, she happily walked home, carrying the secret of the twilight garden forever.