

# A TWINKLE INSIDE

Anisa had been coming to her grandmother's house for as long as she could remember. She liked the quiet garden best, a jungle of tangled ivy, towering sunflowers and daisies that had long since taken over the paths.

But there was one place she'd never been: the greenhouse.

It sat at the very end of the garden, almost hidden behind a curtain of honeysuckle. Its panels were green with moss, and the door was always locked. Grandma said it was too dangerous, that it hadn't been opened in years.

But today, as Anisa wandered through the garden alone, she noticed something strange. The little terracotta flowerpot by the compost bin was upside down, and beneath it, nestled in the soil, was a silver key. Its surface was cold and smooth, but faint lines etched into the metal caught the light in odd ways, like the shape of ivy leaves, or maybe something older. For a second, Anisa thought it shimmered.

Her heart thudded. She glanced up at the house. No one was watching...

The lock clicked open with a soft clunk and the greenhouse door creaked as she pushed it. The air inside was different – warm and still, like stepping into another season. The broken glass panels glistened, scattering patches of coloured light across the dusty ground. Long-forgotten plants curled from shattered pots, their stems winding like snakes toward the ceiling. One leafy vine twitched slightly, though there was no breeze.

Anisa stepped forward, brushing past a hanging fern. In the centre of the floor was a cracked stone trough, completely empty except for one thing.

A single flower.

It stood upright in the middle of the soil, its petals glowing faintly blue, shifting to violet when she tilted her head. The shape of the flower was unlike anything she had seen before: five perfect points, like a star.

She took another step, heart hammering. The air seemed thicker now – heavy and warm, like something holding its breath. As she moved closer, the flower straightened. Its stem grew taller, slowly, as if reaching for her. The petals unfurled wider, revealing a deep swirl of colour inside that shimmered like oil on water.

Then it happened. The flower turned. Not toward the light – toward her.

