**The Moment Time Stopped**

It was an ordinary Saturday morning when Maya went for a walk in the bush behind her grandparents’ farm. She liked the peace and quiet there, the sound of the birds calling to one another, and the smell of the flowers, it was just so pleasant. The path she followed was one she had walked many times, crossing through tall trees and around large rocks covered in moss.

The afternoon sun warm on her back and the sound of rushing water soothing her thoughts. Birds chirped in the trees above, and dragonflies darted across the surface of the stream like tiny blue sparks. But that day, something was different.

As Maya rounded a bend near the creek, she noticed a strange glow coming from ahead. It wasn’t sunlight, this was brighter and shimmering with silver, like moonlight, but in the middle of the day. Curious, she stepped off the path and pushed through the bushes.

In the middle of the clearing was something she couldn’t explain. A large, glowing circle floated in the air, not touching the ground or anywhere. It shimmered, like the surface of a bubble, but inside it was a scene that didn’t match the bushland around her. Through the glowing circle, she saw a busy city street—people walking quickly, cars rushing past, tall skyscrapers rising into the sky.

Maya blinked. Her heart began to race. She looked around to see if anyone else was there, but she was alone. The birds had gone quiet. Even the wind seemed to have stopped. Everything felt still, as though the world was holding its breath.

A bird flew past and, without hesitation, darted through the circle. It vanished instantly. Maya stared, frozen in place. A few seconds later, the exact same bird came back through from the other side. It flew as if nothing strange had happened at all.

Maya didn’t know what she was seeing. Was it a dream? A trick of the light? She wasn’t sure. But deep inside, she felt something shift. She had always believed the world was simple, just what you could see, hear, and touch. But now she wasn’t so sure. Maybe there were parts of the world that most people never noticed. Maybe there were hidden places, or secret things that didn’t fit inside the rules she had always trusted.

She stood there for a very long time, watching the glowing circle and the busy world inside it. Nothing else came through. Nothing else moved. And then, slowly, the light began to fade. The circle shrank until it was gone, leaving only sunlight and trees behind.

The bushland looked the same again. But Maya didn’t feel the same.

She walked home slowly, her mind full of questions. She didn’t tell anyone what she had seen. It wasn’t because she was scared, but because she didn’t have the words to explain it. How could she describe something that felt both real and impossible at the same time?

From that day on, Maya saw the world differently. She began to look more closely at everything, the flicker of light through the trees, the way shadows moved around, the quiet spaces between sounds. She started to wonder what else might be hidden, just out of sight, waiting to be found.

She paid more attention in science class. She read books about space, time, and the mysteries of nature. But even with all her learning, nothing explained what she had seen that day.

Maya never saw the glowing circle again. But the memory stayed with her, bright and strange. It remained a mystery. Deep down, she knew the world was bigger, stranger, and more magical than she had ever imagined.