

■ FICTION ■

To exist in two places at once...



ILLUSTRATION: AZRA HUMAYRA

TINATH ZAeba

There is an arrangement in the world that appears accidental, but it is absolutely intentional: the moon and the ocean continuously regarding one another without ever meeting. Neither belongs to the other, and yet each seems shaped by the fact that the other exists. The ocean expands outward in fluid uncertainty; the moon remains suspended at a precise, unreachable distance. Stillness above, restlessness below. If anything connects them, it is a question neither can answer: can you exist in two places at once?

The moon holds its place in the sky with absolute certainty, occupying a location that cannot be walked toward or returned from. It cannot descend, it cannot venture. Its entire meaning appears bound to the horizon from which it is seen. To exist there means to belong there, yet the moon's shape changes constantly: full, half, slivered, gone. It never remains the same, yet it never leaves. How strange I think, that something so fixed is also something that evolves so much.

The ocean behaves differently. It has no exact boundary; it shifts, collapses, reforms. A line of water approaches the

edge of land, withdraws, and approaches again, the art of almost touching. A single wave can reach a place and vanish from it before the next wave finds its mark. There is no settling. Only repeating attempts at arrival.

Between these two forms — the held and the moving — lies an ongoing experiment with distance. The moon is always where it is. The ocean is always becoming where it moves. Yet every night, without agreement or intention, their surfaces mirror one another. The ocean offers the moon back to itself through reflection. Suddenly the moon appears in two places: one suspended in the sky, one floating in water. Neither position is false and neither is complete.

Maybe presence is not limited to physical location but multiplied through longing. The moon does not move, yet it appears to descend when seen in the water. The ocean absorbs nothing, yet carries the image of something it can never hold. The idea of closeness becomes slippery. If they're so far, one so above, and one so far down below, how are they always perfect in unison?

The moon remains above the whole world, even while fragments of its image break apart across the waves. A reflection, disturbed by ripples, turns singular light into

scattered pieces. The ocean cannot hold the moon steadily, and yet it keeps trying. A still object becomes many through distortion and a shifting surface becomes a record of devotion.

Is it possible to exist in two places at once?

The moon appears twice: once by being, once by being needed.

The ocean appears twice: once by movement, once by memory.

When the moon is seen within the ocean, it does not leave the sky. When the ocean reflects the moon, it does not stop moving. They remain separate, occupying distinct realities while acknowledging the illusion of closeness. What joins them is not touch, but willingness.

The ocean never holds the moon. The moon never reaches the water. And yet, every night, the world insists on placing them together. Distance doesn't quite matter when fate is as certain as a gravitational force. I exist in two places at once.

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■ POETRY ■

Survival should not cost them their souls



ILLUSTRATION: ABIR HOSSAIN

TASFIAH LIAKAT

They teach her how to be afraid
But not how to dream.
She grows up full of apologies,
For taking space, being seen, existing.
He learns early
Softness invites judgement, mockery, cruelty;
Tears are a weakness
To be rid of with fists and shame.
Her body is the problem
And so are his feelings.
Be careful, smaller, polite;

A woman's lot in life –

Be strong, silent, stone;
As a man must be.
Let's raise one half to be afraid,
And the other to be empty
When her back bends, call it devotion
When his silence deepens, call it strength.
You wonder why the kids are hurting
While teaching them how to be everything but whole
Teach them both
Her body is not a crime
Nor is his heart a weakness
Survival should not cost them their souls.