



ILLUSTRATION: ABIR HOSSAIN

■ FICTION ■

# When time stands still

TINATH ZAEBA

At first glance, you would not notice that I live in a fragile prison, a home with two bulbs of glass pinched at the throat, sand forever descending. Inside, I walk on grains as fine as dust, pale gold that shifts beneath my weight. No matter how much I gather into my hands, the sand slips through my fingers, scattered by the smallest breath of movement.

I have always measured myself by time, not in the softness of moments but in the speed of them. I am the child who ran before she could walk, the student who devoured lessons meant for later years, the woman who leans into tomorrow before today has even finished. To be ahead of the curve is not just ambition; it has become my rhythm. My eyes are rarely fixed in the present; they are drawn instead to the narrow passage where sand rushes through, to what comes next, to what I must achieve sooner rather than later.

So, when he steps into my hourglass the very first time,

the impossible occurs: the sand halts mid-air. The falling grains suspend themselves in light, glittering as though a thousand stars were scattered between us. Time, once relentless, stills in anticipation. The urgency I have always carried, the need to be faster, better, and further, dissolves into something weightless.

He is not a clock or the hand that turns it. He is the light that refracts through the glass, bending the hours into strange, beautiful shapes. Where once I saw nothing but a relentless funnel, I now see colours dancing on each grain, hues that only appear when illuminated by him. I was so busy counting the sand before it even fell that I never thought to just watch how it descends.

Inside the glass walls of my hourglass, I have always felt the inevitability of decline, yet I never realised that even falling is beautiful. The sand between my fingers has meaning as it slips through: each grain is precious because each grain can hold him. It would be easy to say that he stops the hourglass entirely, but it would not be true. Each grain lingers longer before falling, each second swells into

a full breath, and the hourglass does not stop; it slows just enough for me to pause.

My home grows beyond the hourglass; time stops becoming my enemy; it is no longer a race. It is a companion, and like all companions, it requires attention. To love the present, to dream of the future without regretting the past. He exists in this very moment, and so, if I want to be with him, I must exist here too.

Your time is only well spent if it is traced to the feelings you share with the ones that make it meaningful. For the first time, I understand that it is not meant to be outrun; it is meant to be lived.

So, we remain here, where sand is suspended like stars around me, light refracting across the glass. I am alright with staying still. I do not always have to run to conquer or to achieve. The hourglass flips over and over. I do not notice. I am simply here.

*Tinath Zaeba is an optimistic daydreamer, a cat mom of 5 and a student of Economics at North South University. Get in touch via mailing to tinathzaeba25@gmail.com*



ILLUSTRATION: ABIR HOSSAIN

■ POEM ■

## Sorceress

PUNOMI RAHMAN TITIR

By the flickering stove,  
blue potion jars  
cradling in-between worn-out fingers  
swivelling amidst cracks of skin  
meld into warmth.  
By the stirring ladle,  
blue potion jars  
tucked underneath hollow armpit  
spaces  
slipping between stitches of a tattered  
blouse piece  
stream into liquid.  
By the brewing cauldron,

blue potion jars  
spilled into spread mud vessels  
scent of warm coconut  
waft through the air.  
By the old sorceress,  
who plaits my hair  
stretched fingers pressing against  
desert scalp  
drenched roots untangled tufts  
threaded back.  
By the silence that moulds,  
my drowsy head rested onto her laps  
drift into time  
until the snug melts away  
like blue potion jars.