The Prisoners of the Sandclock

Christos Saccopoulos*
“I hate you.” That was all she said, but it was enough to damn her forever.

“All right,” I said with grave dignity. “But we’re not friends anymore.” Her anger disappeared instantly. She was once again whimpering and begging, just like a puppy. I hate people who act like puppies.

“I’m sorry, Janice. Honest. I’m sorry.”

“I can’t be friends with someone who hates me.”

“But I don’t. I didn’t mean it, Janice. Honest.”

I ignored her. For seven years I ignored her. I guess I just forgot about her. It was pretty easy. I had lots of friends, and it was easy to find new partners to hold my hand. Don’t ask me who held Anita’s hand. I never really thought about it, not until seven years later. Now every day I see those hands in the lunchroom because I can’t look into her eyes.

The Prisoners of the Sandclock

by Christos Saccopoulos

On the grandfather’s knees seated
The myth I first heard
Of the men who are born
In the Sandclock’s lower half.
In there trapped
From their birth they struggle
The sand’s silent—
The sand’s monotonous flow
to stop.

In there trapped
From their birth they struggle
The time’s glass—
The time’s infrangible walls
to break.
And flows-flows-sand-flows-sand-sand..
Silently
   Monotonously
   Rythmically
tic-tac-tic-tac.
Shrink with each grain of sand
The transparent Sandclock walls.

Sweat springs wet
From the fighters’ tense muscles
In the tragic consciousness
Of the sand’s unknown quantity.

And drops-drops-sweat-drops-sweat-sweat.
Silently
   Monotonously
   Rythmically
   plits-plats,-plits-plats.
Mud becomes sweat and sand
Mud that traps the men’s arms.

Tragic contribution
   the sweat
To tomorrow’s uncertainty
Of the sand flow.
Conscious hand of help
   the sweat
To the Sandclock’s macabre work.
But the fate of Sandclock men ordered
—my grandfather said—
That they MUST struggle
That they MUST sweat

The fate of the Sandclock men ordered
—my grandfather said—
That when the last grain of sand drops
They shall CEASE struggling
To fly through the glass jail
And with their non-existence to sing
The Sandclock’s eternal victory.