


The Great Hourglass

t the center of the village stood the Great Hourglass, a relic said to measure not just time but the balance of hope and regret in the world. Each New Year's Eve, the Keeper of the Hourglass, an enigmatic figure named Eryndor, would turn the glass, allowing the sands to begin their journey anew.

The villagers believed that as the sands shifted, they carried the weight of their past year — moments of triumph, failures, and choices — down into the base of the glass. The Keeper's turning was not merely an act of marking time but a ritual of renewal, where the past was buried, and the future was given room to breathe.

On this particular New Year's Eve, a young woman named Selene hesitated on the edge of the crowd. She was known as the most talented healer in the village, but the past year had left her heart heavy. She had failed to save her own father during a deadly fever that swept through the valley, and though she continued to heal others, the weight of her grief and self-doubt had become unbearable.

As midnight approached, Eryndor appeared. He was not an imposing figure — draped in a simple cloak, his presence was quiet yet undeniable. Carrying the Key of Renewal, he climbed the stone steps to the Hourglass.

Before he turned the glass, he paused, as was his custom, and called out, "Who among you will step forward with what they wish to leave behind?"

A murmur rippled through the crowd, but no one moved. The Keeper's gaze swept across the gathering, his eyes settling on Selene. She felt his gaze like sunlight piercing a shadow.

Summoning her courage, Selene stepped forward. In her hands, she carried a small pouch filled with ash — the remnants of the herbs she had used to treat her father's fever. She knelt before the Hourglass, pouring her ashes into it, and whispered, "I carry guilt I cannot heal. I fear I've lost the wisdom to serve others."

Eryndor nodded solemnly. "The hourglass turns not just for time, but for renewal. When the sands fall, they bury what you no longer need, but they also reveal what you still carry within."

He turned the Key, and the Hourglass shifted. The ancient sands began their cascade, glowing faintly as they flowed downward. Selene watched, mesmerized, as the ashes she had offered dissolved into the swirling sands. As they disappeared, she felt a strange lightness in her chest, as though a tightly wound knot had begun to unravel.

But more than that, she saw something she hadn't expected. Within the upper chamber of the glass, the sands shimmered, forming images of the lives she had touched that year — villagers smiling in gratitude, children running freely because of her care. The Keeper's voice echoed softly: "Though we stumble, the gifts we offer the world endure."

When the last grain of sand fell, Eryndor spoke again, this time to the entire gathering. “Each year, the hourglass reminds us that time moves forward, not to forget the past, but to renew it. Carry forward only what strengthens your heart, and leave the rest for the sands to bury.”

As the villagers returned to their homes, Selene lingered for a moment, gazing at the Hourglass. For the first time in a year, she felt the courage to heal not just others, but herself.

— *William Zeitler*

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