

Bourne
toWrite...
creative writing
workshops

It's Time

by Garf Collins

It had taken me a year to tell the time, or so they said. I was two years old, and my parents were very proud of me. When the big hand was up, and the little one pointed to six, it was bath time. When they were both up, it was lunchtime. But these were mere beats on the surface of life - nothing to do with time itself. Even then, I knew it was elastic, with a fluctuating value. The minutes bought by delaying bedtime had a value above all others. When I was deep into a game with Lego - time contracted. When told to finish, it seemed as if time was being stolen from me.

Now that I have unlimited time to think, I know as little about time as I did as a two-year-old. Time is glacial for me - a total contrast to time for an infant. Every second then is crowded with new insights. Busy brains are totally preoccupied with resolving coloured blobs into shapes; incoherent noise into voices and then words; developing the skill of walking. But I, fully formed, have no fascination for my limited physical surroundings. No urge to decipher the voices I hear or learn the words they utter.

But why doesn't time go backwards as well as forwards with the sand flying upwards in the egg timer and the broken egg reforming? Physicists say it is entropy - the tendency for everything to decay into disorder - except for atomic particles. For these, quantum mechanics rules that time can go both ways.

I'm told that here my time is indefinite. That means anything between a microsecond and eternity. The thought of the upper end of that range terrifies me.

I close my eyes and imagine time going backwards. I'm escorted back to the airport. The unknown hand that slipped a packet of heroin into the pocket of my rucksack moves away with its evil package. The sniffer dogs walk backwards away from me. Then time starts forward again, and I board my flight and go home.

I'm shaken out of my foolish dream as my cell door clangs open. It's time. Rough hands are dragging me out for more brutal interrogation to which I have no answers.