

## GoingBack [in] Time

by Laurel Winter

Laurel Winter says she lives a magical life in Asheville, North Carolina, where she is happily involved with creative projects involving art & words & design & energy. Recent highlights include one son embarking on a racing career in California and the other son graduating from Oberlin with a triple major and highest honors. We're pleased to see her back in our pages after too long an absence.

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1.

After Richard told her the whole quantum physics thing at the cocktail party, Ellie said, "I get it! We can go back in time."

"Go back in time," he repeated slowly, enjoying the attention, the perky camera-ready face tilted up at him. "Only one of those words has meaning."

2.

Richard had been studying quantum theory and metaphysics for twenty-three years so he was understandably jealous—even irked—when the weather girl in the little black dress went into an excited state after his five-cent pop tour of the quantum cosmos and echoed herself around the room, kissing him, slapping his face, grabbing a bottle of champagne and shaking it and spraying it ecstatically around the room.

"Spooky action," she whispered in both of his ears at once, "at no great distance. This rocks!"

3.

"Since all wheres are here," Ellie said, pulling his cute little reading glasses from his inside suit pocket and perching them on her cute little nose, "that eliminates *go* as a meaningful word."

"You could say that," Richard started to say, but then there was another one of her beside her, jumping up and down.

"Time! *Time* has no meaning!"

“And *back*,” said yet another, plucking the reading glasses from the first Ellie’s nose and folding them neatly and putting them back in his pocket. “As used in that sentence anyway. As a time referent, *back* is nonsense.”

“That leaves *in*.”

“In the moment.” “In synch.” “In love.” “In the flow.” “In and out.” Had one of them just grabbed his crotch?

4.

“Does this mean what I think it means?” she asked.

He had no idea what she meant by that.

5.

“That’s for sleeping with Marcy,” she said, when she slapped him.

Who was Marcy? he wondered.

6.

“Yes of course I will,” she told him. “I have loved you since the beginning before the beginning. Since before the Big Bang—all those committee meetings. And remember Egypt. Remember France—well, forget France and Madame Guillotine; I am sorry about that.” She caressed his head. “Remember Peru instead.”

He remembered nothing, although he desperately wanted to. “Please,” he said, “tell me what is going on.”

Ellie laughed and winked on and off and back on. “It’s like play-dough and finger paints and mudpies.”

7.

“One particle,” she said. “Two slits.” She rubbed her crotch—god that dress was short. “Want to play?”

8.

Richard was dizzy. All the Ellies—that was her name, right?—spinning and dancing and spraying champagne and talking physics as if it were a first language, as if it were slang, as if it were the babble of an infant.

She kissed him again. “Dear brilliant idiot. Stop thinking so hard.”

9.

“I wish you could be here,” she said, sobbing, clutching his lapels. “I wish you could let go. Just for an instant. One bloody here-and-now. That’s all it would take. But you are too damned—whatever it is you are.”

10.

And then he was alone, one cheek stinging red, doused with champagne and tears, Ellie-pink lipstick everywhere. The party continued around him. “Going back in time,” he said, and wished for that. Just five minutes. A time loop.

11.

A young woman in a little black dress—accent on little—sashayed up to Richard. “I’m bored by lawyers and executives and our hostess tells me you’re a hotshot physicist. Can you dumb it down to weather girl level? I’m Ellie.”