

Time's always existed. That is, it's always flowed, sometimes in the direction you understand as forwards, sometimes in a motion you may think of as backward. The cause followed by the effect, and the reverse. A past before a present preceding a future, and the reverse.

Most people go about their lives never realising that time isn't like water. It doesn't always run down the hill, toward the sea. Like the poet taking the road less travelled, time takes whichever path it chooses. Time is contrary.

Any scientist worth their salt will shrug at you if you ask them to explain what time is. Or they might bamboozle you with equations and formula, pretending to have answers. Or maybe they hold the religious view: that time is absolute and marked by God's own metronome.

But the movement of time can't ever really be explained other than by your own ageing. In the way you're growing, or the way your parents and teachers pluck out their greying hair, or your grandparents and neighbours with their deepening wrinkles like well-worn passages.

And yet, if time flows one way, what happens if it flows the other? Is a dead thing made living? Or was it living all along, somewhere in a section of time, and you only have to travel back there to see it again?

Don't go imagining time-machines; that's the stuff of science fiction and this story doesn't belong there. You already time-travel anyway, when you're minding your own business, walking to school or having lunch or playing sports. You ignore it, most of the time. People do. It'd be tiring to always be aware you're in one moment and then you're in another and another again.

But maybe you're one of the few who does notice. You know, a strangeness called *déjà vu*. That familiar conversation you could almost anticipate. The unknown town or building you somehow knew your way around. Or the prescient sense of the phone about to ring, of a person you know who'll be there around the next bend. An urgency to get home because you're certain something's wrong. Like the movement of a shadow in your peripheral vision, like the memory on the tip of your tongue. Time trickles forward, and around, and backward.

It's subtle. Our ape brains are sensitive to things not behaving as we believe they should. We think we're on a racetrack, heading in one direction toward the finishing line. We'd probably panic if we ran instead to yesterday. We'd possibly

*Rain* Ele Nash

scream and hide if we arrived at our fifth birthday party. So, generally, time flows in random directions without us entirely remembering that it does.

You'll forget this soon enough, unless for some reason like me you have to remember. Unless you would like to notice. Or you need to. Then your brain won't erase the *now* when you slide to the *then*. You'll see how time really ticks. You'll wish you hadn't; there's a good reason people shouldn't know. But by then, or now, or at some point hence, it's already too late to change your mind.