

## Time

by David Riessen

Before our beautiful son Sam was born, there was no Sam. That makes sense. Or does it? And after Sam died, we go back to no Sam? Do we? No, definitely not. Time is all messed up, and before and after might not exist beyond our own convoluted, subjective perceptions.

When Sam was about three, he had a science fiction view of how the world works. If something bad happened, he would cry out for us to bend the immutable laws of physics.

“Make it today again! Please, Mommy, make it today again!”

At first, we didn’t know what he meant. Obviously, he was unhappy about the dropped ice cream cone or boo-boo on his skinned knee or whatever the calamity was. But what does “make it today again” mean? And then Debi figured out that he wanted us to literally erase the disastrous event and start the day over again. Sam believed in time travel. It’s a weird concept for a toddler to come up with on his own. It’s not like we were reading him *Slaughterhouse-Five* as a bedtime story.



But maybe it’s not so weird after all. The Block Universe Theory (which I know almost nothing about) posits that the past, present, and future all exist simultaneously. And as crazy as that sounds, it might account for how Doctor Strange is able to see 14,000,605 possible futures. He isn’t seeing something that hasn’t yet happened, he is just tapped more deeply into the fullness of the space-time continuum. The truth is I

haven't seen the movie, but I'm sure Benedict Cumberbatch is good. He's always good, right?

Physicists tell us that before the Big Bang, there was nothing. Nothing: no space, no time, no thing. But what does that mean? I can't wrap my mind around it because empty space is still a thing, and no time only makes sense in relation to some time. I used to think about stuff like this when I was a kid. These days, I seem to have resumed my search for answers I will never know. Well, "never" is a strong word, but I'm not holding my cosmic breath.

Debi and I got married at Mohonk Mountain House on September 12, 1982. Our first song at the reception was the classic "As Time Goes By."

You must remember this:

A kiss is just a kiss,

A sigh is just a sigh.

The fundamental things apply

As time goes by.

I used to love this song, but I don't love it so much anymore. Wanna know why?

1. Please don't tell me what I must remember. My memory sucks. Too much trauma and too much weed.

2. Although Debi and I still kiss, I have to admit that it's less often and with fewer tongues.

3. On the other hand, we do sigh a lot more.

4. What are those fundamental things? Parents are not supposed to outlive their kids. That seems pretty fucking fundamental to me.

5. As time goes by. I wish it went somewhere else.

When Debi was pregnant with Sam, she met with a psychic who said that in a previous lifetime, we had a son who died. But Debi was afraid at the time that the psychic was actually telling our fortune. Could either possibly be true? Maybe both? Does time mean anything?

All of this leaves me more than a little dazed and confused. I think that Plato said that all learning is remembering. And if that's true, then maybe three-year-old Sam is the most learned person in the world. He knows that time travel is possible because he hasn't yet forgotten the mysteries of the universe. That sounds good, but then why can't I go back and warn twenty-four-year-old Sam about fentanyl?

I need to make it today again.



**David Riessen** has been writing plays, screenplays, novels, and TV scripts on and off since he was a teenager. In the wake of his son's sudden death, he has found a home in creative nonfiction and has recently written *Nothing Lasts Forever*, a collection of stories and essays about loss, grief, and life. Some of these stories are featured in *Defenestration*, *Bright Flash Literary Review*, *Moon Park Review*, *Cool Beans Lit*, and now here in *bioStories Magazine*. David lives in Larchmont, New York with his wife Debi and dog Raven.