

GOING BACK

by Scott Mullen

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A Dramatic Duet

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SYNOPSIS: Em is preparing to travel back in time when she is questioned by Jess about her decisions. Jess is holding onto a secret and has an agenda of her own. They both discover—in the time travel waiting room, everyone has their own reasons for being there.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 females)

EM (f) Teen; Capable, serious. *(49 lines)*

JESS (f) Teen; Friendlier. Dressed nicer. *(52 lines)*

TIME: The near future.

SETTING: The time travel waiting room.

SET: A row of 4 or 5 chairs.

PROPS

- ☐ clipboards
- ☐ forms
- ☐ a bag for Em (optional)

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

One way to give movement to the characters is by having Em keep moving down one chair, and have Jess keep moving with her.

AT START: *JESS and EM sit in adjacent chairs, each filling out forms. JESS looks over at EM.*

JESS: What did you put for number 5?

EM: I don't think we're supposed to talk.

JESS: It's not a test. Come on. Number 5. "Please explain why you want to go on this journey."

EM: I think the answer is personal for everyone.

JESS: What's your answer?

EM: It's personal.

JESS: I thought you had to be 18 to do this?

EM stiffens.

EM: I'm 18.

JESS: Come on.

EM: I just look really young.

JESS: Really young.

EM: It's not my fault.

JESS: You're not 18.

EM: You want to see my ID?

JESS: IDs can be faked.

EM: You think I'd get a fake ID to do this?

JESS: Yes.

EM: You're not 18.

JESS: I just came in to get a copy of the form. To see what the questions are. I mean, this is amazing—it's the time travel waiting room! People are traveling back into the past. Finding a whole new life. In another time.

EM: I'm 18.

JESS: They're going to check, you know. Check and double-check. That's why they have these forms.

EM: I'm an adult.

JESS: Come on.

EM: What does being an adult mean? I can change a tire on a car, can you? Can you change an oil filter on a '69 Mustang? Can you pull a TV out of someone's trash, open up the back, play with the wiring, and get it to work, good as new?

JESS: No.

EM: Can you cut someone's hair with an old pair of sewing scissors? Can you make a meal for seven out of four dollars in groceries and have no one complain? Can you do any of those things?

JESS: Four dollars?

EM: I can. Don't tell me I'm not an adult.

JESS: So who's going to do all those things if you're not there?

EM: Someone will. Someone else. It's not my turn. Not anymore. I'm out of here.

JESS: But—

EM: Let me ask some questions. You have a nice outfit. You clearly didn't get your haircut from someone in a bathroom. You look like someone with zero problems.

JESS: Everyone has problems.

EM: Tell me yours.

JESS: They're *my* problems.

EM: Exactly. So don't ask me about question number five.

EM turns back to her form.

JESS: Where are you going?

EM: Seriously?

JESS: Just a question. I'm looking for ideas. You know, in case I decide to go back in time. When I'm 18. There are so many choices. So many eras in the past.

EM: You came to the time travel waiting room, and you haven't even thought about where you might want to go?

JESS: I'm just picking up the form, not deciding today.

EM: I'm deciding today. I'm *going* today. By the time they figure out where I went, it'll be too late. Because there are no travel-backs, you know? Once I'm in the past, I'm in the past. As a matter of fact, if you think about it, I'm already dead, and in the ground somewhere. Because the past I'm going to is hundreds of years ago. And it's cool.

JESS: You might as well tell me.

EM: I'm going back to the 1500s. North America. Just me and the Native Americans.

JESS: That's where you're going?

EM: I've been studying the language. I've been out camping a lot. I can start a fire with two sticks. I can kill a buffalo and carve it into steaks. Can you do that?

JESS: It sounds lonely.

EM: I *want* to be alone. I'm going to build a log cabin, that's all mine. Where I can sleep when I want, eat when I want. Not have to listen to anyone.

JESS: I think I'd need running water.

EM: I'm going to build my cabin near a stream.

JESS: That's not the kind of running water I was talking about.

EM: Let me guess. You want to go someplace where you are pampered. Where you just lie there, with cucumber slices over your face, and someone rubs your feet.

JESS: That sounds amazing.

EM: That's not a thing!

JESS: Sure it is.

EM: There's not a past you can travel back to where someone is just going to rub your feet!

JESS: I bet there is.

EM: You can have that done now! There's a spa down the street!

JESS: It's not the same.

EM: If you want to go back to the past, it should be because you want to change your life completely! Because there's nothing here for you. Do you have family?

JESS: Do you?

EM: Do you have friends? You must have a boyfriend. Someone like you.

JESS: Someone like me.

EM: Pretty. Successful.

JESS: You think that's all it takes to be happy?

EM: I don't know what it takes to be happy. But I know I'm not going to find it here.

JESS: I don't think you should be running around the woods 500 years ago. What if there are bears?

EM: I'm not afraid of bears.

JESS: What if it snows? What if it's cold?

EM: Bring it on.

JESS: What if Andy misses you?

EM stiffens.

EM: What did you say?

JESS: What if Andy misses you?

EM: Don't talk about my little brother.

JESS: You think you could really never see him again?

EM: Who are you? Do you know my mother?

JESS: Em—

EM: Did she send you to follow me? No—I know she didn't. Because she doesn't care enough to do that.

JESS: I've never met your mother.

EM: Who are you?

JESS: This is what I know. One day—today—you disappear. And no one ever sees you again. And your family tries to cope—your sisters, they're almost old enough. You taught them pretty well. Your little brother, Andy, pitches in where he can to make up for your absence. But it's hard. And your mother is no help. Her drinking gets worse. And one night, your brothers and sisters are separated. Into foster care.

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