

Life as a one-way function

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In the later seasons of MAD MEN, Don gets a hot secretary, Megan, and then up and promptly marries her.[1] Whether this is a good or poor idea is left up to the reader, but Megan wants to be an actress, like so many hot chicks who crave attention, and Don sets her up to be a copywriter, then an actress, and, because this is TV, she succeeds: Don Draper magic works (what? it's a TV show). Her "career" suddenly becomes important. She and Don plan on moving to LA for her acting career. Don later decides he can't go, but that Megan should go anyway. She becomes a glamorous LA woman. When Don arrives in LA, he doesn't fit in with her life any more; she's outgrown him, or grown in a direction orthogonal to him. In one of their last real interactions, she sets up [a threesome](#) for him, but it's a melancholy, goodbye threesome, not a fun, life-affirming threesome. "Enjoy it," Megan seems to be saying, "because we're done, and this is a parting gift."

Don thinks he's going to show up in LA and Megan is going to be his... but she's not. She's not the girl, the secretary, he first met. You can't turn a famous actress back into a secretary just hitting the big city for the first time, not when you have made her into something impossible to achieve for most women. In programming we call those "one-way functions:" easy to compute but difficult or impossible to reverse (without them, all you crypto HODLers would be hosed). Turning a secretary into a famous actress is a one-way function: she'll never be the same, even though Don would like her to be. He can't swoop in and have "her" again. He'll never be the same in her eyes, because she's changed, and been exposed to numerous high-status men. Don can have sex with her, but she's become an actress, and the sex is sex, not her life. Sophistication goes up, rarely down.

Most people realize that, with enough time, most things in life are one way functions; my favorite example of this being chicks who either get fat or pregnant. Once either happens, she's not the chick you used to know. Every time a hot girl gets fat, a part of my soul dies. The main girl [from this story](#) got fat... dropped from what I'd argue was a low 8, sensational body and okay face, to a... 6? I remember the last time I undressed her, more than a year ago, and realized that what I'd hoped was "a little quarantine weight" was instead "she got fat." **The sadness that hit is like a foretaste of death.**

In the short term many decisions can be reversed: we all know people who've broken up, gotten back together, broken up and gotten back together. Many decisions can't be reversed: you've been through the function, and you can't get back what you were. A lot of women who divorce, learn this the hard way (the stability and money those husbands provide is worth more than they realized, and their SMV has dropped—considerably, often).

It's important to recognize which decisions can be walked back (most of those are decisions with short time horizons). Much of life can be unlocked by categorizing decisions in this way. If a decision is "two" way, one need not agonize over it or collect information until one's sure. Act quickly, and make lots of small test bets. Lots of people don't want to [go to a sex party](#), for example, because they think that decision means they are now, "sex party people". I often recommend to couple friends whose sex life could use a little spice to go to a sex party and take in the erotic energy of doing something risky and sexy, together.

The decision is bidirectional: a couple can go, observe, not have sex with anyone else or even each other, and decide to explore more, or not.

Yet much of life *is* one way: Don doesn't seem to recognize that with Megan, until it's too late. Her fame can't be re-corked. He can't make her un-famous. The kind of men pursuing her because she's famous

aren't going to stop. Over enough time, the woman you were wild for at 20 isn't going to be the same 15 years later.

[1] Roger also gets a hot secretary around this same time, Jane, and marries her. They [try LSD](#) together and Roger achieves heightened consciousness. Then he's seen being himself again and Don is like, "Roger, what happened, I thought you'd achieved enlightenment via LSD?" or something like that, and Roger shrugs and goes, "It wore off."



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