

Blah, Blah, Blah... Dead

Part I: The Beginning

The most important part of a story is the first line. A good first line can make a shitty story into a timeless masterpiece. Well, maybe that is going a little too far – allow me to rephrase. A great first line can make a shitty story into an okay story.

Unfortunately, the first line of a story is also the most difficult to come up with. I wanted to start off with something witty and cynical. Something Woody Allen might think about in the shower. Something that was controversial. Something that would make a person think, “This guy needs to get a life. However, I am quite interested in where he is going with this story. Is it a comedy? Is it a drama? Is it rewrite of a story originally written in the 1980’s? A lot of great things happen in the 1980’s. I had a child. He really got in the way of my sex life and ended up destroying my marriage. Hot dog, I love him more than spaghetti loves meatballs. Oh, and Flock of Seagulls was huge in the 1980’s: case in point. Ahh, what was I doing just now? Hmm....” I spent years trying to come up with a perfect first line that fit my criteria. Nothing was good enough so I decided to skip it.

Now that I have completed the most important part of a story – or rather strategically avoided it – I can move forward with ease. What I am about to share is extremely personal. It is pretty serious stuff. There are a lot of people, between zero and three to be precise, who would be willing to trade their Princess Diana Beanie Baby for this information. I like to think of this story as a sort of montage of psychoanalytical phenomenon that occurred as a result of the degradation of the cumin seed.

Part II: The Day I Died

Out of college I lived with my best friend, Evan, in an efficiency apartment. I always told my mom it was studio apartment because it sounded more fancy. I always told my dad it was a shit hole because that is what it was. It consisted of a bathroom, a kitchen/living room/bedroom, and a closet. We owned a TV, a couch, and a queen-sized mattress. I usually paid the rent, so I slept on the mattress and he slept on the couch. There were only two occasions when this sleeping arrangement changed: (1) My girlfriend wanted to stay over for the night thus, Evan had to sleep in his car or (2) Evan and I got really drunk and both fell asleep on my mattress while watching *Top Gun*. To clear up any confusion about my sexuality – I am straight. Evan and I just happen to love *Top Gun*.

On the morning of the day I died I woke up at 7:38 AM. I was dizzy, dehydrated, and hungry – needless to say I woke up with Evan’s hand on my face. Given the circumstance, I felt pretty good. I think I felt so good because I woke up before my hangover did. That’s a common misconception about hangovers. Most people think a hangover is something that happens to you. They think it is like a backache or a sore thumb. Nope. Hangovers are living things. To quote the *Mayo Clinic Handbook of Unexpected Living Organisms*,

Hangovers are living organisms. All babies are born with a hangover. The hangover leaves the baby’s body through the throat and hides inside the baby’s ear. After escaping to the inside of the ear, the hangover does nothing for typically between 15 and 21 years, during which time he or she becomes very lonely and depressed.

After this time elapses, the young adult will drink a copious amount of alcohol in a short period of time. This will inevitably result in the young adult falling asleep. At this point, the hangover crawls into the ear, down the throat, and to the liver - where the hangover discovers alcohol. The hangover consumes all the alcohol in the young adult's liver and stumbles back towards the inner ear. Unfortunately the hangover usually gets lost somewhere in the body and falls asleep. Upon awakening, the hangover becomes aggressive. Depending upon where the hangover has woken up, symptoms may include headache, upset stomach, vomiting, diarrhea, sore feet, and/or death. To avoid the symptoms of hangovers, always wear earplugs while intoxicated.

As I was saying, I woke up at 7:38 AM. I felt good. My hangover woke up at 7:53, at which time I made my way to the bathroom, drooled for two minutes, and then released the previous nights festivities mostly through my mouth and a little through my nose. After that I was set for the day. I wandered back towards the mattress where Evan lay, now wide-awake.

"I'm hungry," he mumbled.

"Yeah," I said as I sat back down on the mattress and took a drink of water.

"We should have some food."

"Okay."

We then commenced to fall back asleep. Five hours later I woke up to a light feathery touch on my ear. For the past six months Evan had become taken by the art of kissing other men lightly on the ear. I am fairly sure I'm the only one who does not try to hit him when he does it.

"Morning, big guy," he said.

"Morning."

I rubbed my eyes and looked around. I was a little confused.

“Smells good in here.”

“Yeah, I made breakfast.”

“Damn, nice. When did you wake up?”

“Twenty minutes ago or so,” Evan said as he brought me a plate of food.

He made cheesy eggs with hot sauce and toast: a classic gourmet breakfast for broke young adults. I got out of bed, took three steps, sat with him on the couch, and began eating.

“This is good man, thanks.”

“Yeah I know; I’m a pro.”

“Did you hear, uhh, Seal and Heidi Klum are splitting up?” I asked.

“Yeah, who cares? Did you know people are upset that Ryan Gosling didn’t win sexiest man alive?”

“Yeah, old news. I still think Brad Pitt should have won every year since 1994.”

“True, true.”

“What you doing today?”

“What is today?”

“Um... Saturday. The 5th.”

“What month? June?”

“Huh? Is that really relevant to what you are doing today?”

“Yeah. If it’s June I am going to spend my day drinking beer.”

“And if it’s not?”

“Well, if it’s not June then it is probably July. If it is July I’m gonna be pissed that I missed the 4th of July and will lay around all day until 6:00. Then we are gonna celebrate America the best way I know how: with nachos and tequila.”

“It’s June.”

“Cool, we are gonna celebrate America tonight anyways.”

“Hahaha alright. Dude, I hope you never get a job.”

“What? I have a job.”

“No, I mean like a high-paying job... like a career. Just be broke and live in my basement your whole life. And keep me down to earth.”

“Alright, deal. As long as you have a nice basement. And it has to be bigger than this room. I need a place to knit and watch porn.”

“At the same time?”

“Well... you gotta do what you gotta,” he joked. “Like the guy who got caught masturbating while driving.”

I laughed, “Is that something people do?”

“Yeah! Dude, you didn’t hear about that?” Evan lived for stories like this. “This guy who was like twenty years old let one loose when he was driving alone one night. He hit a light pole. Cops showed up and interrogated him or whatever. I guess he told them he does it sometimes when he gets bored in the car. He said it has never affected his driving before and claims he lost control of his car because he thought he saw a giant, man-eating boob in his rear view mirror that was chasing him.”

I could not stop laughing, “What?? You are joking. How do you get bored in the car? How long was the drive?”

“Oh man, that’s the best part. He was driving home from work. It is a seven minute drive.”

“Wow...” I was speechless. I am fairly certain Evan was telling the truth. I had more questions. I didn’t know where to start. How do you come up with a story like that? Did he get arrested? Did the cops believe his story? How do *I* get a giant boob to chase *me*? I took a moment to myself to reflect on these questions. I chose my next words very carefully.

“Wow.... Okay. Well, I am gonna take a shower.”

Evan laughed, “Alright man, stay out of trouble in there.”

I grabbed a towel from our closet and headed to the bathroom. I probably didn’t shower as often as I should have. I must not have smelt too bad though; Evan never complained. Then again, he might just have become immune to my scent. Evan and I had been best friends since kindergarten. We have lived in the same city within walking distance of each other for 15 of the last 16 years. The year I did not live in the same city as him was probably the most boring year of my life. I had no social life. I felt so much more comfortable in social situations when he was around. He brought my wild side out. And for better or worse, he could convince me to do anything.

Evan was gone when I got out of the shower. He left a note on my mattress:

I’m gonna go get a bottle of tequila. You go get salsa, chips, and cheese. And sombreros – two. Meet back here by 6:00 PM. Party. You have four and a half hours. GO!

P.S. Love you.

I dried off, threw on some jeans and a t-shirt, and headed for the door. Upon arrival at the door I swiftly turned around and took my pants off. It was 95 degrees outside. I

grabbed some shorts off the floor. They smelt okay. I put them on and left. Eight minutes later I died.

Part III: Death

I cannot say what will happen to every person that dies. I can say that, for me, death was exactly as I expected it to be. When I first died I did not actually think I was dead. I thought that the earth was about to be blown up by an alien race and my friend, Ford Prefect, was feeding me booze and preparing me to hitch a ride on a space ship. Yes, I reenacted *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* trilogy in its entirety – even the sixth book – for what must have been the first 19 years of my death.

It's hard to keep track of time in death. I had always been taught that time is relative, but in death there is nothing to make time relative to because, as far as I know, death is infinite. It is kind of like a never-ending dream that I have complete control over. I see what I want to see when I want to see it. It took me 19 years to figure out I was dead. I guess I was in denial or something. But, after I figured it out, I took full advantage of the perks. I got high off the smoothest weed. I read trillions of books. I discovered the graviton and proved The Theory of Everything. I watched every movie that has been made plus another 78 that I wrote, directed, and starred in.

It wasn't for around 300 years that I finally got serious and decided to look back on the day I died. I was not scared to relive it. I had always known that I would be fine with death. It never bothered me. Actually, I expected to die at a young age – granted, by young I meant 50, not 25. I don't know why I expected it. I was always healthy. I took care of myself. I guess I thought something crazy would happen to me. And I

wasn't wrong. Those last eight minutes of my life... they were fucking *crazy* and I am proud of the way I went out. No, looking back did not scare me. What scared me was how my family and friends reacted to my death. What scared me was my funeral.

I used to think about my funeral a lot when I was alive. I thought they were the coolest things: one final party that was dedicated to me, I had complete power over, and I did not have to attend. I didn't want people to be depressed at my funeral. Everyone dies; it should not be a sad thing. I wanted people to have a good time. I was so serious about planning the greatest funeral ever that I actually kept a journal specifically for funeral ideas. I called it Paul's Fun Ideas for Funerals. It was kind of a big deal to me.

Evan must have found that journal and read it because when I finally did go back to view my funeral I was just pleased as peaches. It had almost everything I wanted. The night started off with George Michael's "Faith" on full blast. All of my favorite people showed up. Evan even invited a random homeless guy. There was a chocolate fountain, a pool filled with ice cream, an open bar, a laser light show, and a guy doing the robot. It had to be the greatest funeral of all time. Towards the end of the night, when everyone was pretty plastered, people started making toasts. They were beautiful. There was one toast that struck me as particularly brilliant. It was when the homeless guy decided to make a toast. Mind you, he was completely sober.

"You know. These night. They are great; this is great. We are all great. This night. This guy, he died man. That's cool though. This whole night, man, it's just a montage. This whole life, I mean. It's a montage of psychoanalytical phenomenon. It happened 'cause of that cumin seed. It's gone, man. But that's okay. Cool, that's all."

I speak fluent homeless; allow me to translate:

“Life is confusing. It doesn’t make sense and it never will, so don’t try to figure it out. Just relax and enjoy it.”

Part IV: The End

The conclusion is the most useless part of a story. Typically the conclusion is used to either restate the main ideas or tie up any loose ends. In my opinion, conclusions should not exist. I mean, was it really necessary for us to know what happens to Harry Potter and his friends when they get older? I have an imagination and I enjoy using it. For these reasons I refuse to conclude my story.