

The Boy with a Thousand Eyes

My name is Oliver Masterson and I am 1,002 years old. You may be wondering how that's even possible considering the average person dies at a *much* younger age than 1,002. Well, simply, I'm immortal. But, what's the point in telling you the simple, Reader's Digest version if I can tell you the slightly-more-complicated version?

I was born on January 12, 2014 to Julia and Joaquin Masterson in Chicago, Illinois. I had a younger sister, but my mom miscarried when I was about 7 or 8. I remember my sister's name was Tatiana, and that I loved her so much that I cried for weeks after my mom miscarried. That's tragedy #1.

After my sister's death, I tried to have a normal childhood. I went to school and had friends. I lived normally. My parents never fought and never yelled at me or beat me. They were extremely loving and caring, especially my mom. My mom was a saint. She used to sing to herself while she cooked and would come up with the best bedtime stories right on the spot. My dad was extremely competitive and would always challenge me to a race or would come up with outlandish dares and bets. My dad was also an awesome artist and could draw just about anything perfectly. My parents were amazing people.

Well, when I was about 13 or 14, my saint of a mother died suddenly in a car crash. That's tragedy #2. I was deeply upset, but my dad flat-out lost his mind. It was tragic to see him lose his mind because, my god, he was a genius. He just couldn't bear the loss of my mom, and he turned to extremely unhealthy ways of dealing with grief; drugs. He did lots of drugs until I was about 15 or 16 when he died of a heroin overdose. That's tragedy #3.

I lived with my aunt Lorraine after my mom died. Aunt Lorraine was incredibly nice, but she talked about my childhood traumas a little too much for my liking. She was a nice lady, though, and I'm thankful that she took me in when I desperately needed a home and a family. There's not a whole lot to say about my Aunt Lorraine because, to be quite frank, she wasn't an extremely interesting person. But, she was nice.

The rest of my childhood was relatively normal. I graduated high school valedictorian, so that was nice. I went off to college at University of Louisiana at Lafayette for Francophone Studies. Granted, my major hasn't done me any good, I did find the curriculum interesting and I can say that I became fluent in French thanks to college. So, that's certainly a plus.

While I was in college, I met my first best friend, Freddy Beaumont. He was a superstitious, black, genius Psych major who always dressed to the nines and wore a small wristwatch that was stuck on the time 2:34. He always said that his watch that his grandma gave him was "right twice a day".

We were roommates all the way through college. He stayed at college because he wanted to go beyond a Bachelor's degree and was hoping to get a Ph.D. (which I am happy to say he did and he successfully became Dr. Frederick William Beaumont).

Freddy stayed in Lafayette, but I decided to move to New York City. You might be asking why I moved to such a random city. Well, the answer to that question is simple; I wanted something new and exciting. Granted, for the first year or so in New York, I went from one mundane job to the next. I was a waiter, a cashier, and then finally a barista. While working these dull, 8-hour days, I met some of the most interesting people.

My one next door neighbor was a Ukrainian young woman named Olga who collected vintage high heels religiously. My other neighbor was a middle-aged Canadian man who read Dante's The Divine Comedy like it was The Bible. This is why I loved New York. Living here was an adventure every day, that's for sure.

While I was a barista at Starbucks, I met a woman that I would never forget. Her name was Susan "Suzie" Violet Wayland. She was a 20-year-old art student with fiery red hair and an attitude to match. She was the sassiest young woman I've ever met, but she had a heart the size of the Sun. Her blue eyes always sparkled with enthusiasm and seemed to eternally be searching for the perfect time to say something snarky. She could draw masterpieces like it was nothing and always had the right thing to say. She was one of the smartest people I've ever met.

By some miracle, we went on a date. I barely remember anything about the restaurant or dinner itself, except for our conversation. I can't remember what I ate because I barely ate it for I was too invested in listening to what this wonderful woman had to say. She wore a sleek black dress, 3-inch heels that made her 5'11", and carried herself like a queen.

We talked about everything. We talked about the stars, the universe, why we're here, religion, politics, sex, love, hate, peace, war, aliens, ghosts, demons, angels, wine, music, emotions, drugs, crime, the afterlife, movies that make us cry, foreign languages, sickness, everything. She had an opinion on everything we talked about, and expressed it eloquently and intelligently. She listened to my arguments, countered my arguments with her own just for kicks and giggles, and then would intently listen to my counter-argument. We did this for hours until the restaurant closed and kicked us out.

Everything after this date is a blur, because the next thing I remember is proposing to her on the night of her 22nd birthday, March 17, 2037. She cried and threw her arms around my head, saying "yes" so many times I forgot the meaning of the word itself. We immediately began to plan our beach-side, California wedding to be a year-and-a-half from the day I proposed. Everything was set in stone and it was going to be the best day of my

life. She told me that she wanted a small wedding, a private wedding. Suzie had everything planned, right down to the flavor of cake and what brand of shoes she was going to buy. But before the best day of my life could ever occur, the worst day of my life happened first.

It was November 17, 2037 at 5:34 p.m. It was 6 months after I proposed. She was in Omaha, Nebraska, visiting her mom, stepdad, and stepsister. On the way to the restaurant, a drunk driver swerved into their lane, hitting them head-on. Suzie was killed immediately, and with her a part of me died too. That's tragedy #4. God be with you, darling, I will never forget you and I love you.

Right after her funeral in Omaha, I went into the hotel room, and I shot my brains out. Only, I didn't. I put the gun in my mouth and immediately pulled the trigger. I remember praying to whichever god will listen to reunite me with the love of my life. No god was listening that day, because the gunshot wound healed immediately. I couldn't believe it, and shot myself again to test whether or not I was dreaming. I definitely wasn't. The bullet hole began to heal within seconds. Within a minute, I was good as new. *How? What? This can't be real.... No one lives through that. I can't be alive.... I'm probably dead and in the afterlife.... This is a weird afterlife...*

I immediately ran to the hospital. My first doctor fainted, my second one retired immediately, my third one suggested that I go see "another kind of doctor", but my fourth one listened. He listened to my failed suicide story. So, he began to run some tests.

After about 2 years of constant tests, talks, hypotheses, therapy sessions, examinations, experiments, theories, models, pills, prescriptions, and overly-scientific explanations, he finally told me that I definitely couldn't die, will never be able to, and why.

My body is on pause. Something in my DNA made it so that when I turned 23, I will never age a day beyond that. My body will forever be stuck in that age, that moment. My body repeats my 23rd birthday, January 12, 2037. So, I will never get any new scars, cells, I can't ever get tattoos or piercings, and more importantly, I can't ever die. My body heals and repairs itself so that I am forever the same. My doctor said that I was the first case he'd ever seen. He also said that he couldn't figure out why my body would do something like this, and consequently, he couldn't find a cure. That's tragedy #5.

After finally realizing that I will never die, I began to appreciate every little moment. I focused on and appreciated the weed growing between the cracks in the sidewalk, the bird singing louder than all the rest, the lonely cloud in a blue sky, the flower that's a different color than all the rest, the smell of coffee in the morning, the sound of a can of soda opening, everything. I took pictures so that I can remember everything I experienced and all the people that I met.

My memory is fuzzy here, but the next thing I remember is Freddy's funeral. He died at age 73, and I had told him about everything right after I got an answer from my doctor. I had expected for him to tell me that I was out of my mind and that I needed to be committed. But, he didn't. Rather, he sat and listened. He sat and listened until the day he died. He was the kindest person I've ever met, and I will never forget him. That's tragedy #6. God bless you, Freddy.

What historical events did I live through and remember the most? Well, I lived through the Terror Wars of the 2090s, where the world powers declared war on the large terrorist groups that were running the world. The terrorist groups were actually winning at one point, having taken over California and part of the Midwest. But, the world powers sprang back and won the war in 2099.

I also lived through The Romantic Punishments. In 2103, governments across the world decided to arrest and publicly execute anyone who wasn't heterosexual. Of course, you had to be *openly* non-straight, but if anyone was found guilty of hiding or protecting a "wrong", you could get life in prison. It was estimated that during the 5-year span, 4,569,000 "wrongs" were arrested and publicly executed for who they fell in love with. The UN finally decided to outlaw any discrimination or hate crime against the LGBT community in 2108. This peace declaration was called the No Bloodshed Act of 2108.

And finally, the third event that I am going to talk about is the Black Depression of the 2300s. Due to overpowering levels of smog, pollution, and the incessant development and destruction of trees, we eventually ran out. We had no more grass or tress. The governments of the world were working hard to bring back all of the trees and grass, and it eventually worked. In the 2400s, we were fully vegetated again. Easy to say, we didn't take our natural resources for granted again. This lack of vegetation would be universally known as The Black Depression. Companies sold oxygen like we used to sell propane. The world was black and grey. We could no longer see the blue in the sky and the air was full of smog and pollution.

Before I sign off, I'm going to talk more about the people I've met. I met a girl who had never seen grass before, a boy who was called by a nickname for so long that he had forgotten his real name, a woman who had one blue eye and one brown eye and was completely convinced that she was a child of the angels because of this, a man who was hopelessly addicted to eating tissues, an old woman who had so many grandchildren that she could line them all up and spell out the alphabet, and an on old man who couldn't see a thing but could paint the most beautiful paintings in the world. People are interesting. Their lives are an interesting thing to study and learn about. You should stop, get out of your own head and life, and maybe talk to that "crazy" old man who begs for money on the steps of your local library. You might learn something new. God knows I have.

I'm going to start wrapping this whole thing up. I truly tried to not focus on the tragedies in my life, because we can all focus a little too much on the tragedies of our lives. But, isn't it better to look at and focus on how blue the sky is rather than looking at and focusing on the flat tire on your car or the weeds growing over your relative's grave? I am going to step away from this, and I am going to go out and live. I have a long, long life ahead of me, and I may as well make it the best life that I can make it and cherish every moment with every person I meet. And while I am out living, I want you to promise that you will too. I want you to promise me that you'll ask that one girl/guy out that you've been eyeing for weeks, get a crazy haircut and dye your hair bright pink, read that book that's been sitting on your bookshelf for two years, travel to a country you've never heard of just for the sake of travelling. I want you to live because we are all placed here for a reason, and why not do everything you can while you can? Alright, goodbye, go out and live, God bless all of you, and thank you very much for all of your time.

- By Maleaha Brings Plenty