

LIVE, NOW.

My life has never been fuller than after I was issued a death sentence.

Okay, I am being melodramatic. We are all issued death sentences.

Some of us though, have a more urgent expiry date than others.

The beauty of being told that you have a chronic disease with no cure is that you know what is likely to be your cause of death. If it isn't the actual disease that kills you, a related illness will get you in the end. Or you could simply die from old age.

Death is inevitable.

Everyone is heading towards the same destination. Everyone has one thing or another wrong with them - be it physical, mental or emotional. What of it?

I am not going to go into discussions of heaven or hell, or ponder the morality behind political correctness and societal mores.

I'm just talking about the here and now.

More importantly, I wish to talk about the *now*.

If you forget everything else in this article, please remember at least one thing - be happy NOW.

It seems so cliché to say you never really know what you've got till it's taken away from you, or almost taken away. But it is so true.

Before being diagnosed with an autoimmune disorder, I lived my life in the haphazard way that many are wont to do.

I was born, grew up, went to school, made friends, graduated and found a job. That was life. There were minor and major dramas along the way, and I'm sure my experiences were no more exciting than most. But it was MY life. That's what made it interesting (at least, to me).

I had the existential questions lingering in the back of my mind. What was this all about? What was the meaning of life?

I never really had to give it much thought because there was always so much else to worry about, like - what payments need to be made, who will I be meeting up with today, or I wonder if I will make it to work on time.

I try to figure out when my life began to shift. My memories come in fits and starts and I can't remember exactly when things changed. They just did.

I think good or ill, really is just a matter of opinion.

I can choose to be bitter and really angry about being diagnosed with Lupus. But in hindsight, this may be one of the best gifts that the Universe has ever given me.

It's just there. Inconvenient, scary, painful, unfortunate, but it just is. I'm not in a mood for a pity party. That's just the fact of the matter.

Let's spell it out, just for the hell of it. Systemic Lupus Erythematosus.

I'm not contagious. Let's move on.

We all have to grapple with the same basic concepts.

Good and evil.

Love and hate.

Living and dying.

The quality of your life is not determined by the years that you span, but in the minutes that you live.

I mean *really* live.

There are many days when we get so caught up in doing what needs to be done that we cavort from one task to another, not being able to fully appreciate what we have now.

Stop reading for a moment and think - where am I at this very moment? Am I sitting comfortably? Is there nothing else I'd rather be doing other than being here? Is there anything I can do to make my experience of being alive - better?

I am caught up in superlatives.

Better, best, happier, happiest, worse, worst.

To some, mediocrity equals death. That isn't a bad thing per se, but I want more out of life. MY life.

I aspire to do great things and make a name for myself. I want to be doing something important and noteworthy that will make my life a shining example for those who come after. I want my family and friends to be proud of me. I want to be liked enough so I don't have to feel lonely.

I want to see and be seen. I want to live.

I want this, I want that, but what am I really doing about it?

Everyone has got to make a living. Yes. I agree. Not many will hire me. But I write anyway. It's something I can do. The pay isn't much, but I'm not complaining.

*Little drops of water,
Little grains of sand,
Make the mighty oceans
And the pleasant land,
Thus the little minutes
Humble though they be
Make the mighty ages
Of eternity*

- Julia Fletcher-Carney

Things have changed considerably since I have had Lupus. I'd had the prospect of a healthy and normal life snatched away from me, and it isn't until nearly four years later that I am beginning to understand what a gift that is.

I was too caught up in my life that I had no time for those I loved. I was too busy making a living to have a life. I was too worried to fail that I kept putting off doing anything I really cared about.

I complicated my life in ways that only a human can.

I put forth that each moment you breathe is as important as being given an academy award. Although if all moments were as golden, how could I possibly say it stands out from all the other moments of my life?

Therein, lies the rub.

I need the noncommittal moments of life to make me feel like I am living in a movie script. What kind of movie would my life be? I would like to think that the movie that is my life can be considered an action packed suspense comedy. Likely that it would play more like a documentary or a self-help video or "how not to live out your days". I may be a bit hard on myself. As most humans can be - so what's the point?

I remind myself to just keep moving.

These days, I revel in the minutia of life. I live in moments, marked mostly by various degrees of pain (or the blissful absence of it – which is rare).

I sit and enjoy a cup of coffee and just take in the scenery. I get things done on most days, but on others, I don't get a single "productive" thing accomplished. But I stay in that moment, and move on to the next as it passes.

I move from one thing to another and try to take pride in the fact that I've got another day under my belt. Mission accomplished, another day done and accounted for. Great day! Superlative!

I make my goodbyes like they're the last I'll ever make. I make my hello's like the I'm never going to meet a new person ever again. I look around at things like it's the first and last time I am ever going to see these things. I take things for granted here and there, but I often snap back and remember to take note of stuff I've chosen to ignore. I do my best to take accountability for my actions.

I wish for – a day where everything feels right – even if nothing particularly spectacular occurs. I wish for a smile that comes from the soul and shines out through my eyes. I trust that I will remember to worry about things I can control – and although I will forget this occasionally – I trust that I will remember to be happy – not later – not tomorrow – but now.

All these things and more I wish - For you, for me and for everyone that ever is and will be.

The Universe loves you, so rock on!