

I Will Not Say Battle

Life isn't victory because existence isn't a competition, writes brain cancer blogger Adam Hayden on day one of a recurrent chemo cycle.

March 18, 2024 By [Adam Hayden](#)

I will not say battle.

It's more like a negotiation.

Battles are absolute: To the victor goes the spoils (life).

But life isn't victory because existence isn't a competition.

I mean, okay, survival of the fittest, but that's about fitness to an environment, not fitness as measured by wellness gurus and keto bros.

Existence is more like a marathon and survival is endurance.

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Death is not defeat.

Unless we have a species of losers.

The Cubs broke that curse, and wouldn't you know it, I saw them win the World Series on the old flat screen last time I was on chemo. In fact, they're playing a spring training game at 3:05 pm EST today. Go ~~Cubs~~ Chemo Go!

Every story must have an ending, and life is a narrative. Narratives don't cede defeat, they conclude, and being authors of our own conclusion is a loss only if we did not consider a final chapter before submitting the manuscript. So do consider the latter half of your narrative even when, especially when, you're living through the filler. Don't stop at the final chapter. Keep the epilogue open for when you reach it, but chapters three through twelve are aimless if you aren't authoring your life with chapter eighteen in mind.

Eighteen.

Chai.

To life.

Double chai.

Triple chai.

May your memory be for a blessing.

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It's more like a negotiation.

But, Adam, we all cannot and will not conclude our lives in the ways that we imagine, so should we really be thinking about the end of our stories while we're living it? Isn't that fatalist?

Just because you spilled a mug of coffee on your novel or left it on the train, doesn't mean the author didn't have an ending to the plot only because you didn't reach it. So always be writing the conclusion. I'd rather edit than publish a version I wasn't happy with.

Some things will change today. They already have.

It's recurrent chemo cycle day one, well, night one. It's coming up in a few hours.

I made food decisions today. It's fine. I'm getting strict again. I'm getting anecdotal. I'm getting all case study like. All n of 1 like. All gluconeogenesis and macrophages.

I'm making other decisions today, too.

Decisions for a more structured routine.

I'll stare at the mature trees in our yard a little more today. How the big oak is already beginning to bud in February. The wisdom of the trees is to stay rooted in the winter. The branches expose their naked vulnerability only to be garbed in green a season later. Ain't it something. The trees live their lives with trust that nutrients will come, and if we continue to destroy the ecosystem, the trees won't stop converting carbon dioxide into oxygen only because we may have passed the climate tipping point. The trees live their cycles unaware whether the soil will dry up or smog will block the sun or trap the heat or melt the ice or flood the coasts or kill the polar bears. They trust each day that the environment provides. We should all be so lucky to live with that trust, which doesn't mean ignoring trouble but it means to always show up and do our part. And our part isn't for us, it's for you. So pay your damn taxes and volunteer your time.

Calls for potential assistance have been made. "Can I reach out in the morning this week? I'm starting chemo, and it may be a little rough in the mornings to get the kids ready for school and off the bus."

You do not recruit soldiers by inviting assistance. But you do live life that way, because life is not victory and existence is not a competition. It's a marathon, and if you want to go quickly you go alone, but if you want to go far, you go together.

I will not say battle.

I will say: Story. Narrative. Endurance. Negotiation. Trust. Duty. Shared decisions. Support.

But I will not say battle.

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