

Wishes for a Well-Lived Life (Before You Croak).

BY: JODI WELLMAN

I HOPE YOU SEE THINGS... that take your words and breath away with the dynamic duo of wonder and awe... like the first tulip of the year — insistent on pushing its way through wintry soil to live its brief but beautiful life above ground (kind of like you: beautiful and alive and totally temporary).

I hope you see the far-flung corners of this wild and wonderful world: the craggy mountains, the smooth, wind-swept sand dunes, and the frothy waters that beg to be whitewater rafted on with gleeful abandon.

I hope you see the welcoming smiles of old friends and the snaggle-toothed smiles of strangers in new countries.

I hope you see free solos and triple salchows and perfect 10s and Oscar-winning performances that make you shake your head in astonishment for what humans can do with themselves. I hope you see a gleaming, bright future ahead for yourself.



I HOPE YOU TASTE THINGS THAT DELIGHT YOU... spices that detonate little flavor bombs in your mouth (hello, Ras-el-Hanout!)... like your mother's carrot cake (with almost-inappropriate layers of cream cheese frosting)... like the best burger in whatever town you've road-tripped to... like the kick ass bottle of wine you decide to crack open on a random Tuesday just because... like the comfort food that delivers on its promise right when you need it most. I hope you let food play less of a villainous role in your life and more of a nourishing role. I hope you never experience the bitter taste of regret. (Say it with me now: "More red Runtz, less regrets!")



I HOPE YOU SMELL THINGS you want to savor forever... like your baby's head (or the smell of your soggy, post-nap, furry cat's head)... like the distinct, warm, safe + enveloping smell of home... like the instant flashback smell of the perfume you wore in college... like the smell of a Parisian patisserie with impossibly flaky croissants fresh out of the oven... like juniper trees in Sedona... like your first ever holiday turducken... like the sweet smell of success.



I HOPE YOU FEEL THINGS... like sunlight on your face after a loooooong wintery winter... like the thrumming bass at a concert that feels like it was somehow always a part of your insides... like the softest fur you've ever felt and must rub against your face or else you'll just die... like the feelings of rapture, enchantment, lust, and all-consuming head over heels love. I hope you feel your feelings and don't stuff them down, because the doldrums of the lows make way for the soaring heights of the highs. I hope you feel foolish every now and then because it will be an indication you've tried things on for size (and not everything is supposed to fit).

I HOPE YOU HEAR THINGS that enter your ears and course through you like liquid life... like the thundering crash of waves at the beach... like the sound of pretty much any bird... like your favorite



song from high school when it comes on the radio... like the sound of absolutely nothing after a mindbogglingly overstimulating day... like the sound of a Champagne cork popping in eager celebration of

anything... like the voice of the person you love the very most... like the sound of your own heartbeat — thumping persistently through a stethoscope, proving that you are in fact pulsating with L I F E.

I HOPE YOU TAKE RISKS... that challenge you just enough to stretch you, that take you to the thrilling edge of discomfort all in service of learning and growing and climbing to the top of Maslow's pyramid... because the comfort zone is where vitality goes to die. I hope you punch your fears (and stagnancy and inertia while you're at it) in the throat. You won't kill them but you will maim them enough to move forward with the things that give you that "I might pee my pants" feeling on the route to feeling deliriously alive.

I HOPE YOU EMBRACE THE SILLINESS OF LIFE... by giggling often and snorting root beer through your nose as you laugh at pretty much everything. I hope you plan elaborate practical jokes. I hope you find people that make you laugh from the depths of your belly and then make them permanent fixtures in your life. I hope you stop caring if people think you might be a little bit loony or unprofessional or immature... because this finite existence really is absurd, isn't it? I hope you choose to laugh at the absurdity of it all, rather than cry about it.



I HOPE YOU TRY THINGS... things you end up being really quite good at, sure — but mostly things you fail at along the full spectrum from "mild mishap" to "legendary failure," because failure means you gave it a go instead of sitting on the sidelines playing it safe and wondering what it would have been like to try out for the volleyball team.

I HOPE YOU DO THINGS THAT DELIGHT YOU...

like reading a book that whisks you away to the salty shores of Nova Scotia in the 1950s... like adopting animals that pry your heart wide, wide open with their little claws and then curl up inside your heart forever... like finding the way to move your body that feels less like a boring obligation to exercise and more like an invitation to celebrate your energetic able-bodied-ness... like planning trips and excursions



adventures and dinner reservations and sabbaticals and all sorts of things to

pre-savor before the date of the flight is even on the visible horizon.

I HOPE YOU LEARN THINGS... like that language you've always found romantic and somehow meant for you... like learning how to play the piano (but properly this time)... like learning how to finally write the screenplay that's been burning a hole inside you all these years... like learning how to fold an origami crane... like taking that Introduction to Particle Accelerators class... like learning how to sketch your partner and not have them look like a Martian... like learning how to be even just 19% nicer to yourself.



I HOPE YOU GIVE TWO SHITS... not just one shit, but two... about your work (going to bed after a good day's work with that

distinct satisfaction of leaving it all out on the field, as they say)... about your relationships that matter



(spending quality, not-just-texting time with people who have seen you at your triumphant best and tear-and-snot-covered-face worst)... your love life (keeping the proverbial flame alive)... your leisure life (making room for hobbies that bring your unparalleled pleasure)... your



finances (planning to not die broke). I hope you give two shits about yourself (because you can't give two shits about anything else if you've forgotten to give a shit about your own body and mind).

I hope you never stop trying to quit your vices (it takes time, it's okay)



and that you never stop trying to eat more leafy green vegetables. Oh, and legumes.

I HOPE YOU MAKE YOUR WAY TO YOUR EVENTUAL DEATHBED...

with a profound sense of pride for buying the ticket and going on all the rides. Buying the ticket and sitting on the bench near the trash can isn't half as amusing or soul-stirring. I hope you squash your regrets-in-the-



making before you bite the biscuit... systematically crossing off the entries on your bucket list and course-correcting any paths you're not-so-thrilled to be traipsing down, because you can always turn back and forge a new path. (But not when you're dead.)

I HOPE YOU SUMMON UP THE COURAGE TO BREAK FREE FROM THE BULLSHIT...

like jobs that stab your soul in the face... like relationships that bring the worst out of you... like mindsets that



rob you of confidence... like addictions that rob you of aliveness... like people who drag you down... like those jeans that have never flattered your bum and never will... like habits and routines

↳ **NOPE.**

that turn you into an

impressively functioning zombie... like the stories you tell yourself that need to be rewritten pronto — because you are the author of your life and you get to narrate it however you'd like.

I HOPE YOU EXPERIENCE THINGS THAT POSITION YOU AMIDST THE VASTNESS OF IT ALL...

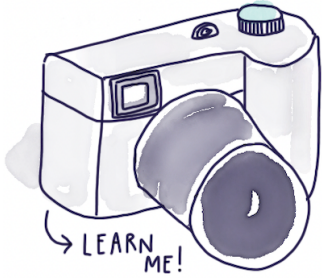
like the depths of the Grand Canyon that scales your problems against the magnitude of the universe you were somehow lucky enough to have been born into. I hope you find yourself swept up amidst a sea of strangers on a hustling and bustling big city sidewalk, distinctly aware that you're not alone in your desire to not screw up, to be liked, to be seen, to gain the approval of your parents, to like your life just a little bit more, to have your deodorant please work in a pinch, to navigate the human condition with some semblance of grace.



I hope you peek through a telescope to see the stars and planets and galaxies and nebulae and frayed edges of black holes, to ponder your strangely reassuring insignificance — realizing that you matter but that other things matter, too.

I HOPE YOU...

- Go start that 7-week photography course!
- Go get in line for the roller coaster!
- Go take that conversational Turkish course!



- Go plan that trip to Prague!
- Go adopt the dog with the sad eyes!
- Go dancing past midnight!
- Go try Pilates!
- Go look up your fifth grade best friend!
- Go ask for a raise!
- Go ask that guy out at Starbucks!
- Go start your own business already!
- Go to grad school!
- Go tell your Dad you love him more than he'll ever know!



- Go pack a picnic with plenty 'o rosé!



- Go get a life-changing haircut!
- Go donate blood!
- Go apply for that grant!
- Go smile at a stranger!
- Go read a mystery novel!
- Go try a biryani recipe!
- Go crack open "the good stuff"!
- Go act like a tourist in your own city!
- Go reminisce over your favorite summer vacation photos!
- Go have some sex!
- Go plan a fabulous potluck dinner party!
- Go take a nap!
- Go plan a personal retreat afternoon!
- Go live like you mean it!



I HOPE YOU REGULARLY COUNT YOUR REMAINING MONDAYS...

because while it's true that you're dying as you read this, there is still time to live it up before you definitely, absolutely, no-doubt-about-it

die. I hope you live a squander-free life. I hope you die with the distinct feeling that you killed it, this life of yours. You

have no time to waste!



JODI WELLMAN can be found over at *Four Thousand Mondays*, talking all about how the Grim Reaper can inspire us to live lives that are wider and deeper. It's kind of her life purpose.