The Fire and Fury of Hep C

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Growing up with Hep C colors the world very differently. Because I knew early, I avoided alcohol from the get-go. I'd like to think it allowed my liver to keep going to thirty. My biggest fear wasn't dying, but accidentally infecting someone else. Over time I found my paranoia getting the better of me. I abhorred physical contact, because it added to the layered stress of social interaction. Having notified the school of my condition I was kept out of PE. I wasn't shy about the topic, and the stigma merely fueled my rebellious teenage self. I clung to that rage, it felt justified, but often when we're young we misidentify the real emotions at play.

The treatments to me, looked like hell, having personally watched my mother take the non-pegylated interferon. But I knew that it was the only way out, my hope was that someday the treatments might not be so bad. (I'm glad to say that modern day treatments as oral pills, with minimal side effects are a walk in the park by comparison, having taken three of the old and three of the new.) My rage pushed me through rough moments, it wasn't a will to live, but my reluctance to die that moved me forward. By 18, by the time I was eligible for treatments I wasn't sure when I should start. (Thankfully now they have treatments for children too!)

But the rage pushed me forward, I developed a notion that I would largely be unable to control how I lived, so I should control how I died. I knew that at some point liver disease would take away large portions of my life, so I did everything I could to mitigate it. I worked out, ate relatively healthy, fostered life-long friendships and developed a healthy emotional state. When the symptoms began piling up, I turned to my rage, it had outlived its usefulness. I knew that in the coming years I would be weaker in every way, and rage could get the better of me. So I broke it down, through writing. In writing, emotions could be separated, I could take the sadness and stillness from my rage. I could take out the Joy from vengeance. And the fury faded when I stopped focusing on the problems and started focusing on solutions.

I'd stoked a fire within, I'd focused my idea of vengeance on the virus and gotten nowhere. So it was time to do more. I found my salvation in advocating for others like myself with Hep C, and talking about it. It was odd to me at first, that what was a problem when I was younger had become a solution with age, but sometimes in life, when rage colors our gaze we should seek to see the world without it.

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