

As I celebrate 50 (OMG, 50???) years of life on this amazing planet, I can't help but reflect on those 50 years.

The conclusion? I am indescribably grateful for the charmed life I have led (and lead). I am an incredibly lucky woman, for more reasons than I can begin to recount. It isn't lost on me that where I am today is the sum total of every moment, all the good, the bad, and everything in between, that I've experienced since entering this wonderful world on a snowy, sunny March morning.

And while I've had an amazing, full life, it's not just that life that I'm grateful for, it's my tribe. That beautiful group of people I've encountered along the way has made this life the wonder that it is. And those people, YOU, matter to me, more than you know. Each and every one of you is a part of the journey I've walked and the life I've enjoyed.

And while I am a gift-loving girl, it is truly your presence in my life that is the real present. Whether it was yesterday or a lifetime ago, stateside or in Costa Rica, a brief encounter at work, a lifelong friendship, a neighborhood thing, a fleeting romance, a childhood friendship, a blood connection, or something in between, your presence in my life has shaped me in a special way.

The specifics of the conversations may have been long forgotten, but the feeling has not. You've touched my heart. And for that, I am forever grateful.

On this milestone birthday, I would love nothing more than to celebrate with you, to have a special moment with you, another conversation, a hug, a laugh, a drink, a meal, but time, distance and the fleetingness of life make that impossible. So please, allow this letter to act as a poor substitute for the real thing.

No, I'm not dying. I'm just a 50-year-old woman humbled by the life I've led and all of the incredible people who have graced it.

Thank you for being one of them.

I love you.
Shannon 

I've often lamented that we wait until someone dies to talk about what we loved about them. And why? Wouldn't we all like to hear that while we're alive and can appreciate it?

For some reason, this one has been harder to wrap my head around. Maybe it's having a grandchild, maybe it's staring down an empty nest, whatever it is, for whatever reason, it's been a bit unsettling.

And then, a friend of mine said something super poignant... "It's a privilege not afforded to everyone." Mic drop.