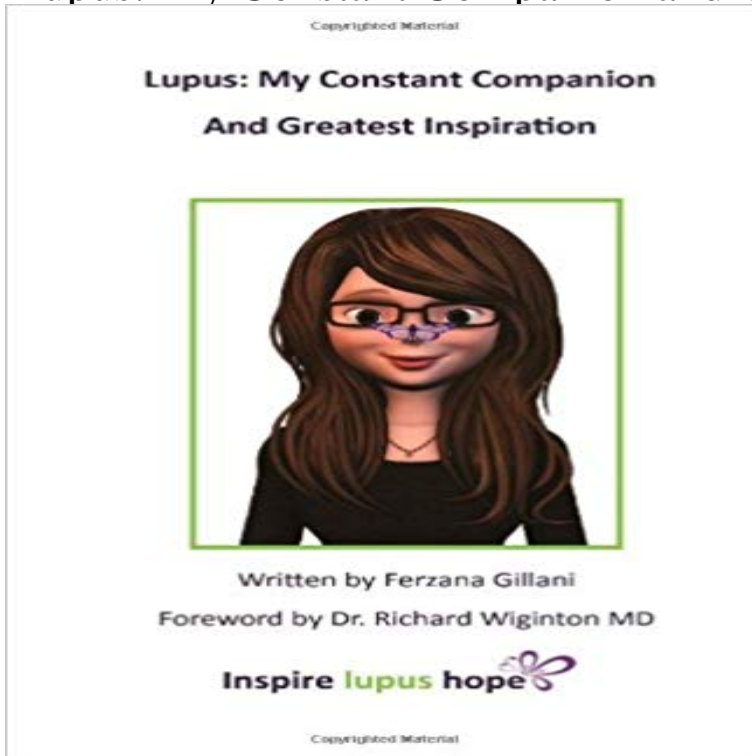


Lupus: My Constant Companion and Greatest Inspiration



I was diagnosed with Systemic Lupus in 2008, after a year of pain and confusion in my body. My symptoms came to a head when I took vaccinations in preparation for a trip to Africa and then spent three weeks under the African sun. I returned home to a confirmed diagnosis of lupus and spent a turbulent few months trying to make sense of the drastic changes that were happening to me. When I first heard of my diagnosis I felt extremely vulnerable, broken, lost and helpless. I desperately looked for messages of inspiration and hope as far as my new diagnosis was concerned but I was unsuccessful. Over time though, armed with more awareness about lupus, I realized that almost every side effect of the disease and the medications could be managed (and counteracted in some cases), and I began to feel like I could regain much of the energetic life I once had. Now, having lived through a complete transformation from weakness to empowerment and even gaining a deep sense of gratitude for all that lupus has inspired in my life, I wanted to share everything I have learned, in an objective way by allowing the reader to follow me on my journey. I have listed every bad judgment as well as every success through my experience as a way to support self-discovery in others touched by lupus. I'm a firm believer that we need to be our biggest advocates and having all the information around us, empowers us to make better decisions toward our own well-being. By sharing my journey, I hope others can avoid a lot of the fear, panic, confusion and despair that often comes with this diagnosis. I also hope to relay an alternate perspective about facing chronic illness: in my experience, lupus has shaped me in ways I never imagined and through it I have a deeper sense of inner peace and balance and I sincerely look to my lupus as being my greatest inspiration. I hope to be that message of inspiration and hope that I

looked for, unsuccessfully, when I was first diagnosed.

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