Dear Diary,

Wow how the time is flying by. Quarantine is bringing a mixed blend of emotions and experiences every day.

It’s somehow already two weeks into April… so I have a bit to debrief here.

First, Matt and I broke it off. I realized that I was feeling stressed about the thought of having a relationship with someone and needing to prioritize them in my busy life. I do care about Matt, but I also know that there are parts of him that I am not as much of a fan of. First, he talks too much. When I’m with him, sometimes I love that part of him. Other times, I just want to be able to be in control of the conversation or I want him to ask me more questions about myself so that he shows curiosity for me. I can tell he isn’t as mature as some of the men I’ve been with. He seems to have very specific opinions about things and tends to talk about them like they are the one and only truth. He often over speaks and over shares (which actually I love when he is talking about us and our connection and how he feels), but he’ll forget what he has shared, which means that many times when he is speaking for long periods of time, he is repeating things to me that he’s already told me. This can get annoying. I can tell he is a bit impulsive in his emotions as well. None of these traits by themselves are deal breakers. But the fact that I was dwelling on some of this subconsciously while also realizing that I can not make time for a relationship right now made me realize that it was time to call it.

I told him over the phone while he was in the desert (escaping from the virus and finding some solitude - whether it was for me or for him… I’m not sure). I basically told him I’d like to have him in my life, but I can’t build a relationship with him. I can’t promise him my time but I can promise him my care for him. He took some hours to think about it, and realized that it would hurt him too much to have me in his life in a way that wasn’t what he needed. I respect that he made that decision. I am really appreciative that he stayed true to his own needs and wants. So now we are apart. He is back home with his father in Chicago and I am still in Boulder. I’m happy to be alone again. Sure, it can be lonely to not have a romantic partner. But I know that at least where I am at in life right now, it is the better decision. I love myself and I am happy to be alone. I am happier when I am in complete control over my life and when I don’t have to think about someone else’s needs. It’s the same reason I can’t have a pet, I don’t have enough bandwidth to be responsible for someone else’s needs right now. I need to focus on my own things.

Speaking of which… here are some of my own things:

The podcast! Radical AI launched last week and we already have hundreds of listens! We have been getting so much engagement online and I am honestly shocked at how the pieces are falling together. If I am being completely honest here… I have been losing motivation for SciFi iRL. Maybe it is because we have been losing viewership, which makes it difficult for me to find the motivation to spend countless hours editing episdoes. Maybe it’s because I am spreading myself too thin across multiple platforms that surround the same topic. If I had to choose at this point between Radical AI and SciFi iRL, I would choose Radical AI. But I have commited to this, so I will continue to see it through. It doesn’t help that everything is over zoom now, it makes it hard for me to find as much joy in the editing and the process. But alas - I will get over myself and I will continue to pull out the work so that I can keep showing up for both Shamika and Dylan. I do feel like I am not putting in enough work into either project now because I have spread thin myself across both platforms.

In the future, I will need to set boundaries… I’m not sure what they’ll look like yet. Perhaps a month in between SciFi iRL seasons to get a rest. Perhaps forcing Dylan to actually slow his roll so I don’t have to spend 20+ hours on Radical AI stuff after our initial launch momentum has worn off.

I am so impressed with the quality of people we have been getting to accept interviews on the podcast. I am really excited to finally have a product that I want to share with people and that people actually want to engage with. This is by far the closest to successful I have felt with a side project. I am really excited to see where it goes.

To be honest again, I wish my life could just be these side projects. I am definitely ready for a break from school this summer - though I feel like I am slightly dreading this internship. I’m not sure why either! I love the idea of getting money, but I feel very nervous about the idea of needing to work with industry code again. Luckily Wesley is my saving grace here. The fact that I will be physically with him and able to have him to answer my questions and teach me without me needing to feel guilt or self-consciousness over my probably inevitable inability to understand the codebase will be so helpful and needed. I actually don’t know if the internship is still on though… I technically haven’t received my offer letter yet.

Fortunately, if the internship falls through, I can still do research for the university over the summer. That will be really nice actually because I will likely be continuing some of my research for them anyways, so this will just be my way of getting paid for it!

Back to my side projects for just a moment: here is a pro and con combo for doing these partner projects. PRO: When I have a partner I am forced to be accountable and follow deadlines and actually perform and follow through with creating the product (something that I struggle to do on my own). CON: I feel like I have joined two ideas (SciFi iRL was Shamika’s idea and Radical AI was Dylan’s idea) which makes me feel like I subconsciously give them more power over the project. Maybe it is good for me to practice not feeling the need to control something so much, but it definitely makes me wonder and hope in the future that I’ll be able to be in charge of projects and initiatives that are birthed from me where I am the sole leader and people can look up to me for guidance.

It’s all about that patience. I need to continuously remind myself to stay patient.

\*takes break to Tweet for Radical AI for a few minutes\*

It’s crazy how side projects can take over my life when I enjoy them. I love that I spend all day pursuing my passion.

It’s wild to me how far I’ve come in such a short amount of time!

I am going to be guest interviewed in CSC 300 for Nicholas’ class soon. I reached out to him about it, but he told me he was planning on reaching out to me as well! I love that I have created and am continuing to create an image of myself in this field that is in parallel with who I want to be and who I’d like to become.

When I envision an ideal future for me, I am leading people. I have successful creative projects, like the podcast and SciFi iRL - but that people consistently engage with and enjoy.

I am leading students and mentoring others, but am still guided by my own network of mentors. I am working on things that are important and respected, that I love and feel fulfilled by. I have enough time for friends and family outside of work as well, and I am not consumed by my career (as I am now). I am okay with being married to my work right now though, at least until my PhD is over. I’ll only be 27 at that point. Then I’ll have done my work and proved my worth so that I can take a step back and allow for things outside of my career to hold a bigger place.

I am just so fortunate and grateful to be able to dedicate my life to a career that is so meaningful to me. I enjoy my life and my work so much.

I will start to back down a bit soon. Over the summer I will try my best to give myself more time for family and friends. I’m going home mid-May for a bit. I think I’ll start by committing to a month, but I could see myself staying home realistically until probably mid-July. (who knows… maybe longer? But probably not. Though it all depends on the virus.) I was initially feeling reservations about going home, but I am actually starting to get more and more excited about the idea of getting to spend a lot of time with my family :) I am so grateful to have the opportunity too, it’ll be like we are all growing up again!

**I am so grateful at how close my family has become**. When I compare where our family was 5 years ago to now, it is astounding me to me how close we have all gotten. My family means so much to me. Even just thinking about this fact makes me more excited to go home to them for a while. I should definitely take this opportunity and utilize it, who knows if and when we will ever have this opportunity again.

I am still going strong on my sobriety from weed. Today is day 84!!!

I have taken adderall several times in the past few weeks though, and drank a few beers. So this isn’t full sobriety exactly, but significantly reduced drugs than ever before. I don’t feel the need to be fucked up. Even when I drink a beer, I don’t feel an urge to have a second drink. I’ve only had a second drink once in months, and it was over the span of like 6-7 hours. I love the feeling of mental clarity so much. When I wake up in the morning, even if I feel tired or overwhelmed from work or the impending day… I feel how great my brain feels and I know that I have treated my body well, and that fact alone makes me feel motivated to get up, make my bed, brush my teeth, get dressed, hydrate my body, and get my shit done.

I love waking up to piano music and watering my plants. I love feeling like I am taking care of me. I love falling asleep away from a screen, in a room that is dark, with nothing but my thoughts lulling me to sleep, as my hands rest gently on my belly and my heart in a silent sleep-inducing meditation.

It’s funny how so many people warned me about what getting a PhD would do to my body. My mom warned me about Stormy’s hair falling out and others told me about how they have lost themselves and their bodies and sanity to the PhD… but so far (at least in my mental clarity of 2020 sobriety from weed) - I have been building better systems for my mental and physical health than ever before.

This quarantine has been such an important practice for me to reassess my relationship with food. It’s interesting being at home all of the time and battling my impulses to overeat or eat while watching tv and numbing myself if I feel stressed. Fortunately I am not numbing with drugs, which helps me stay aware of when I have overeaten. But I’ve definitely felt internal impulses to overeat off and on throughout the last month or so in quarantine. I’ve been working through them. It helps that I have roommates constantly in the kitchen, so I can’t hide my food from anyone easily. It keeps me pretty accountable. Sure, I’ve ordered food like ice cream and burritos and thai food and over eaten a bit in that regard, but those cases are few and far between, and sometimes my body actually really needs some extra food. Especially as I’ve been starting to run more frequently. I actually felt a bit of a running high the other day when I went for a long run and hike through the NCAR trails. I haven’t been sticking to any sort of yoga routine unfortunately, but I know that it will take time for me to get back into that. Again, it’s all about that patience.

I’m hoping to get back into a meditation routine as well. I know it would be really good for me.

I read a quote the other day that said, *what if we recharged ourselves as often as we recharge our phones*. That really stuck with me. I need to remember to take care of myself as often as possible. It’s important to remind myself that I set most of my deadlines, and to keep perspective on life as a whole when I let myself get stressed over work. This last weekend was great for me to remind myself the joy of slowing down to recharge.

I am really excited to continue my amazing work and to see where these projects take me. I am excited to go home and spend time with family for a bit. I am so grateful to be living this crazy life I am living.

**I’m feeling it all**. The goods, the bads, and the in-betweens.

Life isn’t black and white. It’s a million shades of grey. Rather, it’s a fucking rainbow. I’m loving every shade of it.

~ Jess

Age 23 ½

P.S. I finally feel the warmth and welcoming and exciting feeling from roommates and a home that I had wanted all of my college career from this house. I am so excited to continue to live here for a long time <3