Oh boy, what a time to be alive.

So many thoughts have been going on in my head and I feel like I haven’t given myself time to process them.

Here are the things that need processing in my life:

1. Dad’s near-death fall
2. What Dad’s accident means for the family’s flying hobby
3. If I should fly before I leave for Colorado
4. What leaving for Colorado and leaving Utah means for me
5. What going back to Colorado means for me
6. What Dylan and my relationship is and should be when I get back
7. What happened between Sam and I while I was in San Diego
8. How I am feeling today, this summer, and in general (check-in on self care, mindfulness, and general life)
9. **Dad’s near-death fall**

I am starting to slowly feel better about the initial shock of Dad’s accident. It’s been such an interesting experience to take care of Dad the last few days… I feel like it’s the closest that I have been to him in *years*. He is so grateful for me and so appreciative of my care for him, and it honestly feels really… nice. (Total side note: I just received one of the nominations for the Ada Lovelace scholarship from my department!! Woot!!)

Anyways, back to Dad. It feels really nice to care for him. I was feeling a bit burnt out yesterday and the day before (because of the emotional strain and initial shock of it all and also feeling like a fish out of water when it comes to nursing him). But today I felt like I was hitting a groove, and Wesley and Eric were really helping out a lot too which was great. I finally dialed in his pain pills and I feel like we found a nice sweet spot between delirious and in-pain.

Taking care of Dad has made me realize how wonderful it is to have family. Eric admitted to me the other day in a very nonchalant way that he is planning on getting married and having kids. I think Wesley has made a lot of indications that he plans on getting married at some point too. I don’t know if he plans on having kids though. For me… well, I don’t know where I stand.

I see how fucked up Mom and Dad’s marriage is and it makes me never want to get married in my entire life. (Also total side note: Eric is sitting at the kitchen counter right now and he just told me he is lonely, which is why he is so whipped by this girl Christina that he is seeing).

Anyways, yeah. Mom hasn’t been there for Dad at all since he came home. She’s in the busiest week of her entire school year, so I empathize that she just needs to strap in and get it over with. I think if she doesn’t show some care for him this weekend though, then Wesley, Eric, and I are going to talk to her… because if she isn’t wanting to be there for him… then what does that mean?

I do really hope that Mom and Dad start to see a relationship therapist if they continue to stay married for the rest of their lives.

Back to Dad though, I think the biggest looming unknown in the aftermath of his accident at this point is whether or not we will all fly still or not.

1. **What Dad’s accident means for the family’s flying hobby**

Eric and I very much still want to fly. Wesley initially was acting like he was going to quit. And then he was acting like he didn’t want to. Now he’s conflicted. We all are. It’s hard because flying is such a happy place and an escape for all of us. Eric and I dedicated most of our summers to flying… and now to have it ripped out from under us right as I get my certification.. It’s almost like the universe is flipping us off.

It’s hard because on the one hand I am so grateful that Dad is alive and that his accident was only a broken back… which makes me wonder if we should just stop pushing the agenda and if we should just call it on the sport and listen to the signs from the universe that this sport is too dangerous.

On the other hand… I want to fly so badly. The thought of not being able to fly again (and especially the thought of Eric and Wesley not being able to fly again) makes me so sad…

But the thought of either Wesley or Eric flying also **scares the shit out of me**. Which I didn’t realize until now… It will be so much harder for me to be relaxed knowing that the family is still flying and could die from this sport.

I keep telling Wesley and Eric that if I continue to fly, I will only fly if I become *amazing*. But do I have the ability to push through the PTSD and the fear of myself getting hurt and the existential fear of my family getting hurt or even worse?

I feel wildly conflicted and I honestly don’t know what to do. Wesley and Eric are also in the same boat. It’s a hard choice.

I try to keep reminding myself that I just need to be patient, and even though it is a bummer that I am here for this week and it would be so perfect to fly while I’m here… I have my whole life to fly if I choose to do that.

Side Note: Eric just told Wesley and I that it’s time like these where he is super happy that all three of us get along. And I told them that it definitely makes me happy to have siblings like them that I can depend on.

I love my brothers.

1. **If I should fly before I leave for Colorado**

Based on what I said above, I’m not going to focus on this one too much. I’ll get my paperwork done with Jonathan and get my reserve parachute… but I’ll see if I fly next week or not. No need to rush anything.

1. **What leaving for Colorado and leaving Utah means for me**

Leaving Utah is going to be emotional. I know that it will be better for me to be back living on my own (for my own stress, sanity, and self-care) - but being away from family will be harder than it has ever been before -- especially knowing that Dad will be needing a lot of help.

I love my family so much. It was interesting hearing Dylan on the phone when I was in San Diego tell me about how the universe one way or another decided it was time for me to come home. He mentioned the word “home-sick” and at the time I kind of shook it off. But now I am realizing that I might have been homesick after all.

Sam was being a shitty friend (will dissect that in a minute) and I was feeling like I needed people on my side and people who I felt comfortable around. I feel that at home more than anywhere else.

It sounds kind of redundant to say… home is what feels like home (like duh.. obviously).

But it is interesting because for so many years my home in Utah was no longer my “home”. It was a place I could go back to for support, parents, time with the brothers, free food, and respite (sometimes). But I always called “home” somewhere else. Either my apartment in SLO, the road while traveling, or my house in Boulder.

But right now… home *is* home.

It always has been and it always will be.

Not just because of the physical location (though that is true too) - but because I am surrounded by the people that make this place feel like home.

Sure, we all have our quirks. Wesley has a hard time being clean or not picking fights when he’s in a bad mood. Eric has a hard time controlling his stubbornness or micromanagement sometimes. Dad had a hard time controlling his micromanaging and constant debating and overtaking conversations. Mom has a hard time connecting with all of us and doing things that are outside of her work.

I have a hard time staying sober and being there for my family sometimes. I have a hard time taking care of myself while I am at home.

We all have hard times with a lot of stuff, especially while we are all living together.

But we all love the fuck out of each other.

I can’t imagine my life without my family. I can’t imagine my life especially without Wesley and Eric. **I love the fuck out of these boys**.

So yeah, leaving will be hard. It will be bittersweet. Because while I know that living on my own again will be really good for my mental health and really good for my personal, private, and professional life -- I also know that I will miss my family like crazy.

I am forever grateful for the time that I’ve had in Utah to live with my family this summer.

1. **What going back to Colorado means for me**

Going back to Colorado is going to be rough in many ways I’m sure. Adjusting to living with roommates again will take a little while to get used to. Adjusting to being entirely in charge of my own schedule again will be really good in some ways, and potentially dangerous in other ways (e.g., me diving right back into working like 10+ hours a day).

My goal is to try to set better boundaries, to work smarter (not harder) this upcoming semester, and to learn to say *no* to things that don’t serve me or my precious time.

I am honestly really excited to go back. Of course the circumstances of my Dad needing more help right now make it a bit harder for me to enjoy the idea of leaving… but I think if I keep my focus more on the arrival in Colorado and less on the departure in Utah, then I will be happy when I arrive.

1. **What Dylan and my relationship is and should be when I get back**

I still haven’t had much time to process this either. Fortunately, the most time that I spent processing this was in California with Claudia after Juju left. Claudia was so helpful, just being there listening to me and my concerns and my needs and giving me advice where needed.

This is where I’ve landed so far:

I think that I want to tell Dylan that I can’t be in a committed, exclusive relationship with him. I am scared to tell him that because I think it might hurt him.

But I need to be true to myself. I know that I can’t be exclusive with anyone -- it makes me feel trapped, less independent, and not myself. I know that I have no interest in being in a committed relationship right now as a 24 year old devoting her time to her career and her family and loved ones. I have spent years figuring this out about myself and being happy that that is just *who I am right now* and that these are things that *I just need right now*.

If Dylan needs something else and if he is looking for something else… well then, it pains me to say it - but I don’t think that he and I are a good fit then. It isn’t fair for me to be the only one who gets what I want.

I love Dylan. A lot. I really do. I want him in my life for a long time as a partner in many different ways. But I also need to be true to myself.

This doesn’t mean I can’t be with him. I want so badly to be with him. But I want it to be like a friendship. I don’t need validation in my friendships… I just need to trust that they care for me and that they are there for me. The love comes naturally from that.

Why can’t the same be true for relationships?

I believe it can.

But I suppose we shall see.

1. **What happened between Sam and I while I was in San Diego**

Sam was being such a dick in San Diego. From the moment that I got in his car and out of Claudia’s car at Laguna beach after dinner, he was just being such a dick to me. He was being annoying and saying things to make me angry and just not really asking at all about how I was, how I’ve been, what I’ve been up to, my views in life and on the world, and anything about me.

I felt angry at him. I was angry that he was being so mean. I was angry that he wasn’t being more intentional with introducing me to his friends, he wasn’t trying to hang out with them at their party, he wasn’t trying to ask me what I wanted to do with my time or how I was feeling… he was being so selfish.

But then again, maybe I was too? I don’t know… I think that Sam’s behavior in San Diego wasn’t okay. Because I honestly was dreading the thought of staying there longer after Saturday night. Which I guess is why Dylan made a lot of sense when he told me after my Dad’s accident on Sunday that the universe had willed me back home in some way or another.

It’s hard for me to know what to do about Sam because I feel so many mixed emotions:

1. Anger towards him and how he treats me and treated me when I was visiting him (and how he always gives me shit for not calling him enough and that’s like half of what we talk about now.. Which is not cool).
2. Gratitude towards the friend that he has been (Eric reminded me how amazing it was to meet him when he visited in Washington off of the PCT and how much respect Sam gave him). I felt *so* grateful for Sam when he immediately bought me my plane ticket home to be with the family and brought up that idea himself without any input from me. He is very supportive and has been there for me during *really* hard times of addiction, depression, eating disorders, traumatic accidents, and everything in between.
3. Love… I still feel in love with him sometimes. Obviously less after this trip with him, because I am not even remotely in love with the person he was in San Diego. But I am in love still with parts of him that I see come out, and who I know he can be. It’s a confusing emotion. I told Claudia that part of me was in love with Sam while I visited. But I also told her how I am in love with all of my close friends… of course I didn’t tell her that I am actually partially in love with her as well. Something that I will have to come to terms with some day… but that’s for another diary entry.

So what will I do with Sam? Well.. I don’t know. I think I need some space from him, and I think Eric said it perfectly the other day - I just need to reserve my time with him to be with all of the college friends. Because I love hanging out with him when I’m with our crew - but I don’t enjoy it as much when it is just he and I.

I’ll see what I do with this.

1. **How I am feeling today, this summer, and in general (check-in on self care, mindfulness, and general life)**

Alright - we’ve made it to the end! Congrats!!!

Time for a general check-in.

Well… let’s see.

I am feeling *so* much better now than I was a few weeks ago (especially at the beginning of my California trip). I was feeling incredibly burnt out from trying to spend time with family + waking up at 5 am every single morning to fly + trying to be there emotionally, romantically, and sexually for Dylan on a regular basis + trying to maintain other friendships + juggling like 3 new research projects + teaching and doing my actual job + spending soooo much time on RAI stuff…. It was **a lot**. And I felt like I wasn’t giving *any* time to myself for self-care, time to be alone/in solitude, or time to reflect, decompress, and recharge.

That’s why when I got to California I practically blew up at Dylan for having tasks for RAI and tasks for being his sexual sub and tasks for being emotionally there for him and tasks for research… I was just fucking over it.

And I’m glad I blew up like that. It needed to happen so that I could be clear about my boundaries and take the time and space that I needed.

I’m so grateful that Dylan yelled at me on the phone to take the time I knew I needed.

I’m so fucking grateful that I called off my work and research for a few weeks to decompress.

I’m so fucking grateful I’ve had the time and space that I’ve had during Dad’s initial recovery and during his accident and during my time in California.

I feel more clear headed, optimistic, and happy than I have in a long time… and that is pretty freaking insane despite the fact that Dad is in intense rehab right now.

So this is my yearly reminder to myself:

**TAKE TIME OFF WHEN YOU FEEL BURNT OUT. TAKE TIME TO YOURSELF. TAKE TIME AWAY FROM WORK AND EVEN AWAY FROM OTHERS. TAKE THE TIME YOU FUCKING NEED AND TAKE THE TIME YOU DEFINITELY DESERVE!!!**

I just got distracted because Mom came home from her super hard day at work and I can tell Eric is pissed at her for not taking care of Dad and I am trying to just be supportive of what people need (The emotional sponge as Wesley calls it).

That’s the great thing about taking rest though. The more work I do on myself, the more care and love I give to myself - the more work, care, and love I can do for and give to others.

This life is such a journey.

So many ups. So many downs. So many turns, twists, and flips….

And when there are falls…. Well, we get back up. We push through. And we continue to…

Learn,

And grow……

Always.

More soon.

Thank you Universe for gifting me this life. I will not take it for granted.

Love,

Jessie J. Smith

Age: 23