

My Journal

Dane

October 2025

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Tuesday, September 02, 2025 - 10:51 PM

Today was somewhat of a full day, and an even fuller head of thoughts. But, that's what you're for dear journal.

I started today off feeling anxious as all hell. This might seem silly further in the future, but I think a lot of it comes down to feelings about a girl. For future me who may not remember well, there's this girl Claire, who you talked to on the Benedum patio. There was a bouncy house, for whatever fucking reason, and you were smiling politely watching some *adults* enjoy the random bouncy house. It was a good moment. She noticed, and we struck up a conversation.

She was cool. Claire is a transfer student from Juniata college and is now technically a sophomore mechanical engineering student, though she'll tell you she's more of a junior. Good for her to make that switch—I'm sure that will pay off in dividends later. She is interested in prosthetics, and you recommended Humotech as a possible spot to land an internship next summer. She asked about our thesis, and how we like grad school. I'm pretty sure I gave an answer somewhere in the middle that I like it a lot but it's certainly a challenge. She had to go to class (MEMS 0024, lol), and I totally fumbled and did not get her number. She was clearly interested.

A couple days later, I saw her again on the patio when Andrew and I were going to eat lunch. We waved and exchanged smiles, but I didn't talk to her other than that. I regret that. I feel like I felt weird if I would've left Andrew alone while I did that, which probably does have some merit, but I also feel like there's an age gap problem. I'm 24, going on 25, and she's 20 (maybe close to 21?). Now that I'm writing this, I don't feel like it should be an issue really, especially if there's a vibe and they (not necessarily Claire) are mature enough. I should've said hi and been more deliberate.

Things took a turn when I found her profile on Tinder. Before, I thought she was cute and nice, but her first picture on her profile at the time is her in a pink floral two piece swimsuit, and holy moly she is hot. I have to admit I was taken pretty down hard by lust at that point. She, at the time of this writing, has not liked me back. With a profile like that though I'm sure she's getting plenty of attention and I might be lost in the stack. I'm not too pressed about it.

Knowing that her class was today (Tuesday) though, I thought I'd sit out on the patio in case we bumped into each other. I did see her, but either she did not see me, or purposefully avoided me while she was headed into class. I think she was just busy. I'll try again next week perhaps unless I see her sooner? Who's to say. Not a priority.

I had therapy today. That went okay, I guess. We talked about this feeling of feeling disconnected that I've had recently. I have felt somewhat alone even while around others, and a bit less like myself. Kind of like I have less control over what I say or do. I would really like to get a handle on that. This journal should help. Rachel also recommened checking out a self-compassion test and to give myself some credit that things are good, and it's okay to be feeling weird. It's a big transition from what I was living. She also pointed at trauma... is this a trauma response? Am I waiting for a shoe to drop?

One thing we talked about is why am I not able to bring myself the happiness I would expect to get from having a partner? Am I seeking someone because I genuinely want a relationship or because I feel like I need someone else or am bored? I think it might be the latter, and that it's not a good time for me to get serious right now. I don't want to keep my head under the sand either, but it might be a good idea to relax some. I need to be happy on my own before I can bring that happiness to the table with someone else. But we'll get there.

Lewie is feeling rough with leg pains again. Amber and I were supposed to meet up this weekend to hang out at the dog park but that has been postponed a couple of weeks. I really hope he feels better soon, I feel bad for the puppo. I thought I saw a little limp on the webcam last week, but he immediately walked it off. Maybe that concrete isn't helping. Poor thing.

Then, I went to Ngoc's grandma's wake. She was 83 when she died. It was somber, and honestly really hard to be there. Kim was particularly upset. Their family was very kind, but it reminded me of the disbelief that I had when my mom died. I remember the wake being very strange. I flitted around the room talking to different people almost as if to entertain. Like nothing was really that wrong to begin with. Then, when the pawl bearers brought the casket out, there was a realization that overtook me completely. I could see that for some of her family, they hadn't hit that realization yet.

I drove back to school after that and hung out in Matt's lab for a while. I tried to write some goals and outcomes, but didn't make any progress. It was nice to be around friends, though. Then, I gave David a ride up to the VA hospital where his car was parked.

I thought I noticed Eliana shooting looks at me. I followed her on instagram, I guess we'll see where things go.

Tomorrow I'll see Devyn and Erik! I'm very excited for that. We're getting dinner at Totopo and perhaps drinks at Hitchhiker. Devyn is interviewing at Aerotech for a new job. Good for him. It'll be nice to see Erik too.

That's pretty much it. I listened to some Matt Maltese this afternoon and that made me feel a bit better. Now that it's after midnight, I can't complain and feel more neutral than anything. I'm

excited to ride my bike in to school tomorrow.

Thursday, September 04, 2025 - 01:58 PM

So today is actually a late journal for yesterday... I got ssschleepy and went to bed.

Yesterday significantly less happened. I finished my first draft of the goals and outcomes section, I went to class, and then I got food at Totopo with Devyn and Erik (Juengling).

The first draft of my goals and outcomes section was pretty good I think, but there's still issues. For one, I've got to tighten up my goal. It's just not good enough but it must straddle a line between being too long and being jargony. There's also problems with intellectual merit. I feel like there's not one single issue that is being addressed.

We discussed this somewhat in the group meeting we had right after class. Dan started talking about how for hybrid systems the proving of stability is still very difficult. I feel like I could have some good ideas on how to solve that problem, because the answer has to exist in examining boundary behavior. I should get a move on trying some things out for that. I watched a lecture by Andre Platzer about verifying hybrid systems, and while his system of differential dynamic logic does seem to capture hybrid system behavior, it feels way too complicated.

ERLM was fun. Dan went over some goals and outcomes submissions and offered comments. I think mine would've been one of the best but I've had a head start on this whole proposal thing. Also, I feel like my writing experience lets me get ideas across easily.

The rest of the day was pretty chill. I retooled my dating profiles with some better pictures of me. One of me from the last Yinz Run Club, and one again from Jonathan's wedding. Claude thinks I need a picture that is a proof of sociability. It might be right. The results though have been dramatic. I'm certainly getting more matches and have a couple new threads going.

Then, Devyn, Erik, and I caught up at Totopo. That was a lot of fun :). Devyn is not having the best time out in King of Prussia and is interviewing for jobs out here (As well as around the country). He thinks Philadelphia Gear is a boring company to work for, and for someone with his skillset, is probably a waste of his talents. He and his girlfriend have a debt mountain that they're trying to work down too—she is having a really hard time finding a job with a biostatistics degree. They're going on 27. It was really nice to see Devyn again. I forgot how much I actually missed that guy. Erik was good too, he's working full time at Siemens now and is living in Lawrenceville with his girlfriend.

That's pretty much it from Wednesday. Today (Thursday) I woke up and didn't really get moving until close to noon. That's problematic but I do feel refreshed. Today I have the union meeting, and I'm watching the Eagles game and Andrew's.

Friday, September 05, 2025 - 11:53 AM

Similar to yesterday, I'm actually writing for mostly yesterday.

The football game at Andrew's was fun! I had a generally good time being there, but was also so tired at points I started to get really kinda bored. Mithin was there, and it was good to see him. He's a good guy. Julia also invited a friend, Kyra, who went through a breakup literally the day before. That sounds rough. Julia mentioned it must be breakup season.

Before that, I saw Logan and we got a drink at Hitchhiker. It was so nice to see him, and honestly so much more relaxed than when we went to Jolina 2's. He's doing really well. He's looking for new jobs because he doesn't love his current gig. Him and Helena ARE dating, and just hit one year. We're going to go do some autocross together in the next couple weeks and I'm inviting him to the cosy racing community, as he's been doing some sim racing lately. I'm going to bring my sim rig back from the grandparents and set it up. It'll be fun to play together perhaps! I've got to check if Assetto Corsa will run on Linux... I hope so. Some quick googling shows that it works! With some finagling, but also cosy looks dead... Maybe it's iRacing time. Maybe some other league... We'll see what Logan's got going on.

But today is Friday, and I haven't gotten a lot of work done either. I've got to get a handle on that, but at least I went for a walk today! And today I'm getting my haircut.

I also got my new glasses. They see much much better!

I am crippled by lust though. In my weakness right now I'm thinking about texting Alexa. That is such a dreadful, pernicious idea. I bet she gives great top, though.

Friday, October 03, 2025 - 05:46 PM

Hi Journal, it has been a minute. I've had a lot of updates since last time, but I've been a slacker when it comes to actually writing them. But today, I really need to write out what has been on my mind. I've been weighed down with some thoughts these past couple of days that are really affecting me.

I met a girl named Matilda on Hinge. We've been on four dates, and I can tell that she really likes me so far. She is really, really nice to me and frankly has reset the bar for me on what I expect from a partner. Matilda works in human resources for UPMC, does not drive, and lives Downtown. She does corporate HR, which basically means she does HR for other HR departments, and special one-off departments that don't have their own HR department. Apparently, hospitals have their own dedicated HR units, so shes above them, in a way.

Matilda is just over five feet tall, has blonde just-past-shoulder length hair, and gorgeous sky blue eyes. She's really quite intelligent from what I've gotten to know of her so far, and is incredibly kind. She smiles at babies, dogs, holds doors open for people, and is generally so friendly. She really inspires me in that way. She treats people with zero biases and reliable warmth.

Her family is from Sewickley. Her dad is some sort of designer, who not too long ago had his company bought and not long after was laid off. He is between jobs right now and not having a lot of luck finding work given his age. Her mom happens to work for the company that laid him off. She's got a background in government affairs, but is working in a finance role. She has a brother named Addison who does computer science work for a company called Grant Street Group. Addison lives in Brooklyn, and is a couple years older than Matilda.

One thing I really don't know about Matilda right now is about her hobbies. The last I really dug into them was on Hinge with her. She listed her hobbies as exploring PGH, reading, trying new recipes, and traveling. Do we have any of those in common..? Not particularly, but we do share some passion cooking and reading. She likes to read a lot of memoirs, she has said. She also likes to bike.

There are some things about Matilda that I really like. First, she's inspiring with how friendly she

is. She, just by being herself, makes me think that I'm too cold to the world and too defensive. She makes me feel really good about myself, is always excited to be around, and doesn't judge me. She's been very reciprocal in just about every case so far. She refuses to let me pay for some dates, bought our coffees on the first date (and refused to let me pay!), likes to be the big spoon *and* the little spoon. She's a big cuddler and I absolutely love that. There is some serious physical chemistry.

One thing I really like about Matilda is she is curious about the world and people. I feel like I can talk to her about anything. She is extremely approachable, genuinely interested in me, easy to talk to.

There are also some things about Matilda that really intimidate me going forward. For one, I really want somebody to tinker with, and I don't think she's ever going to fill that need. She does not drive, and while I don't think that's a forever problem, it's not exactly conducive to my biggest hobby being working on my cars. I really don't want to give that up, to be honest, but also I don't want to force a hobby like that on someone. That's reason enough I think it might not really work out.

But, here's another problem. I want to be a dad one day. I asked Matilda if she ever would want kids, and she opened up to me about a couple of concerns she actually has about having kids. Matilda has a DNA translocation between chromosomes 2 and 8 that places her in a much higher likelihood of having a miscarriage, or passing defects on to kids. Also, Matilda had a cleft palate when she was born, which though corrected, required several surgeries at UPMC Children's Hospital. She credits that as one of her big drivers to working at UPMC. But, she could also pass that cleft palate onto a kid. Between these two genetic issues, having kids for her is actually a super challenging issue before even considering any external factors like climate change or the current political climate. There are mitigating factors, like IVF or an egg donor, or even CRISPR, but that would be so much for her to go through if she didn't 100% want a kid, too. She said she's had previous relationships end over this topic, and honestly teared up some while talking about it.

Matilda and I have had four dates so far, which is an insanely short time to even begin to say you know someone. She makes me feel so good, but these are big issues. Am I going to fast trying to figure all these things out? Part of me feels like the answer is yes, but also part of me feels like if these are dealbreakers I need to kill things now.

Which is another thing that makes me feel crazy and horrible. Last night, I spent the night at Matilda's. We didn't have sex, but we stopped just short. We were definitely both into it (see physical chemistry), but the emotions are weighing on me very heavily. I gave her one of my hoodies to wear if she likes, which I think she really does. It makes me happy to see her so happy. But part of me is wondering if I'm settling and compromising on what I might actually need in my lifetime.

I don't know how to go forward from here. Do I really know her enough to know? How do I go forward without really hurting her? Is it too late? I don't know. I know she agrees that we barely know each other yet. Is it immoral to keep seeing her? I do like her, but this is different from the plan I had in my head. I also am worried of something more insidious, where subconsciously I'm neglecting her future pain for my short term enjoyment. That makes me feel beyond fucked up. I couldn't end things with Amber previously, and I don't want this to be the same problem. I definitely need to talk to my therapist Rachel about this next time I see her.

I'll see Sam and Eric tonight at Applebee's to discuss planning Sam's bachelor party, and maybe

we'll have some time to talk about this.

Writing about this has made me feel a bit better. Also, listening to *Year of the Banana* has helped, too.

Last but not least, I gave Matt his STI wheels back today. I overheard his dad might be going into the ER today just as we were finishing swapping wheels. I should check on him soon.

Sunday, October 12, 2025 - 09:07 PM

Hi future me, it's been another minute. But, not as long as last time though. Here's some things I want to write about tonight:

1. I'm getting closer to an internship opportunity at INL.
2. Matilda is now my girlfriend at the current moment. This might be problematic.
3. I got dinner with Lucas and his sister at Noodlehead
4. I hosted a poker night. That was fun!

So first things first.

I talked to Dan last week about how an internship opportunity might be a really good thing for me to pursue next summer. He totally agrees. I'd love to potentially do a stint at INL or somewhere similar. It could be really cool, and being in Idaho for the summer could be a lot of fun too (especially if I bring the bike :eyes). I wonder what the weather is like up there! I wrote a one page research statement for Greg Shannon, as he was interested in receiving one. Dan helped me revise it, and we got to 'better than an 8/10'. Dan is so coy about praise sometimes, but he knows it can go to my head. He's careful in that way. Keeps me guessing. I'll presume he was impressed by it.

Work is going a bit better. My motivation is pretty good, and I'm making progress on my proposal. I still don't feel completely locked in, but we're getting there. This is really challenging, and even though it's my full time task, I don't feel like I'm going as fast as I could. One proposal in a fall semester? Hmph. I know its for my thesis, and by the end of the semester if it's ready to go, I think that is good enough. I'll check back in on this thought later.

Okay, now to the dating front.

I've hung out with Matilda a few more times, and asked her to be my girlfriend. She makes me feel really good, but that in itself makes me uncomfortable. It's not the 'feeling happy' part of that that makes me uncomfortable, but when I look far into the future, do I see one with her? The answer is not really. And that fucking sucks. She is so, so nice, but if I'm being honest, I don't think we're on the same level or maybe compatible as partners.

I don't know how to end things. Part of me feels like I'm being premature, but part of me just feels so anxious and frankly guilty that I haven't cut things off with her already. I am really trying to understand why I feel this way. I know she's an adult with her own stakes and emotions, and I wonder why I just don't feel like I connect with her the same way. But at the same time, when she smiles at me and tells me she feels so special, my heart *sinks*. I don't know what else to say but to affirm her. That's fucked up.

Well we went apple picking, and that was a lot of fun. I was invited to a bonfire afterwards, and I asked her if she'd like to go. It was with a couple of my engineering friends, notably Josh, Patrick, and Logan. Everyone got along, but before we went, I asked how I should introduce her. I smoothly

said I could introduce her as ‘my girlfriend, Matilda’. Smooth, but fuck why did I do that. She was very excited, and at the moment, I felt good about it too, but now I just kind of dread this entire series of events.

Sam mentioned to me that ‘I am allowed to be happy’. And he’s right, it’s very nice to have someone that does really like me, is super nice to me, is generally supportive, and *does* make me happy when I’m with her. But there’s also other happiness that I’m trying to pursue. I feel like I need time to do my own hobbies. I like this newfound freedom that I have after breaking up with Amber. I like going on dates with different people. Fuck. I don’t want to have the *responsibility* that comes with being in a relationship right now. I just don’t think I’m ready for that.

On a different note, I got dinner and caught up with Lucas. He’s in town because his sister, Lydia, is visiting Pitt. She’s a senior in high school considering Pitt for engineering. She’s funny, charming, and I suspect she was slightly in to me. She teased me somewhat, and laughed at all my jokes. I think I was able to answer all her questions. But, maybe that’s my own arrogance. What did surprise me though is that she recognized my watch as being a Mr. Jones Watch. That really took me aback, and honestly set things somewhat into perspective. I need someone like that in my life, and while Lydia is not necessarily that person, I do not feel that *spark* with Matilda in the same way. Lucas is doing well though, and we’re going to try and keep in better touch.

Finally, I hosted a poker night. Eric, Sam, and Krzysztof came over. We had pizzas, and I won \$7.65 on 10 dollar buy ins. I’m pretty stoked about that. We’re going to run another one this next Friday :). It’s a nice guys night thing.

So I think I have to breakup with Matilda. Maybe I’m being premature, but honestly, I don’t really think so. I don’t want to hurt her worse by pretending that I’m falling for her in the way I suspect she might be falling for me. Perhaps we have got to get coffee or something soon and we can talk. I don’t know exactly what I’ll say, but probably something along the lines of:

1. I know our relationship just started, but I think we need to end it.
2. I don’t know exactly why, but I just don’t feel comfortable right now being in one, and I’m sorry I can’t be that guy for you.
3. That said, you are so, so nice and I wish I could get there emotionally, but I’m just not.
4. I’m not him for you. But I have really enjoyed getting to know you, and I wish you the best of luck going forward.

It’s going to suck, but I’d imagine we’d be non contact after that. I don’t know what I would want, but that’s probably what I’d go with. I hate that I’m so romantic because fuck I worry this will crush her in a way. In the future, no more flowers or pizzas from scratch? Is making someone feel too special a bad thing?

Of course not, that’s silly I think. Those can still be positive memories even if it doesn’t work. Fuck this will be an adjustment, and I’ve never done this before. I just don’t want to feel so tumultuous right now.