

Intro

I am 17 years old. I am majoring in Biochemistry and Bioengineering. I am from Salt Lake City, Utah. I love anything to do with STEM, and I love my cat Squeaky very much. I love to ski and hike. I am interested in going into research toxicology with a specialization in animal venoms. I would love to go to Australia to work, and I want to get my Ph.D. there.



(My cat Squeaky)

7/16/2020

I am not creative enough to do a musical or artistic rendering of this transition, so I will write about it. The first two entries will be the longest since I will divide up what occurred before this started. In this one, I plan to cover what my graduation was like, and in the next one what my summer was like until this point. I'm uncertain where this will end up, most likely word-vomit, but we will see.

School moved online on March 16th. It was odd, which I guess is an understatement. One day I was complaining about waking up at 6:30, and then the next day high school as I knew it was over. I would never again have to fight my way through crowds of people talking in

the halls to get to class. I would never pass the second-floor bathroom and smell someone vaping again. I don't think my teachers knew what to do with themselves. Either my classwork dropped off to me having no work to do, or it increased to me having an essay due every other day. No one had ever planned for this because really? Who suspected a pandemic would happen?

I like to joke that the world doesn't want me to have a normal year of school. Senior year was my first year that school was actually going well for me, and then a pandemic goes and messes it all up. My therapist wants me to "mourn" my lost senior year and I don't know how to do that. This entry will hopefully count as what she expects. I missed my senior band trip, where we were going to see *The Phantom of the Opera* in Vegas. I missed my prom. I didn't miss much in the social scene, considering that I already had zero friends to hang out with anyway. The main thing is that I missed was my AP tests. I know that sounds like such an odd thing to say, but I did. As much as they stressed me out, they were the norm for me. I have done every AP class that I could since 9th grade, and that was just the way that I typically ended the school year, so to miss out on that gives me a feeling of emptiness I guess. It will always be a part of my life that will remain unresolved. That is what I am supposed to mourn, but I don't know how to. I mean I got my diploma May 22, so that "resolves" the end of twelve years of awfulness, but it doesn't affect the feeling of emptiness that I still have. I try to push it back into a little box in my brain but it is bound to resurface at some point.

I guess I've gotten a tad sidetracked. I'm supposed to talk about the transition from high school, so I guess it is time to talk about graduation. I "graduated" May 22. And I use the term graduation loosely. On the 22nd was when I received a manila envelope handed to me by a counselor in a rain poncho in the parking lot of my high school. We had a "parade" for us, where we all got in our cars and drove to the school and went around the parking lot. It was raining heavily, but all the teachers were out in their raincoats waving to us. It was not my thing, I just wanted the diploma, but my mom was loving it. She was in the backseat waving and cheering and all that. It was quite a depressing sight. I technically "walked" for graduation on the 18th. I went into the school with my graduation cap and gown on and walked across the auditorium stage and got a picture taken. It all took about a minute and then I was done. The whole thing was surreal, and I don't think that I will ever believe that it was real. I know that I have the diploma and my cap, so I know it happened, I don't trust that it did happen if that makes any sense. I'm rambling at this point so I am going to stop. Besides pizza is coming soon so I'm going to stop writing this.

I don't know how to end this. I'm going to stop talking now.

7/19/20

I might try to do this only on class days. So then it isn't me trying to remember to do this every day and it gives me more content to write with. And now saying this, I realize that this isn't a class day, but last entry I promised to describe my actual summer so I'm going to do that before class tomorrow. My summer wasn't much, which is to be expected. If I'm completely honest, my summers are never very entertaining. I've never had much of a social life and this year was no different. I have a total of two friends: one lives in Maryland, and the other parents hate my parents and vice versa, so we aren't allowed to see each other. I did join a group chat for incoming freshmen to MSU so I have been chatting to some people there. We created a Minecraft server together so that is pretty much all I did for a little bit. We are restarting it because we all played on it for about two months so everyone has done everything that they really can. Hopefully, the restart will happen on the 21st so then we can start playing again and doing new things. Other than that I haven't been doing much. I wish I could have gone on hikes and such but I am allergic to the outdoors. I wish I was exaggerating that statement, but I am allergic to all grasses and all trees except for pine and redwood. If I go outside in June I go into anaphylactic shock. So June was just spent indoors playing video games and waiting for it to be an acceptable time to be excited about school again.

Alright, I took a quick ice cream break, and now I'm ready to finish this. July, shockingly, was also uneventful. The most entertaining thing that happened was an overload of doctor's appointments to try to determine whether or not I needed surgery. Well, about five days after seeing the last doctor, I ended up in the emergency room. Turns out I needed the surgery, so I had surgery on July 14th and stayed in the hospital till late on the 15th. I was thinking that I may not be the best person to "capture the mundane" in my life because my life is filled with monotony. The most exciting part of my life is getting a new school assignment or surgery. Quarantine didn't change my summer at all, this was just another summer in my life. I haven't had to adjust to not being able to go out to eat, since my mom is kind of a health nut and hates going out to eat anyway. I haven't had to adjust to not seeing friends, since I rarely see them anyways. For me I don't believe that this is more documenting the mundane, it is me documenting the continuity of my life. Thinking about it that way made me a bit sad so I'm not going to dwell on that thought.

My cat has been super affectionate this past month, and I think she knows that I'm going away. Cats just seem to know things like that. Squeaky, my cat can tell when I'm sad and she comes to cuddle up with me to try to cheer me up. I really will miss her. Now, this topic has made me sad. This has not gone to plan at all. I think I will just stop writing and try to be positive next time.



(This is my cat, Squeaky. She is laying in a box on my bed.)

7/21/20

So I forgot to write yesterday. We restarted the Minecraft server so I have been doing a lot on that. Which I know is an issue, and I need to get my priorities straight, but playing in a fantasy land makes me happy. I am currently working on a fairy circle themed house. So I am doing one main mushroom for my living house, which will be purple, and then one for the nether portal, which will be blue, and then another for animals and crops, which will be pink. It is a really big project, but it is keeping me busy so I enjoy it. This is not what this journal was supposed to be about, but it is really what I end up doing a lot. I was the first person on the server to find diamonds and stuff and I want to be the one to set up the end portal. It gives me a goal to look forward to, so that is great for the summer months where I can't tell what day it is, and night blends into day.

Yesterday I got my "graduation cake". I love anything sweet, and I especially have a soft spot for those Costco sheet cakes. It is a long story as to why that soft spot exists, but I will boil it down to this: I ate an entire Costco cake in one sitting on a bet, earning me 20 bucks and another cake. And Costco was not making any of those cakes for the longest time due to this whole pandemic mess, so when they finally started selling them, I jumped on the chance to get one. So it is technically my graduation party. Me, Minecraft, and a giant chocolate sheet cake. In an ideal world that would be every party right?

I still have been procrastinating the essay that I need to write for this class, I'm just very nervous to start. I don't know how the professors grade, or what styles they like, so I am terrified to get a bad grade. I know grades aren't as insanely important as they were in high school, but I want to go on to graduate school, preferably with a nice scholarship. So even if grades aren't that important, I want to end up with at least a 3.9, if not better. Should I even be talking about this class like this? I mean the professors read this right? I turn this journal in after the essays, so they will never know I procrastinated till I admit to it? I hope.

I also learned that two of my roommates "don't believe in masks". I live in a suite-style room so there is me and one other girl in one room, a small entryway and a bathroom, then another room with two girls. The two in the room opposite mine don't think that masks work to help deal with this, and honestly, that terrifies me. I don't know how I will manage that talk, but I eventually will have to have it. Maybe something in this class will help.

7/30/20

I've honestly been going through a rough time this week. There is a lot of stuff that I am not comfortable going into in something that will be immortalized and read by professors and possibly other people. Let's sum it up with this: past trauma is coming up and that is being amplified by the stress of having to move my entire life to a different state. I realize this journal is supposed to be focusing on the pandemic, but that isn't inside my house, and I never go outside of my house. It would be a lot easier if all I had to stress about was a virus and not being able to go out with friends. Instead of pandemic though, this journal has turned into more of a therapy project that is going to be published. I haven't seen my actual therapist in a month, and I won't be seeing her ever again most likely.

I am stressing about the grade on this. I don't know how I am going to get the spark points. What will catch someone's attention in my life? And how do I keep the attention? Isn't this supposed to capture the monotony of my life now? How does that keep attention?

And the content? How will I manage that one? What will determine if my life, and what I write about my life, will get me the points I need for an A? Does my life get me an A? Or is it not worthy of those points? And who determines if my life is interesting enough? Or if my writing of it is good enough?

Can you tell that I stress about grades?

This entry was stressful, so have a picture of Squeaky.



These are some of my favorite pictures of Squeaky being an idiot.

8/2/20

I got distracted before I finished my last entry. Squeaky came up and sat on my keyboard, so I decided to give her attention, and then the next thing I know I fell asleep. It is good that she came along because I would have gone into a spiral about grades on here and I'm not sure I want people to know what it is like to see me spiral. Anyway, I have some wonderful news! My best friend and I are seeing each other on Wednesday! I mentioned my two friends before, and this is the friend who my parents hate. For simplicity's sake, I will refer to him as "S" from now on. And I am figuring that I should tell the whole backstory about us and why my parents hate him. So settle in for a long campfire tale of idiotic middle school/high school kids. It started in seventh grade and we met in orchestra class. S played the cello and I play the bass. S was very full of anger, considering that he was 4ft 5in at that point, so his anger was compressed. And me being the pain in the butt that I am, I definitely did not use him as an armrest as occasion. So naturally, he ended up punching me, and then somehow we became friends. In 8th grade, I was going through my emo phase, and S was still a ball of compressed anger. Nothing changed from that through 9th grade, except for that S finally broke the 5ft mark. In 10th grade, we started going to different high schools. I went to Skyline and he went to Olympus. Long story short, 10th grade was hell for me and I switched to Olympus for my junior year. We stayed close friends through all of this, but about September of junior year, everything went south, again. One of our mutual friends "A" decided that it would be a lovely time to start spreading rumors about me. These rumors managed to reach S's parents and they chose to believe the rumors about me, instead of what S told them. S was then forced to cut contact with me, and so I went through junior year with literally no friends. Senior year started with no friends as well, but then S and I got in contact again. He explained everything that happened with his parents, and we moved on and continued right where we left off. My parents didn't understand all that had happened, so they hated S, and S's parents still believed the rumors about me, so they hated me. Enter a massive parent rivalry. Our parents hate us hanging out, so we haven't seen each other in a year so this is a very big deal.

I'm happy, so here is another photo of Squeaks.



This is Squeaky

enjoying her box.

8/3/20

I realized that I never fully went into my experience having surgery during this pandemic, so I will go into that. I didn't think about how impactful documenting a surgery during this time would be for an archive, but I will deal with that now.

On July 13th I woke up with extreme abdominal pain. When I stood up I got extremely dizzy, and I vomited a few times. I finished class that day, and then I immediately went to my primary care doctor. She told me to go directly to the ER, so my mother and I drove across town to the ER. I was admitted relatively quickly, but then I had to wait 5 hours just to see a doctor. For that entire time, I was not allowed to eat or drink anything, so I was exhausted, starving, and in extreme pain. Then at about 8 pm, I was admitted for a stay in the hospital till I could have surgery. Keep in mind that this whole misadventure started at 1 pm. I was still not allowed to eat, but I was finally allowed to have those hospital slushies. Those weird ones that are slightly filling and are just flavored ice. I was told that no one knew when I was getting surgery, so I wasn't allowed to eat anything. The next day, on the 14th I had surgery at about noon. The last thing I remember was my anesthesiologist talking about getting stung by a bee, and then I woke up in the bed in my hospital room. I managed to have complications with a "routine" surgery, so my recovery lasted longer than normal. I had to stay an extra night in the hospital, but I learned that the hospital cafeteria makes wonderful waffles.

In relationship to COVID, the hospital handled things well. We were required to wear a mask at all times except for in our private rooms. Even then, we were supposed to put on a mask when the nurse came in. I obviously couldn't have a mask on during surgery, but down to the O.R., I wore one. I had to get a COVID test, which is not as bad as people make it out to be. It just tickled a little and made my eyes water. I am negative for COVID as of mid-July, but I do intend to take another test before classes start on campus.

Okay on to the fun stuff. Trigger warning for blood and internal organs.



(Gallbladder on a cloth. It is blackish and looks shriveled.)

This is my gallbladder. It is not supposed to be that blackish color, it is supposed to be a lot clearer. Mine was inflamed and infected. So this is what a bad gallbladder looks like.



(My stomach after surg
and my belly button.
This is my stomach a
gallbladder from the
my gallbladder out t

8/5/20

So I have good news and bad news. Per usual, I will start with the bad news. My cousin from Florida has COVID. This sounds terrible, but I am not surprised. That side of the family is averse to wearing masks, and they are in the hotspot that is Florida. He was going out with his girlfriend almost every day, and she tested positive. So Zach, my cousin, got tested, and his test was positive. It is really bad because his grandparents are very high risk. Now I officially know a family that has been affected by COVID. Sadly it is mine. Now for the good news. Seeing S went wonderfully! We went on a hike around Silver Lake, a lake up at one of the ski areas near my house and then we went and got coffee. It was so nice to be able to see him after the year we haven't seen each other. We didn't get to hang out long, considering he didn't tell his parents that he was going out, but it still was so much fun to be able to talk to him in person. I am afraid that my dad scared him because Dad doesn't understand a platonic relationship between different sexes. Mom considers it "selfish" that I went out, even though S and I wore our masks the entire time. This was the first time I have seen anyone outside of my family since March. It was fun, but also sad because part of me started realizing that my life is forever changing the second I set foot on campus.

It is very surreal to think that my life has changed so much from where I was last year, and only a small part of it has to do with COVID. I keep making myself sad by writing these things. See, this is why I don't like journaling.

Have a cat:



I'm letting this majestic picture of her take up a whole page.

8/6/20

Today is the last day of my writing in this. I am disappointed that this class is ending, but I'm really glad that this journal is going to end. I hate doing stuff like this. It is a little too much like forced therapy and I do not like that.

I'm trying to finish packing all of my clothes today, except for some pajamas and what I'm wearing to go up there and for class tomorrow. I still can't bring myself to bring Barry (my plastic flamingo head) down. The rest of my room looks so dull and empty and I don't want to take him down till the last second.



This is Barry, My flamingo guardian angel.

I yelled at someone in the store today! I know that isn't a great thing but this pandemic is working wonders for my self-confidence. I have started calling people out for not wearing masks in public areas. Today was my first time being rude about it. My mom and I were at Smith's grabbing our groceries. The Smith's near us regulates which way you can go up and down aisles, but it isn't very enforced. Neither is the mask issue, and Utahns are not very keen on wearing masks. This one lady comes sauntering down the wrong way of an aisle, without a mask on. So I do my usual polite routine of "ma'am will you please wear your mask?". She rolled her eyes and tried to push past me. And I mean she grabbed my arm and dragged me to the side. At that point I was done with her, so I moved my cart to block across the aisle. She kept trying to push past me and I told her that she could go down the next aisle, that she is allowed to go down and that she could take that time to wear her mask. I am pretty sure she reported me to the store security, but they never bugged my mom or me so I think they don't really care.

Have a picture dump of Squeaky since I want her to be a part of this archive and I have no other interesting things to add.



(Two pictures of Squeaky)