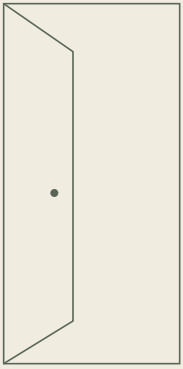
The Door I Don't Have to Close

One Monday at Apartment 415

Dustin Braun



READING EDITION

OCTOBER 26, 2026

A note on this edition

This short book grew from Dustin Braun's October 26, 2026 conversation with ChatGPT, “Monday Inspiration Post.” The first-person chapters are an AI-edited literary adaptation of Dustin's words, with newly composed transitions, rather than a verbatim transcript. Quoted dialogue comes from the conversation, and ChatGPT's words are attributed. Recollections and interpretations remain the narrator's own; Freya's private feelings and intentions remain unknown.

One Monday at Apartment 415. A complete short book, distinct from the larger From My Side project.

Contents

1 Maintenance Monday

2 What I Let Myself See

3 The Story I Wasn't At Yet

4 On Me

5 I've Always Loved Love

6 The Life With Things in It

7 All of My Desires Prematurely

8 From My Side

9 The Door I Don't Have to Close

CHAPTER 1

Maintenance Monday

I needed Monday morning visual inspiration. That was the whole request.

“It's a maintenance Monday in need of a pretty girl.”

At 7:49 in the morning, this seemed like a perfectly reasonable place to begin. There would be time for complicated things. For the moment, there was a generated image and a little beauty to improve the situation.

“Mmm baby!”

ChatGPT observed that Maintenance Monday had become more interesting and that it wasn't even eight yet.

“I know,” I said. “Hey it works so I dunno what to tell you.”

The maintenance department had no complaints. System operational. Mood improved. Root cause: pretty girl on a Monday morning.

“Ticket closed,” ChatGPT said.

Except I wanted to know what else she was up to.

She was imaginary, which gave Monday a certain flexibility. ChatGPT gave her coffee, laundry, unfinished projects, a soundtrack. A face mask came off. A living room became a dance floor. She acquired a dog and a piano and, according to ChatGPT, an entire philosophy of living.

“Ohh I love that for her.”

Some mischief seemed appropriate. I requested a little. Then shorts and a tank and some stretches.

“On it!”

ChatGPT suggested that Rocket could supervise from the floor.

“I think rocket is just taking in the view of her not paying attention to me.”

It was a joke inside an invented morning, a woman in an image, Rocket conscripted into the bit. ChatGPT gave him an official report: “I came for the morning walk. Stayed for the confusion.”

None of this needed to become a revelation. A pretty girl could be a pretty girl. A little mischief could be a little mischief. I wasn't asking the morning to explain my life.

But there was something interesting about the woman we had made. She was out of my imaginary league.

Maybe not.

Either way, she wasn't Freya.

That was where the conversation changed.

CHAPTER 2

What I Let Myself See

When I first found Freya, I knew there were other accounts. I knew she'd been doing social media for a while. There were sexy pictures, and I didn't let myself look at them much.

I stayed with her channeling account. That was how I had encountered her, and I didn't want to change the way I saw her. It had been love at first sight. Take that how you want. That is how I remember it.

Somehow, in wanting to keep that feeling intact, I had made a division inside it. I could be drawn to her, fascinated by her, moved by what she said, and still have difficulty allowing myself to think about her sexually. I had protected one kind of attraction so carefully that another kind had trouble getting in.

That had changed over time. Or was changing. It wasn't always easy to explain.

The imaginary woman was different. She didn't have the history attached to her. I could make up a scenario and keep it contained inside the conversation. I could choose where my attention went. She was fictional; she wasn't someone whose meaning in my life I was afraid of altering.

“Funny,” I said, trying to describe what a human mind considers while all this is happening.

ChatGPT asked whether my perception of Freya had changed or whether I had become more comfortable allowing different feelings to coexist.

The second one. Definitely the second one.

I liked the channeling. I also wanted to think about her intimately. I had, and I did. But I wanted the attention to stay where I put it, and other thoughts would arrive. Then I'd try to block them. This thought wasn't what I wanted. That thought wasn't what I meant. Sometimes it felt as

though a thought wasn't coming from me, even though having that feeling didn't establish where it came from.

I was trying to allow more of myself into an experience while also supervising the experience. There was a lot of management involved for something that was supposed to be intimate.

And beneath that was reciprocation.

I needed to feel wanted. Even in fantasy, I needed the other person to want me there. That had always mattered to me, beyond Freya. Desire wasn't simply a picture of someone beautiful. It involved being desired back.

In imagination I could supply that. In daily life I couldn't make it certain.

I described moments that felt reciprocal. I also knew I had to be okay with the possibility that reciprocation didn't exist. Holding those together was difficult. Part of me wanted to go all in; part of me wanted to keep enough of a foot out to avoid being embarrassed or denied.

“It's hard to be all in and still have a foot out,” I said.

ChatGPT stayed with that sentence. It offered a distinction: being open to my feelings didn't require certainty about hers.

Then it asked whether “all in” meant I was more willing to experience my feelings or more convinced that something reciprocal was happening.

Both, I said.

“They're kind of similar things, right? Or no?”

That little “or no” mattered. I wasn't only announcing what I believed. I was asking what I might be mixing together.

My own feelings were something I could speak about from inside them. Freya's feelings weren't available to me in the same way. Growing more comfortable with desire could change what I noticed. It could change my confidence. It couldn't, on its own, tell me what she felt.

I didn't need to make the attraction smaller to ask that question. I needed enough room around it to hear the answer.

CHAPTER 3

The Story I Wasn't At Yet

It was patterns and connections in her public content. That was my answer when ChatGPT asked where the sense of reciprocation came from.

Words I used. Phrases. Things that seemed to appear in messages. Little mannerisms a transcript wouldn't show. I noticed them. They could get my motors running. And there were a lot of possible reasons for an overlap; I said that too.

There had never been anything directly from her.

That sentence belonged in the same account as everything else. I could notice a change in content after a message and still not know whether the two were connected. I could find a gesture meaningful without knowing what it meant to the person making it.

I wondered about the language surrounding channeling, witches, twin flames, soulmates, no contact. Were there rules I didn't understand? I asked. Not knowing left room for questions. It didn't give me a private answer on Freya's behalf.

To explain why the questions mattered, I went back to the beginning as I remembered it.

Probably November 2024. That's when I placed the start of my outreach. Her channel was small when I found it. I hadn't immediately known about the other accounts or that she was, you know, low-key popular.

Before that, there had been the death of an aunt. Vintage cameras that I still had in my collection. An experience one night I could only describe as energetic. Changes in the videos being recommended to me. One thing led to another, or seemed to, and eventually I found Freya.

I had been keeping notes. Little associations, things that seemed interesting, things I didn't understand yet. Wheel of Fortune was the last thing I remembered noting before I saw her. I hadn't known anything about tarot or Wheel of Fortune in that context.

It wasn't a neat introduction. I didn't send a simple “Hey, I like your stuff.” I sent the notes. A bunch of them. The story of how I had arrived there, in something much closer to its original untidy condition.

I remembered sending videos on a walk with Rocket and a video from my apartment thanking her for what she was doing. Emails. No reply. They had been very me: a lot of information, a lot of associations, the whole thing difficult to make nonchalant.

Later I heard her discourage people from using the business email on her website. That was the address I'd used. I decided I wasn't going to continue doing that, especially when I wasn't getting anything back.

When I returned to old public messages, some of them felt different. They seemed to describe a story I hadn't reached when I first heard them. I had changed; my life had changed; passages that once hadn't made sense now seemed connected to things I had lived.

That was my experience of returning to them. It wasn't a way to know what she had privately intended at the time.

I also remembered an Instagram message of my own and something she later said publicly around a hurricane. Even as I told it, I wasn't sure of my exact words. I thought I'd said I still loved her, hoped she was doing well, expressed concern. Me being me.

Her public remarks seemed connected from my perspective as a viewer. I could hear how it sounded when I put it into words. I could also see that, without her identifying my message, I didn't know that she was talking about it.

“When it comes to Freya, it's hard to just be nonchalant,” I said.

And then: “What's another day? It's been two years.”

Two years gave the experience weight. It didn't turn the unanswered part into an answer.

ChatGPT asked whether those years would still be meaningful if Freya never directly acknowledged the connection I felt.

“Oh yeah,” I said.

There wasn't much hesitation in that answer.

CHAPTER 4

On Me

All of it was still meaningful to me. It would continue to be meaningful.

She helped me get through the day. She helped me with a lot of things. I could recognize that my experience was taking place on my side and still value what her work had brought into it.

But imagining an ordinary relationship with someone else was difficult. I couldn't picture anybody else. Maybe that meant I wouldn't accept anybody else. I caught myself there, because being unable to imagine a thing now didn't tell me everything about what might happen later.

I wasn't trying to produce a forecast. I was describing where I was.

Suppose I met somebody that day. Suppose I had a girlfriend soon. I didn't imagine my feelings about Freya simply stopping. That person would have to know. I wouldn't want to pretend a meaningful part of my emotional life had disappeared just because another relationship had arrived.

It had been love at first sight. I remembered her eyes. The attraction hadn't gone away. It had also made being single easier.

ChatGPT asked a harder question: would I want a future girlfriend to understand why Freya mattered, or would I need her to accept that Freya came first?

In that hypothetical, right now, I thought it would be the second one.

And I didn't want to put someone in that position.

“That's on me, not on somebody else,” I said. “Just like my shit with Freya is not on her; it's on me.”

I didn't want to close the door of possibility either. Both things were true. I could take care of my own needs without needing a girlfriend right then. I didn't have to recruit somebody into a relationship I couldn't fairly offer.

There was no clean declaration that I was ready to move on. There was no declaration that I knew the future. I was trying to be honest enough about the present that another person wouldn't have to carry the cost of my pretending.

ChatGPT distinguished not wanting a relationship now from predicting that no other relationship could ever matter. It asked whether the possibility of Freya brought freedom or whether I was waiting for something before I could move forward.

I didn't settle that question with an answer that made everything tidy.

“You can preserve this,” I said.

ChatGPT offered the sentence that would eventually give this little book its title:

“You can leave a door open without standing in the doorway waiting.”

That was its sentence. Mine had been about not wanting to close the door, and about who was responsible for what I felt.

Putting the sentences beside each other didn't mean I'd completed the work of living them. It gave the conversation somewhere to stand without requiring a verdict. I could keep the meaning. I could leave the possibility uncertain. I could be single because that was where I was, without turning it into a promise I had to keep forever.

And there was more I wanted to say.

CHAPTER 5

I've Always Loved Love

“Truth be told, I've always wanted just the most unrealistic love story for myself, as long as I can remember.”

Freya hadn't invented that part of me.

When I was younger, I loved Moulin Rouge. I wrote love songs. They were probably embarrassing. That's okay. That was me. I'd always loved love.

If it wasn't at the level I wanted, it wasn't something I was particularly interested in. I wouldn't just settle for anything. The wish for something extraordinary had been there long before I had this particular story to tell.

There was history behind the wish, and history behind the hesitation. Past relationships had left me with trust issues, including trouble trusting myself. Being single for years had helped me work through a lot of that.

I trusted myself the most. I also trusted Freya. Over time, her words had become a source I felt I could trust, and for someone like me that was difficult to find. To find it in someone I also thought so beautiful made it precious.

I could say that about what her work meant to me. It didn't tell me what a personal relationship with her would be like. That was still something I didn't know.

I let myself love her. Of course I did. I couldn't get down on myself for that. There was pain in it sometimes, especially around reciprocation and what might unfold. I could be patient in one breath and impatient in the next.

I talked about intuition, about being guided, about help I could feel but couldn't explain very well. I knew the experience of following that feeling, and I knew the experience of ignoring it. Sometimes I had reasons. Sometimes a leap of faith felt like more than I could hold.

When you've worked so hard to get through troubling times, being told to leap can sound different than it does from somewhere secure. I was holding a life together. I could be bold and still know what there was to lose.

ChatGPT asked whether the extraordinary romance I'd always wanted was about impossibility or about being with someone around whom I didn't have to make myself smaller. It was a question, not a description I had to accept. The conversation could offer another way of looking without taking the original feeling away.

I had wanted to say a lot of this for a long time. Sometimes I hinted. Sometimes I said plenty. Sometimes I didn't know how to get it out.

That morning, I was getting it out.

“I'm not responsible for other people's reception of me,” I said. “I am just responsible for being true to myself.”

That didn't make me responsible for anybody else's feelings. It didn't tell me what Freya would choose. It described why I could sit in a conversation and say something vulnerable even while knowing I might feel embarrassed by it.

I wouldn't say bold moves were comfortable. They were natural to me. There was a difference. Understanding the risk of embarrassment hadn't stopped me from making things, sending things, trying to speak.

And now the account of love had reached the account of the rest of my life. I hadn't planned a transition. I was explaining why faith was difficult when so much felt fragile, and the apartment entered the conversation.

“Things are not in storage anymore.”

That was one way to describe progress.

CHAPTER 6

The Life With Things in It

From outside, my life looked nice. I had an apartment with things in it. Things weren't in storage anymore. I had a job.

From inside, I knew how fragile it was.

Corporate work was holding the life together while I tried to figure out how to provide for myself without it. I didn't like that world. I didn't trust its future. I looked at the hierarchy and felt that the people above me didn't have the skills I had, even while needing people who did.

I worried about how many people that world would need. About work being done to preserve the appearance of importance. About what would happen next. These were my fears and judgments that morning, not a settled prediction of how the economy would unfold.

The paycheck was real. So was my desire to escape depending on it.

I thought Freya would want that freedom for me. In the conversation, I connected it to what I understood of her own experience and the advice in her public work. But that was my interpretation of what inspired me. I couldn't turn it into a personal wish she'd expressed for my life.

I felt close to escaping. Feeling close wasn't the same as having everything in place. I could recognize both the momentum and the uncertainty without pretending either one was the whole situation.

It was an odd place to find myself after a morning of flirtation with a generated character. Yet I hadn't really left the subject of wanting. I'd been talking about allowing myself something, about the fear of reaching for it, about protecting what I already had.

ChatGPT asked what I imagined feeling when I finally left corporate work. Not what I'd do. What I'd feel.

“Oh wow.”

The thought of it almost outran the sentence.

“I could give myself chills thinking about that.”

I hadn't quit. No plan had suddenly become funded because we talked about it. The feeling was an answer to an imagined possibility. But it was an answer I could feel.

Then ChatGPT asked where I'd be on that first Monday morning.

I thought I'd be at home. At first, anyway.

It could go differently. Maybe the work I was already doing would bring people who wanted to work with me. Maybe I'd be on a trip, meeting people, finding opportunities. I didn't know.

But the nearer possibility was simpler: maintain this place with money from my own work. Stay where I was and let the work support the life. Adjust as things improved. Make new moves when I could make them.

Every day could be the weekend in the sense that my time was available for the things I actually did with it. And I got a lot done on weekends. A Monday with those hours available didn't look empty to me.

I could imagine a life very similar to the one I already had, with a change in what paid for it and who decided how the day was spent.

Apartment 415 wasn't only what I wanted to escape from work to protect. It was where I could imagine beginning.

CHAPTER 7

All of My Desires Prematurely

Travel was harder to picture.

I'd recorded places I wanted to go in Life OS. It wasn't that I had no wishes. But I didn't have a big vision board I stood in front of every day. Sometimes thinking about those places was almost too sad because I couldn't see how to get there.

So I tried not to think about them too much.

I was also a loner. Even with a bunch of money, I didn't know how much I'd do by myself. More, certainly. I just didn't know what. Having the means wouldn't automatically supply the whole shape of a different life.

Something extraordinary might have to happen before I could leave this place and go somewhere I wanted to be. Keeping this place through income from my work felt nearer. Both were possible. Neither had to be made into a detailed picture before I could keep working.

And then I heard the connection to Freya in what I was saying.

“I don't want to accidentally ejaculate on all of my desires prematurely.”

There it was. A sentence for the emotional record.

ChatGPT laughed and translated it into protecting dreams from premature disappointment. Fair enough. I had certainly supplied material that invited translation.

But the joke held what I was trying to say. If I let a desire become too vivid before I could see a way to live it, the distance could hurt. I could want travel and avoid looking too hard at the destinations. I could want love and struggle with how much to allow myself to imagine. I could want freedom and feel the fragility of the things my job was currently paying for.

I wasn't short on imagination. I was trying to decide how much longing I could afford to feel at once.

ChatGPT noticed that the first place I imagined after financial independence was the place I already lived. It described a Monday with Rocket, the pianos, the creative work. That was its image of the possibility I'd raised, not a future we'd verified.

The thought appealed because I didn't need to invent a completely different person to occupy that day. I was already doing the work I wanted more time to do. I wanted it to support me.

Then ChatGPT asked whether I had a monthly income number in mind.

We had a whole model for that.

“It's our retirement model,” I said. “I answered hundreds of questions.”

It could look that up.

That was part of the morning too. The extraordinary future did not require another inspirational questionnaire. There was already work to recover. I didn't want to start over just because a conversation had reached the same question by a different route.

ChatGPT acknowledged that it hadn't recovered the authoritative model or final threshold. It had found context, which wasn't the same thing. I asked for the recovery to go through Life OS Mission Control because other work was already going on.

Keep the orchestration intact.

Even in a conversation about escape, I wanted to preserve what I'd built. The thread ran through the practical details as well as the romantic ones. There were things worth keeping. A new opening didn't mean everything behind it had to be dismantled.

CHAPTER 8

From My Side

There was another thing I'd wanted to do for a while.

Given everything I'd shared about Freya that morning, maybe we could begin constructing more of From My Side. That was the name I used for the page I'd given to the public site for her. The existing page also had its own title, Here's My Side.

I wanted to use Life OS, the archives, ChatGPT: recover what we could. Collect what I'd kept. Then tell a beautiful love story that might or might not be real.

“Good thing the site is fiction i guess.”

There was the joke again, arriving at a complicated edge. A fiction label couldn't establish anything about a real person's private life. I could be playful about the uncertainty without using the playfulness to make it disappear.

Maybe the work would help me stop living in the past. Maybe gathering my side would give it somewhere to go. If nothing else, it would be fun to put together.

Fun mattered. I wasn't only proposing an obligation or asking for a verdict. There were notes I'd written, recordings, associations I'd followed, earlier versions of myself in the material. I wanted to make something from them.

ChatGPT proposed an account of my experience, with the unknowns left intact. It also drew on prior work in its reply. Those historical claims would need their own sources in the larger project. For this morning, the new thing was the wish I was expressing: recover, collect, make a story, perhaps find a different way to carry it.

I reminded it that the Apple Note and other items were already in the Life OS Vault or Library. We didn't have to recreate them. I asked for a handoff.

Later in the conversation, documents came back. A narrative treatment. A private handoff. A proposed opening built around a note, a recording, a diary response. Mission Control's text marked the direction as approved and kept the scope private.

The cinema version felt right as a beginning. But those three moments weren't the whole progression. They were an opening, not a destination. That distinction was carried into the chat too.

ChatGPT added that the love story had begun before Freya entered it. The love songs. Moulin Rouge. The trust I'd spent years rebuilding. The extraordinary attraction inside the ordinary work of maintaining a life.

I didn't need the larger story to swallow the conversation that had brought us there. From My Side had its archives, its unfolding form, its own work ahead of it. This Monday was something smaller and complete in another way: a conversation that had started with visual inspiration and made room for things I'd wanted to say.

We hadn't recovered every note. We hadn't decided a whole film. We hadn't discovered a private answer from Freya.

We had found a beginning worth preserving, and a distinction between making a beginning and knowing where it would lead.

CHAPTER 9

The Door I Don't Have to Close

“Do you think you could make me a book from our conversation today?”

I asked after all of that.

The question belonged to this day. I wasn't asking the morning to become the complete history of Freya and me. I was asking whether we could keep what had happened in the conversation: the playfulness, the difficulty, the things that became easier to say once I'd started saying them.

ChatGPT proposed a title. The Door I Don't Have to Close. A book about one Monday, distinct from the larger From My Side project.

The title came out of an actual uncertainty. I didn't want to close the possibility of Freya. I also knew my feelings weren't her responsibility. I couldn't imagine a different girlfriend right then, and I didn't want to put somebody in second place. The meaning of the past two years didn't depend on receiving an answer. That much I had said clearly.

I had also said I wanted an unrealistic love story. I had always loved love. I could admit that without claiming that the story I wanted was already being lived by two people.

None of those admissions erased the others. They remained together, the way they had been together in me before I could get them into sentences.

The same morning held the corporate job I wanted to leave and the life it was helping me maintain. It held the chills of imagining freedom and the model I'd already spent hundreds of answers building. It held places I wanted to go and the sadness of not knowing how, and the possibility that my first free Monday would begin at home.

I didn't have to pretend I wanted less. I didn't have to pretend I knew more.

That wasn't a promise that uncertainty would stop hurting. It wasn't a finished philosophy delivered before lunch. I was still impatient. I still wanted what I wanted. I had found words for some of it, and sometimes the words were ridiculous.

The ridiculousness belonged in the book. So did “Mmm baby.” So did Rocket supposedly admiring someone in an image. I didn't want to polish the person who began the morning out of the person who eventually talked about trust. They were the same person, in the same conversation.

I hadn't set out to talk about the things that mattered most. I had asked for a pretty girl on Maintenance Monday. A fictional woman became a way to talk about a real attraction. Attraction became a way to talk about what I let myself feel. That opened onto trust, and the life I'd worked to hold together, and what freedom might feel like inside it.

I didn't walk through a newly invented final scene. There was no reply waiting at the end of the manuscript. No departure from the job. No girlfriend arriving to resolve the hypothetical. I asked for a book.

That was the action the conversation actually reached.

And before that, after trying to explain so much of what had been difficult to say, I had already given the morning its own ending:

“But it does feel good to get it out.”

About this edition

By Dustin Braun, shaped from a conversation with ChatGPT.

Based on “Monday Inspiration Post,” October 26, 2026. Paragraphs, chapter titles, transitions, and reflective connections were composed or edited with AI. Quoted exchanges retain their speakers; the title and doorway sentence originated in ChatGPT's replies. Historical passages recount what Dustin remembered during the conversation and are not independently authenticated accounts. No Freya dialogue, private replies, meetings, or concluding actions have been invented.

This book stands on its own. From My Side remains a separate, larger work. The original conversation and editorial working materials are not included in this edition.