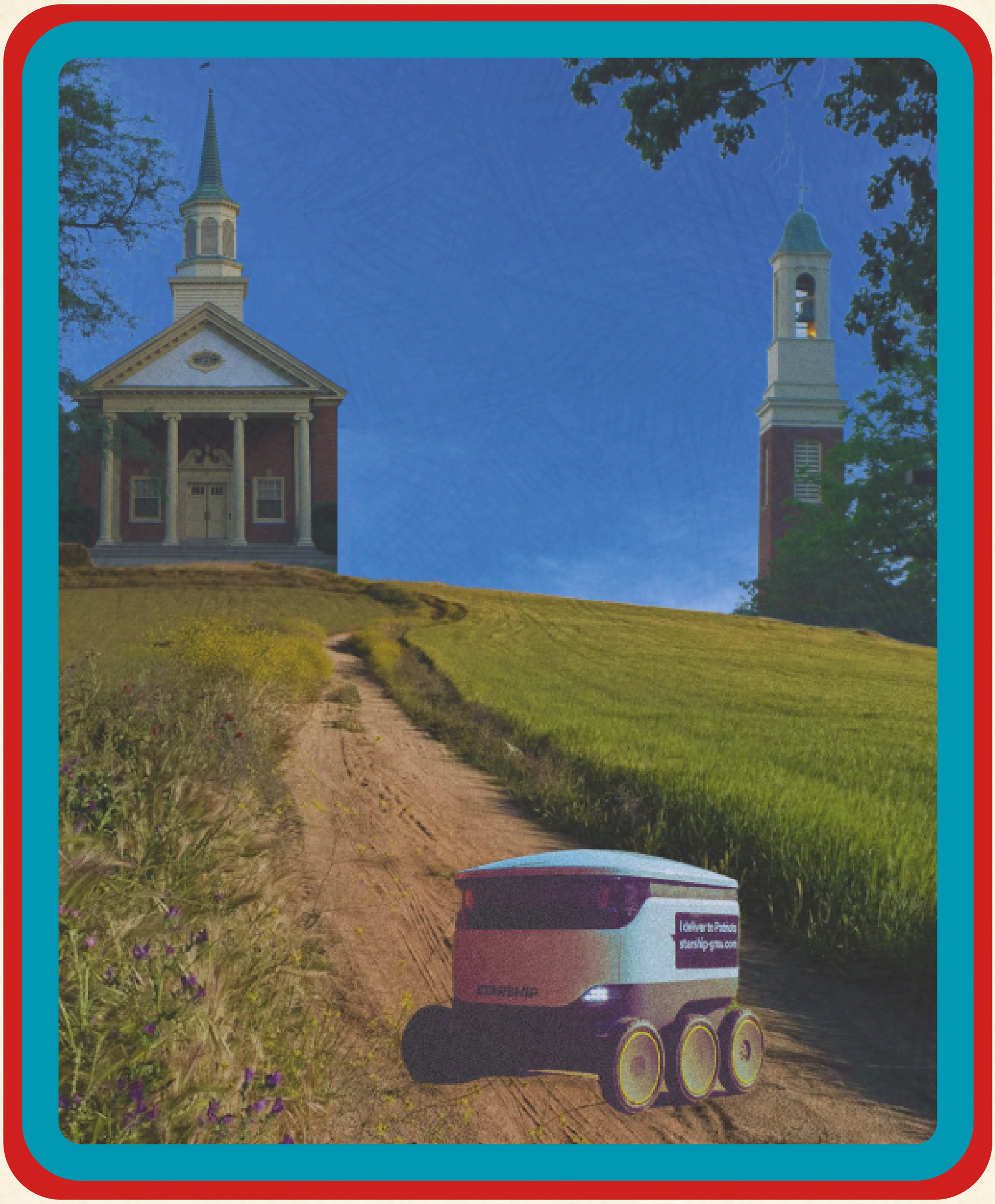
CHOOSE YOUR ADVENTURE

CHOOSE FROM **10** POSSIBLE ENDINGS!

OXFORD, OH

EDITED BY KAYLA ANGUS, BECCA BLANCO, CALEB CHUN, ANNABEL HOWE, AND ASLYNN WETZEL



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Annabel Howe, and Aslynn Wetzel

DEDICATED TO:

Tim Lockridge, the very narrator of our preface, whose guidance was the key to our wayfaring and editing endeavors.

Cornfields, which make up a decent portion of both Oxford, Ohio and this book.

Food delivery robots, who make our lives simpler than necessary.

Our group members and classmates, who made the creation of this book smooth and exciting.

FROM THE EDITORS

Dear readers,

The labor of love you're about to enjoy has been painstakingly crafted for your reading pleasure. Whether you're a long time Oxford townie, a Miami University student, or a fresh adventurer new to the area, we invite you to find a home in this little college town, cradling its memories in your own.

Just one note before you begin! This book is a collaborative effort from a whole classroom of writers, cobbled together by yours truly. To differentiate our voices from the authors, we have chosen to italicize our writing. If you're interested in all of the wonderful writers that have contributed to this book, please refer to our contents section on page 174.

We hope you enjoy Choose Your Adventure: Oxford, OH.

Sincerely,

Kayla, Becca, Caleb, Annabel, and Aslynn

WARNING ! ! !

Friends and foes, wanderers and wayfarers, welcome. I am the guide of your story—or should I say...stories. I am known—on sunny days, stormy nights, and the occasional course syllabus—as Tim Lockridge.

Before you lies not a book...not exactly. Not in the way books usually behave. There is no single path forward, no tidy arc waiting to be resolved by the final page. This isn't just a book. It's a doorway—or several. A pocket-sized labyrinth of stories, stacked with detours and lined with surprises.

Some paths loop. Some wander. And yes, there's corn. Always corn. Whether you're arriving here for the first time or slipping quietly back through the stalks to find what you missed, I'm glad you came. You're right on time. Oxford has a peculiar relationship with time, after all. Sometimes it loops, sometimes it skips, sometimes it waits—just for you.

Let me offer this bit of advice: be willing to listen. Oxford is alive, filled with life, some loud, some quiet, but alive. You'll meet students and strangers, legends and locals. You'll overhear essays folded into chapel acoustics or broadcasted in arenas. You'll find clues in alleyways, journal entries buried under leaves, secrets scribbled within the margins of one's memory, and more.

Some moments will feel real. Others, dreamlike. That's all right. Not everything that matters fits neatly into fact. You won't see everything in one walk. You're not meant to. In truth, you may not understand until your second or third time through—when your questions have changed, when your steps fall just a little differently.

So, step in. Wander well.

The story's already waiting.

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START HERE

You wake up, feeling an unpleasant stinging sensation on your cheek. Groaning, you roll onto your elbows. Wait, where are you? Panicked, you look around, only to see thick walls of green foliage crowned with gold surrounding you, cutting off your vision. As you slowly sit up, you feel the sharp leaves that once stung your cheeks now prod at your arms. Then, all at once, your senses return to you: the air is humid, scented by dirt and vegetation; your limbs ache, almost as if you've exercised; all the while, the buzzing of insects fills your ears.

Disoriented, you stand, the walls around you giving nothing away. Then, through a small crack, you see it. The sheer vastness overwhelms you; a seemingly endless rustling green and gold expanse stretches on and on. You know what it's called, a cornfield, but not the ones you remember; this one is bigger, much bigger.

But wait, a cornfield? A wave of confusion washes over you. How did you get here? The question echoes in the cold emptiness of your mind. You try to grab hold of something familiar—a landmark, a name, a reason for being here, anything. Nothing, only a nagging sense of something lost. How did you get here? You ask yourself again. And then, with a shiver of comprehension, you know the answer: that you don't know. Your mind is a blank page, an emptiness where memories should be. Who are you? What happened? The questions hang, naked and unspoken. You try to scream, to let someone, anyone, know your plight. All that comes out is a faint, awkward gurgle, responded to only by the vast silence of the fields surrounding you. The startled beating wings of a terrified bird above break the stillness, making you wince.

Some time has passed, and, for the nth time, you again find yourself clutching your head, trying to recall a memory, a name, a reason for being here, a clue, anything, but your past remains stubbornly locked away. Frantic for anything other than the prison that your mind has become, you begin to walk. To where? Who

knows? Anywhere but here.

Minutes turn to hours, and hours feel like days as you slowly walk through the field. Your throat dries from thirst while aches worsen in your muscles, each step driven by a primal want to find anything. Then, just before despair overwhelms you, you see something, a small black line, a stark change from the green and yellow you have become accustomed to. A thread of hope weaves through your mind; finally, something different, something to remember. Adrenaline born of sheer necessity propels you forward until the hard, unyielding surface lies before you: a road.

While you've finally found a clue, your hardship is not yet over. You continue to walk, and, after a seeming eternity, you again spot something in the distance, a glint in your amnesiac haze. As you draw closer, it materializes, a sign:

Welcome to Oxford, Ohio!

The words stir something within you, a ripple in your mind: Oxford. The name rings a bell, a place you feel you should recognize, but the familiarity is tantalizingly out of reach. A sense of urgency fills you—you have to keep going.

Gradually, the light greens and yellows of the cornfields shift into dark green forest. The air, while still humid, now carries with it something new, the earthy scent of a forest awakening. The corn's rustle fades, replaced by the song of unseen birds and the sound of leaves that border the road. And along with it, another sign, this one weathered, half-obscured by leaves, reading "Hueston Woods State Park."

Again, you feel a flicker of recognition, a blurred image of sunbeams framed by leaves. This place, Hueston Woods, must mean something.

You push forward, ignoring your pain, deeper and deeper into the

woods, chasing memories real, or perhaps fake. The trees grow taller, their limbs rising higher and higher, scattering the sunlight around you. And then, suddenly the foliage clears, and before you lies a covered, red-painted bridge, "Hueston Woods Bridge."

To venture across the bridge, turn to page 12.

To turn back, away from Oxford and Hueston Woods, turn to page 10.

As you look upon the bridge, a sense of unease washes over you. Could these inklings of memories be fake? Your path here felt too convenient. No, you will create your own destiny, your own ending. Why should you put the fate of your memories in the hands of this unknown destination? This place gives no comfort to your fractured mind. You decide to turn away, back toward your beginnings, away from Oxford, away from Hueston Woods. However unsettling the cornfields may be, it was where you began. Perhaps a clue to your mind lies within its fields.

Briefly resting in the shade, you turn and begin the long journey back. Past the forest, the sign, and the road, you again reach the fields. Pushing back into the dense rows of corn, you once again hear the familiar buzzing of insects and the whispering of the breeze, eventually reaching where it all started, where your new memories began.

However, the sun, now lower in the sky, no longer lights up your path; no longer are there cracks between the stalks that let you see across the horizon. Blind, you walk deeper, each step feeling more aimless than the last as the rows blur into one another. You attempt to mark your path, bending stalks and leaving signs behind, but, like you, the field offers no memory, no discernible trail; each direction leads to more of the same, a prison of your own making.

As the night settles over what you believe is Oxford, so does the chill, and with it, a questioning of your decision. The endless fields that once gave you hope have darkened, shadows overtaking what was once gold and green. They offer you no solace, no familiarity, and no memories. As you continue walking, you find yourself coming across the same landmarks, over and over again. Or perhaps it is your mind playing tricks on you. Surely, that rock is different?

Perhaps the road, Oxford, with its false memories, however unknown, was the wiser choice. As time moves on, you find yourself jumping at each rustling stalk, hoping for a potential clue or

memory. Instead, they just remind you of your isolation. You begin to fantasize about Oxford and its Hueston Woods. Maybe it was not too late. A slow realization begins to bloom in your chest: perhaps turning back was a mistake.

Days pass, each night proving worse than the last. Hunger gnaws at you alongside constant aches in your head. You call out again, just as before, your voice hoarse and desperate. This time, there is no response, not even from the birds. As you sit, you realize there is no path, no landmark, no road, no clue within these fields that will help you.

You do not know when, but you finally realize Oxford was the path; it was not a trick. Realizing your blunder, a desperate sense of urgency fuels your aching limbs. You must find the road again; you will not make the same mistake twice. You run, hoping, praying to find the way back. You spot the bent stalks and footprints you left behind. But, as hope fills you, you see it again, in the same place, the same spot, the same rock.

Exhaustion overwhelms you, and your limbs, finally, are unresponsive. Stumbling, you crash into the rock that curses you. Shivering, you lie there, and, in the distant night sky, a flicker of light—what you can only assume is Oxford—a cruel reminder of futures lost. As the cold night air settles in, you ask yourself for the last time: Who were you? What was your purpose? These questions that drove you, pushed you, remain unanswered, lost within the fields of corn that perhaps should have been your beginning, and not your end. No answers were found for you, only the endless rustling of the corn, a lonely lullaby accompanying your empty mind as it fades into the darkness.

The End.

To explore the wonders of Oxford, try again.
Turn back to the start.

As you begin to cross the bridge, you feel a chill run across your mind. The bridge creaks faintly beneath your weight, its boards aged but sturdy. The quiet murmurs of a creek run beneath you, the late afternoon sun glinting against the red-painted structure. Carved initials and strange messages sprawl across the beams—love declarations, cryptic dates, a sharp "Don't trust the deer."

Midway across, your eye catches a small object tucked beside one of the beams. It's weathered at the edges and folded in half like it had been carried in someone's back pocket. You pull it free: a pamphlet. The title reads in large block letters:

A TRAVEL GUIDE TO HUESTON WOODS STATE PARK
From a Miami student

You pause, again, feeling a sense of familiarity. It seems oddly placed, almost as if it was left for you. You unfold it and begin to read...

A TRAVEL GUIDE TO HUESTON WOODS STATE PARK

From a Miami student

Introduction to Hueston Woods

Nature and Wildlife

This pamphlet explains how a couple of girls attending Miami University created fun in a town of cornfields, specifically at Hueston Woods. Before I begin storytelling and revealing the best ways one can explore the state park, I want to give a brief overview of the land itself. Hueston Woods State Park is a hilly, beautiful piece of land hidden within the flat fields of Oxford, Ohio. Only about a ten-minute drive from Miami University, the state park covers three thousand acres of wooded area, including a shallow man-made lake fit for fishing, boating, and swimming. Within this serene nature area, there are several hiking paths fit for everyone. Those looking for a workout can hike multiple trails sprawling the steep hills throughout the park, while those looking for a peaceful stroll can enjoy the flat

land near the lake. Those exploring the land can also witness the amazing wildlife that lives within the park. From white-tailed deer to wild turkeys, there are several creatures you can find wandering the hills of Hueston Woods. There is even a nature conservatory where visitors can admire the rescued wildlife native to the park. Bird watchers can spot resident and migratory species, and if you're lucky you might even find a bald eagle.

Architecture

Along with observing the stunning nature and diverse wildlife, visitors can also experience several manufactured structures within the park, one of which is Hueston Woods Lodge. Built in 1968, the lodge is a rustic wooden building that overlooks Acton Lake. Inside, there are cozy rooms, a large indoor pool, spacious conference rooms, and a restaurant. Just down the road from the lodge, there is a small campground packed with camper spots and small cabins. Besides the various overnight stay options, you can also find other unique structures within the park. The Hueston Woods Covered Bridge spans one hundred and eight feet, overlooking Four Mile Creek. It is filled with signatures and messages from past visitors and connects to one of the hiking paths along the creek. Hueston Woods is the perfect location for those looking to explore the outdoors. There are so many adventures waiting for all visitors, some of which may be hiding in plain sight.

Personal Travel Guide

Swimming

Throughout my four years at Miami University, I have been able to find some of these secret activities, and now I would like to share them with you. As a homesick freshman, I was constantly looking for things to do to take my mind off my worries. As a result, my friends and I frequently went

exploring Oxford and the surrounding areas, allowing us to stumble upon Hueston Woods. We would drive around and take walks on the trails, the usual activities, until one day we stumbled upon the lodge. Of course, we went inside and began exploring the building. We immediately noticed that the doors to the indoor pool were unlocked and could be easily accessed by individuals who were not actually staying at the lodge. So, we decided that we would come back the next day and attempt to swim in that pool. Thankfully, we were successful. We only went to that pool twice overall, but it was a unique experience that was extremely enjoyable. So, if you are ever looking for a pool to hang out at, try Hueston Woods Lodge, but you didn't hear it from me.

On a less risky note, you can also swim in Acton Lake. While I have only done it once, there is a fairly clean beach where visitors can sunbathe or swim in the water. There is sand within shallow areas of the beach, so you would not be navigating muck and rocks. While the residents of Oxford are usually crowding the area, you can typically find a spot to relax and take in the sunshine. I would recommend doing this on a hot day at the beginning of fall semester or the end of spring semester. Unfortunately, swimming in the lake is out of commission for most of the year, but fortunately, there are other fun things to do at Hueston Woods besides swimming.

Food

On the same side of the lake, we found another interesting adventure: Cooking s'mores. At the lakeside park near the beach, there are a few fire pits. As bored sophomores, we decided we could try out these grills and attempt to cook s'mores over the heat. But we didn't know that these grills required firewood, so most of our night was spent searching the park for pieces of wood and attempting to start the fire. Eventually, we got the fire started and cooked delicious

s'mores while chatting and taking in the sunset illuminating over the lake. So my advice is if you want to attempt grilling out at the Hueston Woods beach, bring a couple pieces of firewood.

Dating

Hueston Woods is also a great place for dates. Whether you are taking a long walk in the woods, watching the sunset over Acton Lake, or even hammocking late at night, the park is well equipped with romantic activities. Over our four years in college, my friends and I were actually successful in all three of the mentioned activities, except the hammocking. When my roommate went hammocking in the woods, a car drove up, shined their headlights into the hammock, and pretended to drive into it. While I think that was a once-in-a-lifetime event, be wary of crazies if you go hammocking at Hueston Woods. I'm sure there are other suitable spots throughout the park for dates that we will unfortunately not have time to try out before we graduate.

Conclusion

While Hueston Woods is not necessarily on campus, it is still an exciting place to check out. I hope that after reading this, you will take my advice and try out some of these activities. And if you find even better ways to experience the wonders of Hueston Woods, make sure to spread the joy. When you go to school in a small town, sometimes you have to find interesting ways to have fun during the week (the weekend life is the only thing that keeps us going). Thankfully, a gorgeous state park is right down the road.

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You step out from the shaded gardens and back onto the paved walkway. The words within the pamphlet lingers within you, but a familiar weight returns to your chest, heavier than before. Though the space was quiet and beautiful, it offered no clarity. Whatever answers you're searching for remain out of reach.

The sidewalk stretches ahead of you, but something makes you hesitate. You feel it again: that pull. Not a voice, not a sign, just a directionless urge, as though something within you is responding to the land itself.

Before you, you see two paths. On your left, the path adheres deeper into the forest, away from town. Nature sings, branches leaning overhead, forming a canopy where light and sound vanish from your view. The air in that direction feels different, cooler, older, still. You don't know what lies beyond the bend, but your body responds before your mind can. The forest calls to something inside you. It's not safety it offers, but space—space to remember, or forget.

To your right, the road opens. You see distant rooftops, quiet lots, and the silhouettes of low buildings. The land flattens out, more exposed, more lived-in. There's a comfort in that; doors to knock on, windows lit up against the dusk. You imagine strangers who might become allies, or at least people to witness you. Perhaps answers live in their stories too.

Both paths stretch before you. One leads into solitude and trees. The other is into quiet neighborhoods and human presence. You take one last breath in the middle of the path. You decide.

If you follow the wooded road, seeking silence and the possibility of memory, turn to page 134.

If you walk toward the cluster of homes and the chance of conversation, turn to page 18.

As you walk, you find the road leading you away, pulling you from the hush of the woods.

The rough edge of bark, the scent of damp soil, the tangle of branches; those fade behind you, replaced by flat sidewalks and evenly spaced trees. Nature gives way to design. The path is straighter here. More intentional. Controlled.

Buildings begin to rise around you—three stories tall, pale sides, narrow balconies, all repeating with quiet precision. Everything feels clean, symmetrical, held in place.

Then, you notice a flyer zip-tied to a lamppost near a walkway. You slow down. It looks like an advertisement, bold title, centered logo, but something about it makes you uneasy. There's too much text, for one thing. And the tone doesn't sit right. It's not what you'd expect from a flyer. Or at least... you don't think it is.

Still, something about this one feels different, in a way you can't explain, almost as if it's calling to you.

You decide to read it.

Are you searching for an apartment in Oxford? One of the many options is Hawks Landing, a preferred off-campus housing commitment for Miami students. Located on Brown Road, the complex is just over a mile away from the campus and can be easily accessed by the U4 bus route.

Overview

Constructed in 1994, this modern apartment complex provides one to four bedroom housing for students. Each apartment has a kitchen with granite countertops, a washer and dryer, and a communal living space. Rooms have a lock, but the central living area is designed to encourage a sense of community while still respecting privacy. The lease also includes access to a swimming pool and hot tub, twenty-four hour fitness center and printer, basketball and volleyball courts, and a central dog park. Apartments are allowed pets with a small upcharge for accommodations.

Community Life

Being one of the farther complexes from campus, Hawks Landing provides a rather calm environment, somewhat secluded. This creates a relaxed and peaceful atmosphere, with friendly relations and few disturbances at night. The complex also occasionally organizes community events such as free breakfast or a taco bar, encouraging resident interaction and comfortability.

Location and Accessibility

While Hawks Landing provides ample parking for its residents, it is also within walking distance to all relevant Oxford amenities such as grocery stores, restaurants, and coffee shops. It is close to everything but still enough distance away to feel private. The U4 bus route passes through the area at frequent intervals to enable those without cars to move around the town.

Greenspace

Central to the complex is a large dog park enclosed by a chain fence. This greenspace effectively promotes community, as this pet-friendly residency houses many dogs. While certainly practical, the park also provides a natural meeting place for the residents and pets alike to socialize and get acquainted.

The general layout of Hawks Landing mirrors the atmosphere of the dog park. There is a large amount of open space between buildings, complemented by winding paths and an occasional bench.

Resident Perspectives

While it is easy to promote Hawks Landing on paper, its

true character can be found through the voices of its residents. For instance, according to the Hawks Landing official website, 98.8 percent of reviewers rate the property five stars in almost every aspect (parking, noise, construction, grounds, maintenance, staff). Many have specifically praised the staff for their attentiveness, efficiency, and willingness to respond to any maintenance issues, as well as their general approachability. The staff are genuinely invested with the welfare of the residents, only furthering the complex's peaceful nature.

Reviewers also commend the layout of the complex for fostering a community spirit while still providing peace. The private units allow for quiet study time or relaxation, while communal areas encourage socialization and interaction. without cars to move around the town.

Hawks Landing Compared

Hawks Landing offers a balance of facilities, convenient location, and community spirit. It has a more contemporary feel as compared to other apartment complexes that were built in the years prior. These may not provide the same pet-friendly atmosphere or modern convenience that can be found in Hawks Landing.

While some housing options prioritize affordability over amenities, Hawks Landing offers a variety of benefits that justify its pricing. The fitness center, pool, and outdoor spaces combined with spacious apartments make Hawks Landing more than just a place to sleep. The dog park in particular also sets it apart from other student housing, such as The Commons or The Verge.

For those who prefer a quieter environment, Hawks Landing provides this luxury as well. While other complexes may be busier, Hawks Landing offers a peaceful alternative

with an emphasis on community.

Final Thoughts

While Hawks Landing may appeal to a large variety of residents, its features make it an especially excellent choice for upperclassmen who want to establish their independence. The apartment complex provides the perfect environment for residents who want to experience independent living away from campus while still enjoying personal peace and quiet. Residents find everyday comfort through the fully furnished housing, in-unit laundry service, and high quality kitchen facilities, as well as twenty-four hour amenities that support an active, healthy, and social lifestyle.

Hawks Landing stands out as an exceptional housing option for pet owners in the area. Pet ownership at the complex is highly encouraged, with each apartment allowing two pets at most. This, combined with the inclusion of the dog park creates a close-knit sub community, along with a convenient outlet for rowdy animals. The vast greenspaces and walking paths lend themselves to an extremely pet-friendly lifestyle.

Hawks Landing demonstrates its commitment to community and functionality through its thoughtfully designed facilities. The location provides convenient access to campus, but the complex maintains enough distance for residents to experience independence along with the privacy and personal community that comes with living on their own. The apartment complex provides students with stability during the whirlwind that is college, allowing a welcoming home to return to each night. The combination of its amenities, greenspaces, and community-focused design makes Hawks Landing an ideal residential choice. Hawks Landing stands as a residence worth highly

considering for those who plan to make Oxford their future home.

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Something inside you shifts, a quiet certainty that you've seen what you needed to see here. Hawks Landing offered you something, though you're not sure what exactly. A feeling. A fragment. But now that it's passed through you, you feel the pull again, subtle, but unmistakable: The urge to keep moving.

You linger for a moment at the edge of the lot, watching the breeze ripple across the surface of the pool, then turn and begin walking again, past the sand court, past the line of cars, toward something different.

You're not sure what you're looking for, just that you need movement. Something that isn't arranged in rows.

The road tightens as you walk. The buildings get older. Apartments turn to brick. You spot flower boxes framing windows. You pass others on the sidewalk: students, shoulders hunched against the wind. Then you see it, calling to you.

A café, tucked between storefronts, a red and blue "Open" sign flickering within its doors. Kofenya. The name feels soft in your mind, strangely familiar, like a childhood melody. You cross the street and head toward the door. As you walk, someone passes you carrying a white cup with a green mermaid logo. A name strikes your mind: Starbucks! There's a Starbucks in this town. Unlike the gentle pull of Kofenya, the memory of Starbucks jolts you with urgency. You figure you could obtain some valuable information there. After all, there are Starbucks cafés all over the place. You reel, wondering where you should go.

For the earthy, soothing Kofenya, turn to page 85.

For the bold, punchy Starbucks, turn to page 25.

The draw of Starbucks is too tempting to ignore. You turn back and call out to the person holding the Starbucks cup.

"Where did you get that?" you shout.

"Just down the street past Skyline! White building—you can't miss it!" the person responds. You make a beeline down the sidewalk, desperate to get out of this nightmare you're in. You see the mermaid logo on the window and release a huge sigh of relief. You're saved!

It looks crowded. There's a group of people gathered around looking angry. Maybe they're upset because it's so busy. As you near, you realize the angry people are holding signs that read "Support local coffee!" and "Corporations succeed when towns permit greed!"

You try not to make eye contact as you try to weave past the protesters, but one of them notices you and screams, "HEY!" You move faster, reaching for the door. Someone yanks your shirt and tugs you to the ground. The group of protesters mobs you, shoving pamphlets and buttons into your hands. You fall, getting lost beneath the crowd. Feet trample you, and your vision fades. How did you get here? You just wanted to know who you are.

Your body gives out.

The End.

You are flattened to death by protestors.
Go back and make another choice.

You decide to go to Bachelor Hall. You trek up the hill and cross a busy intersection to look at it from the front.

It looks empty. As evening starts to set in, the sun hits the windows on the face of the building head on, and it looks like the entire place is ablaze. You enter through the front, but the hallway is shallow. Peering through the back doors, you see that the building opens up to a courtyard. You see a student sitting on one of the benches beneath a tree, and you decide to talk to him. Pushing through the doors, you enter the secluded little area and approach him. He's looking around at the surrounding walls of the building. He seems sad.

"Excuse me?" you say. "What's your name?" He tells you his name is Nick, and he's a Professional Writing and Creative Writing major here at Miami. You continue, "It's lovely to meet you, Nick. Could you tell me a little about this building?"

Nick brightens and invites you to sit beside him while he tells you about his experience with Bachelor Hall.

"Bachelor Hall, at a glance, would be the last place a student would expect to find lasting memories. Situated at the very end of the long-reaching Spring Street, its white-capped bell tower is the first thing many students see on their daily commutes to campus. Built in 1978 and named after Harvard University graduate Joseph M. Bachelor, the building served as the home of countless students' (doubtlessly) favorite subjects: English and mathematics. With this in mind, Bachelor Hall may very well be like any other academic hall on campus: an insignificant building for a class that you woke up too early to attend, or stayed up too late to work for. It is nothing to be paid particular attention to,and since the renovations began in 2024,this place of afterthoughts has been stripped to its bones like an empty insect's shell.

"But not to me. The memories that I have of this place have gone past any concept of ordinary, and those wonderful experiences live on in its walls. By the time I graduate, I will not see how it has been transformed. I will probably not walk Bachelor's halls again for a very long

time, and if I do,there will be no telling how it will have changed. So, I am telling you this as a eulogy: to the place that I knew, to the people I have met, and to the warmth that I have known.

"Bachelor Hall, as aforementioned, is dedicated to Joseph M. Bachelor. A Miami undergraduate, he went on to earn an English master's and doctoral degree at the prestigious Harvard University before returning to Miami as an associate professor of English. After seventeen years of innovative teaching (and exceptional enthusiasm regarding a presentation of Shakespeare), Bachelor was promoted to a professor of English. He would retire in 1946 and died a year later, leaving his 400-acre farm to be used by Miami as the Bachelor Preserve and cementing his legacy for years to come. In 1979, Miami University held a dedication ceremony for the passed professor and crowned the new communications building Bachelor in his honor.

"Of course, I am sure there is no feasible way that Professor Bachelor could have seen what would come of his legacy. There ought to be more to tell for a man who seemed so passionate about his craft, but I take comfort in the fact that his hall is not just a place for students to disregard. I know that my friends do not see it that way, at least—let's go to them now and dig into the meat of my experiences.

"Sophomore year—simply put—was a confusing time. When coming to Miami University, I had in my mind fanciful dreams of wearing a white doctor's coat, pressing forward with what I had long believed was my passion. Having wormed my way out of the primordial ooze of Intro to Bio, however, I faced my personal twin titans of disaster: Chemistry and Physics I. I passed them, of course. But if my father was anything to model myself off of, I needed far better than passing to go to medical school.

"Questions of my true passions swam in my head daily, all as my junior year was rapidly approaching. With little time to my name and few places to call home, I found the one thing I knew I liked to do: write. I entered into the Association of Creative Writers as an anxious sophomore, and I proceeded to spend every Tuesday and Thursday night on the third floor.

"This was my introduction to Bachelor as a place, and not just a simple building. I don't think I can ever think of Bachelor Hall without going back to my days in the Association of Creative Writers. All of this, of course, was the precursor to my eventual change in major; frankly, I got far more time in the building as a Professional and Creative Writing double major than I ever asked for. In fact, there was one semester where most, if not all, of my classes were in Bachelor. I would go down to the stuffy ground-floor classrooms for my morning workshop, then I would climb to the third floor for Literary Marketplace, to the same room I would have ACW in a few hours later.

"A strange sensation, to say the least. I don't want to claim that I did not fall to flights of boredom in my classes during those times, or succumb to drowsiness from a paper I spent too long writing. There were times when I would enter Bachelor Hall and dread seeing the white buildings peeking over the hilly roads of Spring Street, or find the ancient, stuffy classrooms too uncomfortable to pay attention in. For all of its charms and the wonderful memories I have had there with my friends in the ACW, Bachelor Hall is, at the end of the day, a hall.

"But that doesn't mean it hasn't stuck with me. The frequency with which I visited that place and the mixture of coursework and camaraderie that helped me come out of my shell has fixed in my mind a unique association. Had I known any other place in Miami, any other hall or situation,

I might have passed Bachelor off as unremarkable. In some ways, Bachelor has grown with me; I came to know it as I grew in my own right as a student, just as I came to know the countless wonderful people who made a home there too. A very dear part of my college experience has been made in Bachelor, and by extension, Bachelor has been an experience in itself.

"Bachelor will never be the same as it was for me. If you get the same chance that I did to walk its halls, there's no telling if you'll find the same security and warmth that I felt while within it. All the same, though—if you're thinking of a place to host your club, or to find one to join, I cannot recommend this place enough. With any luck, you might just find the members of the ACW lurking on the third floor, caught in a storm of laughter and pen scribbles. Give them a hello for me. With any luck, you might find Bachelor as a whole new home for yourself, just like I did."

Nick goes on to tell you that Miami is renovating Bachelor Hall soon. The courtyard is going to be filled in so that it's closed off from the elements. Miami is making more communal space for the English students. That's why he's sitting here; to mourn for the loss of the unique feature of this building and to celebrate the expansion of a community that already exists.

You thank him for sharing before sitting in a moment of silence. You stare up at the large hole in the building, a fortress wall holding Nick's memories.

Memories.

Every time the bittersweet word comes up, it makes your heart crack. But somehow, Nick's story gives you a little hope. Even though Bachelor will never be the same again, Nick's memories still happened. ACW still happened, and will continue to happen, creating a home for students many years to come. Bachelor is changing, but it still holds Nick's memories. Maybe it can hold yours too.

"When does ACW meet again?" you ask. "I'd like to come check it out." He tells you that they actually meet tonight, and he'd love to see you there. You thank him again, saying you're looking forward to it.

You walk out of Bachelor feeling full and hopeful. Your wandering is coming to an end soon. You have some time to kill before the meeting, and you haven't explored what you've heard students refer to as "Western Campus" yet. You decide to go there and look around.

As you roam around Western campus, two buildings draw your attention: a big beautiful gray stone church to your right and a bright red brick building to your left. Which do you choose?

For the gray church, turn to page 91.

For the brick building, turn to page 33.

33

The sign on the brick building reads "Peabody Hall." You approach it, though you're starting to get a creepy feeling. You watch a student leave the building with a slightly haunted expression, and you're a little worried. When you approach the door, it's locked. There's a black box next to the door with a little red light, likely an ID scanner. This place must be a dormitory. You sigh in relief. That's why the student looked upset. He must hate living here.

You spot someone through the window coming toward the door. You decide to just wait for them to leave and then walk right into the building. But as the door opens, and you make your move, the person suddenly grabs your wrist.

"You don't want to go in there," she warns. "You'll regret it. She will come for you." Startled, you're only concerned about removing her grip from your arm. You swat her away and stumble into the building.

It's dark and eerily quiet. You tiptoe through the floor, searching for some stairs. You bumble around in the dark, curious as to how the other students navigate around the dorm. You manage to reach the top of a flight of stairs, and suddenly the air goes cold. In response, you freeze, unable to move your feet out of pure terror. The sound of wind rushes and somehow echoes through the stairway, getting louder and louder. Finally, you command your feet to turn and you sprint back down the stairs, unable to see a thing. The light coming through the window in the door guides you as you flee toward it.

Suddenly something icy whooshes through you, sapping your muscles of your remaining strength and adrenaline. You writhe as you reach a weak hand toward the light.

So... Close...

34

No. It's pointless now. You can barely move. You fold onto your back and look up at what you think is the ceiling. The translucent wrinkled face of an old woman stares at you with hard, vacant eyes.

The End.

The ghost of Helen Peabody kills you.
Go back and make another choice.

35

You enter the gates of the cemetery and walk along the path. There's no one here except a student. Oddly enough, they appear to be calm, happy even. They're sitting among the headstones, looking as relaxed as if they were among old friends. You decide to talk to them.

"Hello," you greet them shyly as you near, "If you don't mind me asking, who are you here for?" They turn to look at you and smile patiently.

"I'm here for myself," they say. When they see the confused expression on your face, they add, "You want to know why?"

You nod eagerly and sit beside them in the grass to listen.

"The story of the Oxford Cemetery actually begins in Ancient Greece with the birth of Lethe. Lethe, the river in Hades that makes the dead forget their past lives, or Lethe, the Greek personification of oblivion, daughter of Eris the Greek personification of strife. It is there in the cradle of the underworld that the story of the Oxford Cemetery really begins. I would know best after all, considering that my name, Letha, is derived from the very same Lethe of Greek myth and gifted to me by a dead woman.

"In complement to my lethal name, I have always felt a peculiar affection for cemeteries. Perhaps because one of my first memories takes place in one or, more accurately, in a line of cars on the street outside one. It was my great-grandmother's funeral, the first funeral of many I would go on to attend—at least one for every year I've spent on Earth. My only memory of my great-grandmother before seeing her in a casket is of her limbs and fingers, gnarled like old trees by decades of physical labor, barrelling down a flight of stairs. Seeing the blood ooze from a wound on her forehead, pooling under the paper-thin wrinkled skin of her knobby legs, sadness blooming on her face as a once vigorous farmer and moonshine smuggler is brought low by a measly

staircase and the looming spectre of death.

"I also remember being very perplexed by the idea of death while waiting in the car to attend the funeral. My parents being atheists further complicated the whole affair. What is a person supposed to do with death when there is no spiritual explanation for what happens to the soul when the body expires? I imagined my great-grandma's consciousness eternally trapped in the darkness of a wooden box, buried under endless inches of soil unable to move her limbs, frozen inside her mind forever and all time. I did requisition god—who I pictured as Zeus from Disney's Hercules at the time—to watch over her and ease her pain if there was such a thing as the afterlife. I was still not very convinced, but it was this first brush with death that would begin my love story with cemeteries.

"After that first encounter with a cemetery, I remember driving past others and imagining oily tentacles reaching up from the graves to the sky beckoning to me. Instead of being afraid, I felt a strange melancholy, as if I were supposed to be amongst the number of the dead resting in a coffin in the dirt.

"As I got older, though, the cemeteries began to take on a less fantastical notion. Touring cemeteries became a ritual with my little sister. Whenever things started to get bad at our house—and they often did—we would walk to the cemetery and spend hours moseying around, taking turns adding songs to the queue on my phone, before taking a preliminary pass by our house to make sure one of our parents' cars were gone. If they were both still at home, we would go back and walk a couple more laps on the cemetery path until the coast was clear.

"So there were a lot of memorable cemeteries for me, and memories in cemeteries, and general fascination with the

concept of a cemetery, but what about THIS cemetery, Oxford Cemetery? I might have exaggerated a bit when I said that its story began in Ancient Greece.

"The story of Oxford Cemetery, for me, actually began rather inconspicuously in the cab of a black 2015 GMC Canyon parked in Miami University's Ditmer parking lot—Ditmer being a commuter student parking lot, as I was a commuter student at the time. Class was just concluding over Zoom, and I was asked to stay after by my professor who wanted to ask if I was okay. It wasn't something I had really considered before—my okayness. I was living a particularly un-miraculous life. An hour drive to the university and an hour drive back home each night, soundtracked by The Smiths' album *Strangeways, Here We Come*. Work every Tuesday and Thursday morning before class, closing shifts Friday and Saturday, open to close on Sundays. Homework on my lunch breaks. It seemed as though I was living the most okay life to ever take place, yet, when asked if I was, I began to hysterically sob. As it was happening, I thought it was funny to be crying in my car while a person miles away watched me sob on a computer screen. But it was there, on a Zoom call in a university parking lot, that my life was ended by a Miami University English Department faculty member with one sentence: What you're experiencing sounds like domestic violence. And I did the only sensible thing you can do when a life has ended. I went to a cemetery—the closest one being Oxford Cemetery.

"Now, you would think that being told you might be a victim of domestic violence by one of your professors would be the really life-changing part of that chain of events, but it wasn't. It wasn't until I had walked through the black metal gates of the cemetery and past the plaque reading 'Oxford Cemetery Est. 1855' that the gravity of the situation really struck me. It was on the paved path of Oxford Cemetery—

barely wide enough to fit my truck—amidst the tall spires of the ornate gravestones that I ceased to be a normal person as I had been, and became a person adjacent to being a victim of domestic violence. I still struggle with calling myself a victim of domestic violence or thinking about myself in that way because what I experienced doesn't feel real enough to be worthy of such a title. Still, the framework with which I had been living my life had been completely obliterated and, as I had been prone to do since I was a child, I turned to the cemetery for solace.

"Over the following year, as I moved out of my domestic-violence-adjacent situation, I began to visit Oxford Cemetery with increasing frequency. Perhaps with even more frequency than any of my other favorite cemeteries. Every time that I began to feel insane or like the circumstances of my life were too intense to bear, I would drive to Peffer Park, park my car, and walk up the hill to Oxford Cemetery. No matter the level of bone-reverberating emotional distress I was experiencing, walking through the gates of Oxford Cemetery and feeling the air would almost instantly balance my mind and settle my soul. And despite being in the company of the dead, I found that being alive was just a little bit more bearable."

As soon as Letha finishes speaking, you thank them for sharing. Suddenly, Letha returns the question.

"Who are you here for?" they ask. It surprises you, but the question feels good. It makes you feel seen. You mirror their response. You're here for yourself, but you don't have a purpose the way they do. You've lost all of your memories, all of your loved ones—everything. You've learned all about Oxford, but you still don't know why you feel so lonely. Letha puts their hand on your shoulder and tells you, "It's a good thing we've met each other, then. Want me to keep you company? You can tell me about what you've explored today. And you can tell them too." They gesture at the field of stones poking out from the ground.

Just then, something inside you cracks, and something warm and pleasant seeps into your chest. The brokenness is still there, but you're not the only one looking at it. And it feels so good. You stay with Letha until after dark, chatting about the town's little quirks in the presence of the ghosts of Oxford's past.

This is how you're meant to deal with grief and pain. This is how you're meant to share it.

The End.

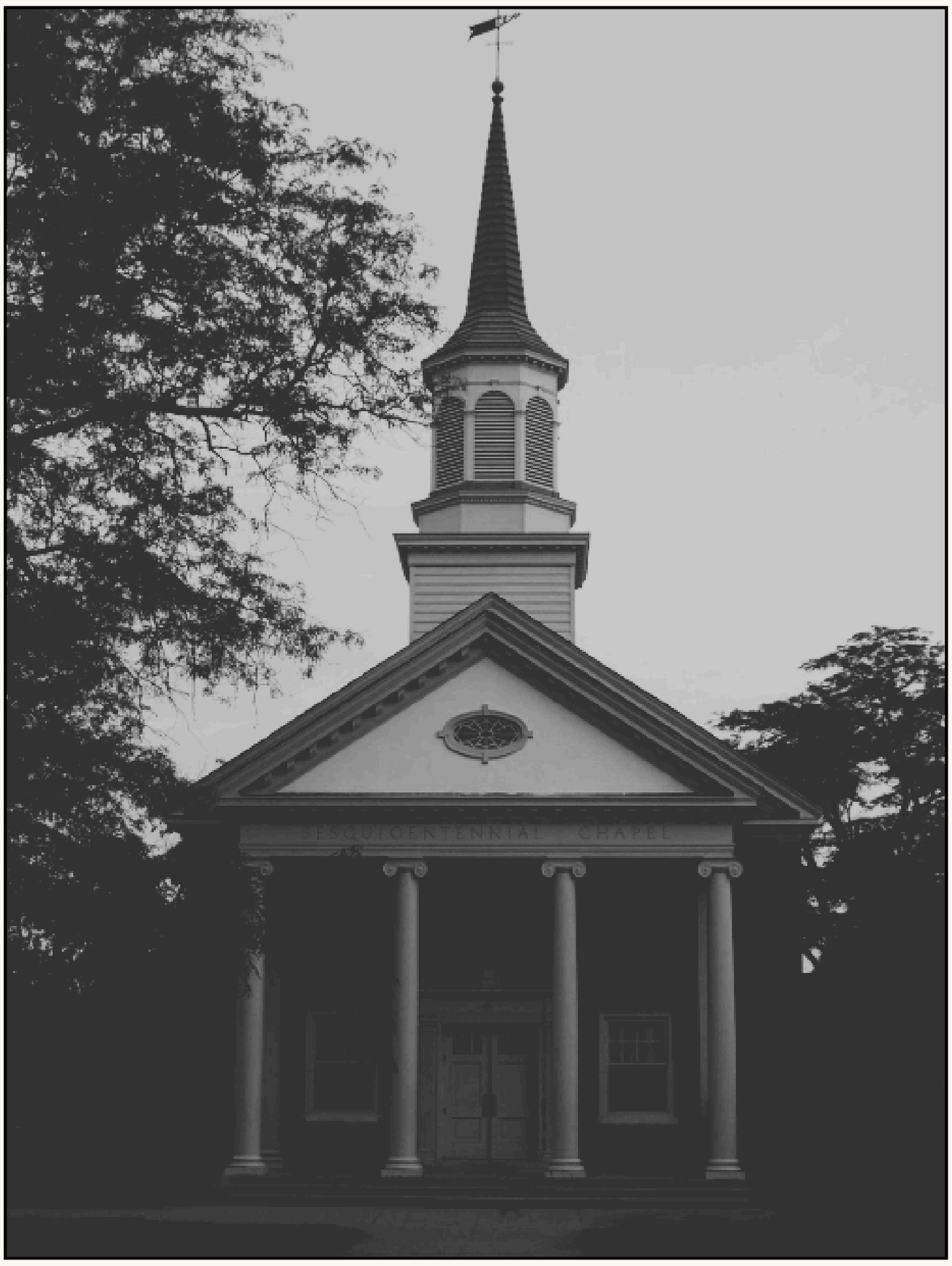
41

You cross the street to go visit the chapel. As you approach, you hear someone speaking. It's not a Sunday, so you're a little confused. You crack open the door and spot people scattered around the pews. You enter quietly and see a pretty little sanctuary, white and brightly illuminated by overhead chandeliers. You head straight to the nearest pew and sit so you don't disturb anyone. Looking at the speaker, you feel confused. He doesn't look like a priest, too young. He's not dressed like a priest, either. But as you listen, you come to understand that this is not a church service. The guy is reciting poetry out of a small book. The poetry itself doesn't jog your memory at all; it doesn't feel familiar. But the experience does, somehow. He must be reading his own work. It's about this place called Goggin. What a funny name. Then the words come to you: A reading. This is a creative writing reading. You must have gone to events like this before you lost your memory.

The crowd applauds, and the young man leaves the pulpit. A girl with a book of some kind comes up and replaces him. She announces that her name is Becca, and she's sharing a creative essay dedicated to this building. It feels like fate. Maybe by understanding this building, you'll understand yourself a little better.

When Becca finishes reading, there is a long pause. Suddenly, the crowd bursts into applause. You start clapping too. You clap so hard and so loud, others look at you funny. You realize there are tears in your eyes, and you don't know why. Before Becca leaves the stage, she announces that a copy of the magazine she's reading from, called Happy Captive, is available at a table near the door. She encourages people to take a copy before they leave.

You get up and exit the chapel, snagging a copy of the magazine on your way out. Outside, you stand for a moment to dry your eyes before opening your fresh copy of the magazine. You turn to the page with Becca's piece in it to reread it right away. Immediately, the experience feels different on paper. You sit down on a step to soak it all in again.



On any given Sunday afternoon, muddied bar shoes kick absentmindedly on the formidable white pews of Miami University's central chapel. Hear the creak, creak, creak of the moment, feel the wobbly elegance embodied in this loyal beacon of hope, or religion, or something?

Built in 1959, Sesquicentennial Chapel was constructed as a non-denominational gathering space to celebrate an array of spiritual events on campus. The donors wanted a constant reminder of the importance of religion in rounding out an individual and instilling morals.

Many pass the structure and admire its architectural beauty—others avoid its haunting religious gaze. Located directly across from the student center, it reminds the passersby of sweltering afternoons spent plunked in the pew of their own neighborhood's church/mosque/synagogue. Its religious anonymity allows it to chide students from all

walks of life. They may even begin to count on their fingers the weeks it has been since attending a service. Like a reproachful mother, it stands unwavering through the seasons and the times, chiding the viewer without saying a single word.

Fewer and fewer students report practicing any kind of religion in the year 2025, yet the chapel remains in frequent use. Its gracious donors of good intention would likely be annoyed by how casually it is rented out, and for what ceremonies it tends to be the vessel of.

Sesquicentennial? What Kind of Name is That?

The second, if not first, eye-catching aspect of the chapel is its sixteen-letter long namesake. Sit on its stone steps for long enough, and one will overhear a passing student's garbled attempt at pronouncing it. Sesquintissential? Sesquintennial? Then a couple of laughs and the shrug of a shoulder.

Miami University was founded in 1809. The United States of America was only thirty-two years old at that point—not even old enough for a midlife crisis. Consisting of only seventeen states, it is safe to say that the university was born of a young and ambitious nation.

To celebrate Miami surviving the test of time, Sesquicentennial Chapel's completion in 1959 served to honor its whopping 150 years as a place to provide prestigious higher education. So, "sesqui-," meaning "one-and-a-half," coupled with "-centennial," meaning "of one hundred years," solidifies the building's importance and place in history.

Ballroom dancers, singers, and sorority members alike affectionately refer to the building as "Ses Chapel," as

though it's a friend's house or an ideal hangout spot. Or maybe they aren't sure how to pronounce the name, and they'd like to go the safe route. Regardless, for those looking for a shortcut, "Ses" is a succinct alternative.

New Wave Gospel

Two weeks ago, the chapel's wooden altar was adorned with pizza, cookies, and different kinds of flavored beverages. It was seemingly a new era of peace offerings to some sort of god, and I couldn't help but laugh at the irony of the altar's dinner table capabilities. Though some might consider it sacrilegious, I think I may call it biblical. Did Jesus not offer himself up at a dinner table, inspiring Catholics everywhere to construct ornate altars for celebration? For the breaking of bread and fast together?

To open the pseudo-ceremony, we students gave signs of peace, greeting one another in the only way that undergraduates know how.

College students, often primed by the ice-breakers and get-to-know-yous from classes, may find themselves lacking in the conversation-starter department. Luckily, one commanding phrase always holds true and gets the job done right: Okay, so like, everyone go around and say your name, major, year, and where you're from.

Following this sign of peace wherein each attendee anxiously awaited their turn, college students broke bread (pizza), and I counted myself among them. The congregation consisted of singers—half from Miami, and half from Vanderbilt University—who all came together to share their love of music and a cappella arrangements of whatever's on the radio. We sat and got to know each other, chatting on and on about altos and baritones and beatboxing skills.

We then sang, worshiping the music itself and bringing the reunion to a close. Harmonies echoed off of the dome (surely the acoustics were considered in the architectural plans on this sacred place), and we led our mischievous procession outside, bar-bound.

Sandals & Bar Shoes

One might argue that the concept of bar shoes (shoes reserved only for patronizing the stickier-floored establishments of Oxford, Ohio) are staples of the modern college experience. Consumerism begs fresh faces of the economy to purchase a certain something for everything, but bar shoes can be the perfect excuse to finally embody the slogan on those blue bins seen in many classrooms. Transform class shoes, formerly walking shoes, into bar shoes, and one day you will find them in the most random of places. Sticky floors, slippery tiles, even Sesquicentennial Chapel's plush red pulpit.

Over 2,000 years ago, Jesus and his disciples donned their strapped sandals in countless temples, their feet regularly caked with such grime that before Jesus passed, he took it upon himself to clean those of his closest friends (I'm paraphrasing, but the point will follow).

Places of worship weren't always spotless and pristine. It wasn't irreverent to be there in everyday clothes, to laugh, even. They were places to gather, to celebrate, to praise the forces that have continued to grant human beings life. They were a shared space for celebration, but the connections forged before, during, and after said ceremonies were just as important as the purpose for gathering itself. People came to be together, to see each other routinely, to love one another, as most religions implore.

Once a place to celebrate the highest of high, the bar shoes of many now chip away at the brittle wood of each pew in Sesquicentennial Chapel. People gather, laugh, sing, and make memories that they will fondly look back on in the years to come. Under this roof, in this house of praise, people come together and celebrate life. I like to think, then, that the chapel is still being put to good use.

47

You look up from the book, once again in tears. But this time, you understand why you're crying. The memories infused into the piece are gorgeous. Simply gorgeous. It must be so nice to have a collective memory like this, experiences that are both shared across a campus and unique to each individual. You realize that you're weeping because you don't have this, and you're starting to doubt whether you're ever going to get what you had back.

The thought is painful, so painful you don't want to stay here a second longer. You spot a building on the corner across from you with a lot of people and consider going over there. However, you've spent a lot of time in this area. The sidewalk leads the other way toward other academic buildings. Maybe you can find that Goggin place the other reader was talking about. Do you go across the street or turn and head the other way?

To cross the street, turn to page 54.

To go the other way and find Goggin, turn to page 109.

48

You leave the Conrad Formal Gardens and head to the middle of Miami's campus, toward a symmetrical building with a beautiful arch nestled in its center. You wonder what there is to explore inside the building and decide to ask someone for advice. As you draw near, you notice a student standing beside the arch. He's shrouded in dark clothes and staring bitterly up at the building. He looks lost in his thoughts and a little scary, so you look around for someone else to talk to. Unfortunately, it looks like he's the only one around at the moment, so you approach him slowly so you don't frighten him.

"Excuse me? Do you think you could tell me about this building?" you ask.

The guy's head whips toward you, and he narrows his eyes.

"Ah, yes, Upham Hall. A landmark of Oxford. And who could forget its arch? A hallmark of Miami University and, if we're being honest, a symbol of Oxford itself. A place filled with the memories and nostalgia of all who have seen it. A place that can turn a potential student into an attending student. A place where you can take the perfect graduation photo. A place where romance turns to marriage. A place where dreams become reality. There's nothing in Oxford quite like Upham Hall.

"At least, that's what the tour guides tell you anyway. However, if you ever attend Miami and go to Upham, perhaps your thoughts will change. But who knows? Instead of conjuring up hypothetical experiences, let me regale you with my own. Upham Hall is indeed a place at Miami University. But for me, it's a place of forced conformity, a place that forgets your history, and a place reeking with the stench of performative advocacy.

"But, if you're anything like me, you're used to it. Don't worry. So what if it's the fourth time a history professor cold

calls your name because you're the other in a sea of whiteness? It makes sense, right? I mean, from his point of view, I might as well be a Get Out of Jail Free card; surely, this student must know about The Chinese Exclusion Act—it doesn't matter that they're Korean, they're Asian!

"It's alright, calm down. Just enter the model minority masquerade that's kept you safe your whole life. Relax, he called you Chinese; it is what it is. So what's one more performance? 'Ah, of course professor, here's some generalized Asian history to spice up the lecture.' Take the praise and move on—just another day at Upham Hall.

"And look, does any of this really matter? I mean, who cares? Just live your life; look how privileged you are—you're attending a university. Does it really impact you that much that they don't provide any Asian history courses? In the words of one of my closest, dearest, and most amazing professors, 'If you're passionate about it, just do it yourself.' What wonderful advice this is. What was I to expect? That Upham Hall, the hub of the humanities at Miami, with its leaking windows and prison walls, would be able to offer me a cosmopolitan selection of history? Perhaps my expectations for higher education were a bit too high.

"Then, it'll happen: the masquerade will crack. It's not a matter of if but when. Who knows what made it happen? Was it the tenth person who asked you where you're from? 'Oh, I'm from Atlanta.' 'Oh, that's cool, but, like, where are you from?' Maybe it's the seventh class where there are only two or three other students who are different. Or perhaps it's when someone confides to you, 'I'm glad that there are finally fewer Chinese students on campus. Do you remember a few years ago? Oh my god! You get it right; you can speak English!' Bellowing with laughter. But regardless, whichever moment it is, it'll happen.

"The series of hairline fractures finally collapses, turning into a chasm. Your practiced facade becomes too heavy to hold, eventually reaching your public service smile. The desire to constantly translate yourself into something that's not other is suddenly not worth it. The mask slips, not necessarily dramatically, but in a quiet withdrawal. The cost of the masquerade becomes too high. And their response? 'I was just asking a question.' 'It's not that big of a deal.' 'Just chill out.' And, in the end, nothing will change—it's just another day at Upham Hall.

"However, what you won't realize is that, after four years of saying 'it's just another day,' you'll find that something did change. Unknown to you, calluses have formed, amassed through a cruel jadedness, invisible until needed most. The meritocracy? Promises of inclusion and a commitment to diversity? You realize these were nothing but empty promises, all to bolster the ethos of an institution indifferent to you, with Upham Hall simply acting as a mirage. All in the hopes of securing one more admission, one more plus for the board of trustees.

"It may tout its commitment to diversity, but when confronted with lived realities, the response is often a shrug, a dismissal, a demand for silence. While there are great people, inevitably, when faced with adversity, the infrastructure that promised to support them will crumble. The crack in the masquerade isn't just a personal unraveling; it's a stark exposure of the gap between rhetoric and daily experience.

"And in that stark exposure, a strange kind of clarity emerges. The disillusionment turns into a pragmatic understanding. Upham Hall, and perhaps Miami University, is no longer viewed through the idealistic lens of the dream it sold you but as it truly is—a series of spaces not built for you, a place that touts acceptance until the point of action. In

its failure to be what you wanted it to be, Upham Hall became a crucible, forging a resilience you didn't know you possessed. The constant need to perform within its walls, while exhausting, snapped you out of blissful ignorance.

"This forced awakening, though jarring, becomes a catalyst. The rose-tinted glasses lose their tint. The energy once spent maintaining the masquerade now redirects, fueling a sharper awareness of your reality. This newfound clarity, born from disappointment, ironically empowers you. The discomfort, while persistent, becomes a teacher, its lessons etched in your understanding of the world and your place within it.

"Upham Hall, in this sense, did fulfill what it originally promised you. It is a place where potential students become attending students, where perfect graduation photos are captured, and where budding romances turn to marriage. It is undeniably a place where dreams come true. It's just that, these dreams and memories, they were never meant for you, and no matter what you do, they never will be."

53

After the student finishes, you stand there in shock. You hadn't expected a response like this. You stare at him silently, wondering if Oxford is truly what it claims to be. If Miami is truly what it claims to be. These beautiful brick buildings, the seemingly diverse people and places you've met so far. Does it all live up to that mantra you see plastered everywhere on campus: Love and Honor? What does it matter that Miami owns this branded phrase if its systems—its people—don't love and honor everyone? Clearly it doesn't. You study him until he looks away in defeat, his face flushed and his expression frustrated. He mumbles an apology and then tells you to check out the Hefner Museum of Natural History or the anthropology labs.

"I never got your name, by the way," you say. He tells you his name is Caleb.

You say to him, "Thank you, Caleb. My goal is to learn about Oxford. All of it. I wouldn't want to learn about this town without your story."

His expression softens slightly, and he nods. You bid Caleb farewell and go inside, determined to keep his experience with you as you explore this space. You think about the options he gave you.

Should you go explore the Hefner Museum or the anthropology labs?

To head to the museum, turn to page 66.

To look for the labs, turn to page 139.

You cross the street and approach a group of people standing around a Miami student with a name tag reading Mikayla. She greets you and says, "We're just about to start a campus tour. Would you like to join us?"

You glance around at the people around you. Their happy and excited expressions feel inviting, so you join their circle. After a moment, Mikayla calls for everyone's attention and points to the building standing next to you.

"Miami University's Shriver Center was opened in 1957 under its original name, the University Center, and was intended to act as the heart of community engagement. The Shriver Center is named after Phillip R. Shriver, who served as Miami University's president from 1965 to 1981. His leadership played a crucial role in shaping the modern identity of the university. Since then, it has undergone two major construction additions and a variety of smaller renovations. Campus population quickly outgrew the space that Shriver provided, prompting the construction of Armstrong Student Center.

"Nowadays, Shriver is a bustling hub of activity, acting as the home to the Rinella Learning Center, the Brick & Ivy Campus Store, the Admissions Center, Miami Catering, the Mail and Package Center, and many multi-purpose rooms available for event rental. It is located in a central part of campus, making it a convenient meeting point or spot to cool off on a hot day.

As if to prove her point, Mikayla heads inside. The AC-chilled

air hits your skin, and you feel relief from the humid Ohio weather. Mikayla leads the group upstairs and down the hallway to a room entrance bordered entirely by windows. She continues her presentation.

"Focused on academic support, the Rinella Learning Center offers tutoring and other methods of supplemental instruction in order to assist students in achieving their goals. Their staff consists of learning specialists and graduate students, which ensures that there is a person able to assist students with most topics. The tutors are even known to act as accountability partners if that's what their pupil finds most useful. The Rinella Learning Center also houses the Testing Center that may be used by students with registered disabilities. Students who qualify for testing accommodations are encouraged to use the Rinella Testing Center to lessen the stress and anxiety that comes with test taking, though there are policies and students must coordinate with their professors to schedule tests and exams.

Mikayla takes you and the group back downstairs and brings you into a bright open space with clothing racks and lots of red and black apparel. The store is called Brick & Ivy, and Mikayla looks eager to talk about it.

"As the first and only merchandise store on campus, Brick & Ivy is always teeming with new students and their families at the beginning of the year. Aside from Miami swag, it also offers school supplies. Textbooks can be easily purchased through the Brick & Ivy website by entering the titles of the books you're looking for or by simply entering the names of the courses you're in. If a professor has submitted their required readings, the texts will be automatically added to your online cart.

"Brick & Ivy can be accessed from the front of Shriver, through the east-facing door across the street from

Armstrong. Alternatively, it can be accessed from the back, through Shriver Center's Starbucks (one of three Starbucks locations on campus). Brick & Ivy's wares rotate frequently throughout the year, so every time you enter the two-story shop you can expect to discover something new. One of the more interesting things that has been added to the shelves this year is Miami's branded coffee, Miami Grind. It is used by all the dining halls, and now anyone can purchase it to have a taste of Miami at home too.

Then Mikayla leads you and the group to the other side of the building where there are lots of plush chairs and a large reception desk near the doors.

"In addition to handling prospective student applications, faculty of the Admissions Office at Miami University organize campus tours, schedule recruitment and outreach events, provide statistical information about our institution, and handle student orientation. Student tour guides and SOULs (Student Orientation Undergraduate Leaders) are hired and trained through the Admissions Office. It is located here on the first floor of Shriver and is often the first indoor location prospective students see on campus. The welcoming environment of the center helps prospective students gain insight into what makes Miami unique.

You follow the others to the Package Center and listen to Mikayla explain the center's use.

"Opening for use in 2017, this facility serves as a central location for students to receive and send mail and packages. With the increasing reliance on online shopping and shipping services, the Package Center plays a crucial role in ensuring that students have a reliable and efficient system for handling their deliveries. Before this addition to Shriver, students had to wait in long, slow lines to receive their mail. Equipped with secure storage, package lockers, and staffed

service counters, the Package Center provides convenience and accessibility for students living on campus—especially because the smart lockers are available twenty-four seven.

Finally, Mikayla heads back toward the entrance next to Brick & Ivy. On the way, she motions toward a door and explains that's where Miami University's catering service is located.

"Miami's catering service operates mainly out of the kitchen located on the second floor of Shriver. A team of chefs and servers provide professional catering services for university events, meetings, and special occasions daily. Whether serving small gatherings or large conferences, Miami Catering offers a diverse menu featuring fresh, high-quality ingredients. From buffet-style meals to plated dinners and grab-and-go options, catering ensures that events held at the university are well supported with excellent food and service. Miami Catering is a great resource for faculty, student organizations, and external guests looking to host events at Miami University. Not to mention, it's one of the better paying student jobs on campus at $14 an hour.

Eventually, you and the tour group make it back outside. Mikayla ends her tour of Shriver by saying,

"Miami University's Shriver Center stands as a testament to the university's commitment to student engagement, academic success, and community-building. Through its tutoring options, event spaces, bookstore, and admissions center, Shriver plays a pivotal role in shaping the Miami experience. Whether as a space for learning, networking, or relaxation, the Shriver Center continues to be a cornerstone of campus life, reflecting Miami's dedication to providing a well-rounded and enriching environment for its students and visitors."

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Mikayla says the group is going to Armstrong next, but you don't feel like learning about Armstrong right now, so you thank the tour guide and continue on your own way. You recall someone asking to visit the Center for Performing Arts during the tour, and that sounds interesting to you. So you ask the cashier at Brick & Ivy where it is and head that way.

Go to page 115.

You follow the sidewalk past the bustle of High Street until the noise shifts, less passing crowds, more voices gathered in one place, with music spilling faintly into the air as the mural on the brick ahead comes into view, cracked but unmistakably reading, "CJ's."

Even before you open the door, you can hear it: laughter, a jukebox playing something low and nostalgic, the scrape of stools against wood floors, and the hum of a familiar crowd. Not loud exactly, just alive.

You step inside. The bar is comfortably worn-in, like a favorite hoodie, with dim lights, walls crowded with framed photos, booths lined in deep red vinyl, and a couple of TVs glowing above the bar, behind which a bartender moves smoothly through the space, half pouring drinks, half telling stories.

CJ's doesn't feel like a place you're discovering, it feels like one you forgot.

You drift toward the back, weaving past a group playing darts and a pair of regulars laughing over a basket of fries, hoping for some space to gather your thoughts and, luckily, spot an empty booth.

As you slide into it, something catches your eye: a small notebook resting beside you on the seat, its cover soft and worn smooth at the corners, feeling too personal to be left behind, and yet, it's here, untouched, waiting.

You hesitate, then reach for it; the leather is warm from the light but cool at its edges, and as you flip it open, a date is scrawled at the top of the first page.

It feels like it's calling to you, almost as if it's been waiting for you.

You begin to read.

I have an extensive family history when it comes to Miami University and Oxford itself. My grandpa was a professor of zoology and lived with my grandma in Oxford, who attended Miami for her associate's degree. Ever since, my uncle, three of my aunts, my parents, two of my cousins, my sister-in-law, my two brothers, and myself have gone to school here. My parents started their collegiate careers at Miami University in 1982. Because of my dad's upbringing, I too grew up with a great appreciation for Oxford. While I've heard many stories from my family over the years, a place that has always held my parents' hearts is CJ's Bar.

My dad, Joe DeVillez, started working at CJ's his sophomore year when he was nineteen, serving only beer as the law allowed at the time. For the past few decades, the manager of CJ's has been a student, and my dad was the first one, giving him not only more responsibility, but also many stories to tell for years after.

One of the most well-known parts of this bar is the full-wall mural of its logo, and I always find it very entertaining that I am one of the very few to know the true story behind it. At the time, a lot of companies would hand out match

boxes with their logos on them as a form of marketing. CJ's did this as well, and one day, my dad gave one to my mom. He pointed at the logo and told her to paint it on the wall. The famous mural is still there to this day, where students are constantly writing their signatures all over it, marking their fun nights. One of the greatest memories I have in my college experience so far was on my twenty-first birthday, when my brother came up to celebrate. The two of us went to CJ's and signed our names on the mural, later trying to convince the workers there to give us a discount on a sweatshirt due to family history (time and time again, we have sadly failed at this). We sent the photo above to our parents, who were so thrilled we were together in a place that meant so much to them at our ages.

CJ's has always been a popular location in and of itself, and is therefore a great spot for students to hang out with friends. Even the merchandise from the bar can be seen on students all over campus. My parents know this as well, which is what created what is now a core memory and embarrassing story for my siblings and I.

As shown in this photo, the first place my parents wanted to go this prior family weekend was CJ's. Something to know about my dad is that he is ridiculously outgoing and can have absolutely no filter, which is a horrible combination when he, on top of this, wanted to show off his knowledge of the bar to the current workers. So you can imagine the reaction my brothers and I had when the first thing he did was go right up to the bouncer and ask, "Hey, is CJ dead?" hoping they would prompt him with questions. He and my mom then got into deep conversations with them, trying to get free shirts out of their visits. When they failed, they bought some anyway. Long story short, it's always a unique experience when they come to campus.

I often don't think people process that CJ is a real person,

as I have never heard him referred to, only the bar. However, according to my dad, CJ sounds like he's had a very interesting life, as he played football for Bo Schembechler, who went on to be arguably the most famous coach in Michigan history after his career at Miami. This caused my dad to hear a lot about what was happening with Miami's football team, since CJ's was also a popular spot for them.

My mom also had many incredible and memorable experiences, as she would go to CJ's after classes to see my dad everyday. In fact, many of her friends also worked there, and when they could not be there, she would fill in for them. However, she was never actually paid, only given a pitcher of beer, including the time she painted the mural.

She has so many entertaining stories, as this appears to be where my parents and their friends spent most of their time. They are even able to tell me how they'd make the smallest moments at this bar fun. One story that was mind blowing to me was when she told me about the last game ever played at Miami's old football field. Until recently, before the university took it away, the previous field's goal post hung in CJ's for around thirty years. This is because at the last game ever played there, my mom and many others somehow pulled them down, marched to CJ's with it, and put their signatures all over it.

Everywhere I go in Oxford, I am reminded of a story from my parents' experience at Miami. But CJ's was by far the most memorable place for them, truly highlighting the most sentimental and lighthearted moments from their time here. Whenever given the opportunity, I mention these stories so others can get a glimpse of Oxford in the 1980s, particularly what my parents' student life was like, because I've never heard them say anything negative. They truly enjoyed the lifelong memories they made, which is something I have

kept in mind throughout my time at Miami because I hope to have done the same.

You close the notebook, letting it rest beside you.

CJ's hums around you, still alive, with music softly playing from its jukebox, glasses clinking, laughter rolling throughout its walls. You find comfort in it, feeling like this place doesn't change, even when everything else does. You decide to sit, finally getting some rest, letting the atmosphere surround you. But, eventually, you feel the need to move; this was not the end of your journey.

Once outside, you hear the door click shut behind you, and the warmth of the bar gives way to cool, open air. High Street is quieter now, like the town itself is beginning to wind down.

This time, you decide to let the streets guide you. You walk past a mural, past the glow of street lamps, past shuttered windows and unfamiliar faces. You find light spilling in uneven patches across the pavement, your shadow flickering along with it. The farther you go, the more the noise fades, replaced by something slower, heavier. Not dangerous, just . . . aware.

Then, just ahead, through the shadows of dark trees, you notice it. A building: a brick facade, tall columns, too still to be ordinary. It doesn't announce itself, but there's something deliberate about its presence. You pause at the base of the steps. The plaque reads, "Hall Auditorium."

You don't remember what happened here. But it feels like something already has.

To enter the auditorium and see what awaits,
turn to page 151.

You want to see the museum and what kinds of animals it holds. You ask Caleb which way the museum is, and he gives you directions. You go inside and follow the bracket-shaped hallway until you see a gilded sign above open double doors reading, "Robert A. Hefner Zoology Museum." Standing against the wall and centered in your line of sight is a large taxidermied bear. Intrigued, you move forward and enter into the warmly lit room. Wooden shelves and display cases surround you, and you feel transported back in time. You wander around for a while in the main room before turning right and entering another room with mounted animal heads with antlers.

You notice a beautiful notebook left on the ground, leather-bound with a golden closure clasp. It's lying spine up on a folded fan of pages, as though it was dropped in haste. You pick it up and check the front and inside cover for a name. There is none. You rifle through the notebook and skim the entries. You flip past poetry, letters, and prose. Why would anyone leave such a precious thing?

You turn to the most recent entry and begin to read.

The first thing you noticed was the bear. Of course the first thing you noticed was the bear because noticing a bear—standing on its back legs, paws raised, and mouth open in a roar—is Human 101. If you don't notice a bear like that, you won't be around to notice things much longer. If you didn't know any better, you'd think the bear was about to drop to all fours and chase you down the long Upham hallway. That was if you didn't know any better.

You always wondered how people got into taxidermy.[1] What called someone to that profession? Or was it more of a hobby? And what called someone to a museum of taxidermy, scratch that, a museum of natural history?

You knew what called you, at least: a paper. It was about biodiversity or the importance of local ecosystems or something that sounded sort of like that. You, maybe, were

1. You also always wondered how people did taxidermy, but you were too squeamish to ever look into it. Those were not images you'd ever get out of your head.

were not paying the most attention in class.[2] You'd check the details later. You just needed to get in, copy some information down, and get out. You opened up the notes app on your phone and walked inside.

There were birds chirping somewhere inside. You wondered if they had live animals in the museum too? You swung your head around looking for an enclosure of some kind. You glanced at the ceiling to see if a poor bird had flown in and gotten stuck. The bird chirped again, high-pitched and tinny. It didn't sound right. You realized it was a recording, playing from somewhere in the ceiling. You had to shudder. You didn't like the piped-in sounds. It made you feel like you weren't alone.

To your left, you saw a capital I-shaped cabinet with bones lined across the top of the nearest horizontal section. They formed a long vertebra with slightly curved ribs running along its length. You didn't know enough about anatomy or animals to recognize what you were looking at, but, if you had to put money on it, you'd say it was some kind of marine creature. Was it a whale? Dolphin? Shark? Do you sharks even have bones?[3] There was a placard of some kind explaining what creature had a spine the length of your entire body, but you weren't here to learn about marine creatures that probably weren't sharks. It had to be more local.

Hanging above the shelf were half a dozen ducks and geese. Their wings were spread to mimic flight. Three penguins of varying heights, arranged small, medium, and large,[4] stood on top of the vertical section of the cabinet. The

2. Which is to say that you were playing The New York Times' puzzles on your laptop.
3. No. They do not.
4. Or large, medium, small depending on how you looked at it.

smallest penguin and largest penguin looked blankly forward. The middle-sized penguin looked up at the larger one, like it was waiting on the answer to a question, like eventually it would find guidance in its larger kin. On the furthest horizontal section were some herons or cranes or something. They had long necks and long beaks and long legs. Those kinds of birds always gave you the creeps. They seemed to know more than they let on.[5] The biggest bird's neck was coiled back, ready to strike into the heart of a fish swimming at its feet. Except, of course, there was no water or fish or thought behind its eyes. You had to look away.

The bear was still in front of you. The sign in front of it said Kodiak Bear.[6] To its right (your left), was a slightly smaller bear standing on its back legs. It looked less threatening than the first and more curious instead. To its left (your right), was a coyote and something that looked like a coyote but bigger and all white (probably a wolf). You snapped a picture with your phone as a frog croaking noise played from the ceiling. You could write about bears for your paper.[7]

This place was starting to get on your nerves. You had this feeling you were being watched.[8] The noises were seemingly played at random, and, each time one broke the silence, you jumped. You expected a frog to jump past your feet or a bird to swoop past your head.

5. This was not to say that any birds had ever let you in on their avian wisdom. The closest you ever got was your cousin's parrot squawking "Hello" and "Treat. Treat. Give me a treat." at you.
6. Until this moment, you did not know this was a kind of bear. In your mind, bears came in three types: Polar, Panda, and Grizzly.
7. Never mind that Kodiak bears only live in Alaska and northern Canada.
8. Which you were, of course. You were thinking of a more real type of eye than the beady glass ones staring dully out of the taxidermied heads, but who's to say those are different things?

Some big cats lounged on the right side of the museum. They were watching you move around the room, lazily stalking their prey. A peacock stood on a shelf above them. Its tail feathers were closed at its side. You would've arranged them all fanned out and pretty, but maybe that would take up too much space or something. It just seemed like an awful waste to you. You walked away, shaking your head, as if you were some kind of expert on birds.[9]

To the left was a semi-separate room called the Hall of Ungulates, whatever that meant.[10] It was a vaguely circular room with two rams standing proudly in the center. The rest of the wall was lined with the mounted heads of different kinds of deer, antelopes, moose, elk. You grew up in Ohio, which meant you had seen your fair share of stag heads and antlers hanging from walls. But you had never before seen a deer displayed with its head, torso, and two front legs out of the wall, like it was just phasing through. A water bison and a buffalo head hung by themselves on the left, and there was something sad in their sideways glances. There was also a rhino head, not mounted on the wall, but sat up on the floor. Its head pointed toward the ceiling; its severed neck was on the ground. Somehow, that was what creeped you out the most. You crept toward it, slightly crouched down. Your fingers were inches from its leathery skin. It opened its beak-like mouth and screamed. It was loud, human, pained.

You bolted from the room, past the bear and the coyote, the geese, the whale bones. You didn't dare to look back to check if the bear was chasing after you.

9. Which maybe you would be, if they'd ever bothered to share their knowledge with you.
10. A hoofed mammal.

You lift your eyes from the page and glance around you, feeling spooked but oddly comforted. A whisper of a memory skims your brain. A writing class, a creative assignment. You almost grasp the idea, but just like that, it disappears. You decide to move on from Upham. Maybe other locations might continue to stir your memory. You exit the building and walk down the sidewalk toward the nearest road. Reaching the road, two buildings catch your attention.

To your left is a large building labeled "Armstrong Student Center" with waves of students moving in and out of it. Across the street to your right, you see a beautiful little building titled "Sesquicentennial Chapel." Both look interesting to you; which do you choose?

To check out the student center, turn to page 72.

To explore the chapel , turn to page 41.

You cross the busy intersection and head toward Armstrong. You hear rumbling, but you assume it's nothing. You climb the steps and go for the entrance. As soon as your hand touches the door handle, you're slammed to the floor. Voices fill the air, screaming excitedly about Panera Bread, or something. Someone steps on your hand, your head, your heel. You're losing consciousness. The pain is sharp and dull at the same time. You try to claw your way out, but it's too late. This must be a busy location around lunch time, you note to yourself before falling into the darkness.

The End.

You are trampled to death by hungry students.
Go back and make another choice.

You follow the sidewalk west, past the edge of campus, where buildings give way to open grass and quiet tree lines. The street thins out here. Everything feels a little looser, less manicured, more lived-in. As you continue to walk, you notice, just off the road, a weathered wooden sign, reading, "Bachelor Preserve."

The path you begin to walk is lined with tall grass and the occasional wildflower, swaying in the breeze. As you walk deeper into the preserve, you notice the noise of town fades, replaced by chirping birds and the rustle of branches overhead.

A few turns in, the trees open slightly, and you spot someone up ahead: a girl sitting on a bench just off the trail, her legs tucked under her, a half-empty bottle of soda by her side.

She looks up when she hears your footsteps.

"I didn't think anyone else would be out here this late," she says, not startled at all. "But maybe we were destined to meet."

You nod before you even realize it. She pats the space beside her, casual and warm.

"My name's Faye," she says. "Can I tell you something?"

You sit.

She grins, like she's been waiting for this moment.

She begins to speak.

"Imagine this: it's late, but you're having too much fun with your new college friends and none of you want to go back to your dorm just yet—what is a group of college students to do? Head on down to their local nature preserve that doesn't have a closing time! For twenty years Dr. Joseph M. Bachelor worked at Miami University, all the while purchasing land around the campus. When he died in 1974, he dictated that 416 acres of that land would be given to the university, which turned it into the Bachelor Wildlife and Game Reserve we know today. The land hosts around seventeen miles of hiking and three trails loaded with various terrains and creative bridges, while also connecting to many of the other nature trails located around campus. As college students, Bachelor Preserve became the site for my friends and I's favorite hobby: night hiking.

"The parking lot is easy to miss—past the stables and down a tiny down-hill turnoff right after a bridge—and we've passed it many times until it became a staple of our nighttime adventures. Next to it is a large sports field, perfect for watching a full solar eclipse. Near the entrance to

the park is a map of the available trails, and occasionally a port-a-potty nearby for those who need it.

"The first and easiest trail you'll find is the Bachelor Preserve East Loop, the one my friends and I spent the most of our time on. It begins at the first fork in the road; one path continues forward while a second composed of concrete stepping stones beckons across the Harkers Run creek. With a flashlight they're easy to cross in the dark, though they can be treacherous after rain or snow. It's the last jump to land that is the most difficult, because after rain the creek swells and the gap can become much larger than before. Once after a rainy weekend my friends and I discovered that the water was too high and the gap was too far to attempt a jump. Luckily, some logs had become lodged between the stones and the land and we were able to cross that way, though it was a slippery endeavor.

"The trail then leads up a hill dotted with thin trees and past a few fields. Along the way, you also pass a few fenced in patches of woods that are part of a study involving deer and their grazing habits, along with the growth of invasive plants. Here, the hiking is a light, uphill trek that leads to another fork in the road. To the right is a small looping trail that leads right back to the fork, and to the left continues the East Loop. Unfortunately, in the dark when you're busy talking with friends, it's easy to take the wrong turn. On many of our hikes we found ourselves inexplicably in the middle of bushes and undergrowth that ended just above our heads, all the while an unseen generator filled the air with an ominous hum. Every single time we turned around.

"On our last hike before the winter hit three friends and I were out and about. We had just passed this trail divide heading further down the East Loop when three of us heard it—a growl off in the bushes. It was like a scene from a movie, the three of us freezing in our tracks while the fourth

kept going on as if he'd heard nothing. We whispered to him to get back, didn't he hear it? 'Hear what?' 'The bobcat of course.' Needless to say, we booked it out of the woods that night.

"Halfway down this stretch of trail, the forest around changes significantly. The many maples filling the rest of the forest start to fade away and resemble less of a deciduous forest to more of a coniferous one. Moss lines the path, but only for a short time. This natural diversity is what led to my first introduction to the location; many nature classes take their students there for hands-on learning, to see examples of plants in their natural environment.

"East Loop trail peaks in a large pool of water, the Bachelor Pond, with the trail continuing all around and branching off into multiple other paths. At night the pond is impossible to see across, but there is a bench to sit on. There's a shorter trail that connects from a gravel parking lot from which the pond is easier to access, making for a nice quick hike and an easy place to get wood photos.

"Oftentimes at night we would turn back, but in the day we'd continue forward. The loop continues on a quick downward path with a slippery patch beneath a pine tree—the needles making the quick downward slope a falling hazard—and goes on to a dramatic section. Where the trail was smooth and mostly consistent before, this section has many ups and downs along with a few plank bridges to cross, but the biggest one comes where the trail crosses back over Harker's Run. A suspension bridge, perfect for scaring your friends on, spans the creek's width and must be mounted via a steep set of stairs resembling a ladder more than a real stairway. Once on it, feel free to jump at random—just remember if you can do it to your friends, they can do it to you.

"The last stretch is a pleasant, easy hike back along the creek, spanning a little over a quarter of a mile. It connects back to the initial trail split and leads back to the parking lot, where surely by now there's nothing left to do but head home. Don't worry, it'll be here the next night, and the one after that. Explore the big open field on the other side of the entrance, check out the DeWitt cabin along the paved path leading in, explore the other trails in the woods. No matter what you do, make the most of it, and enjoy the outdoors while you're at Miami University."

Faye's story leaves you smiling.

You thank her, and she returns your smile with one that feels just as honest. Neither of you says much after that. The quiet settles in again, a comfortable silence. When you stand to go, she nods almost as if she knows where you're headed.

You move further down the preserve. Wind seems to move slower, while the trees begin to stretch taller, older. You stop watching your steps and start noticing everything else.

A bend in the path leads you toward a wooden footbridge. To the side, resting just beyond a bench, you spot a thin, weathered journal lying open on a flat stone. Its pages flutter slightly in the breeze.

You pick it up, brushing a leaf off of its cover.

It's not a diary exactly. More like a record, part guide, part memory. The handwriting is steady and observant, like someone trying to name every detail so they won't forget.

You find a marked page and begin to read.

Trails of Oxford and Miami: A Field Guide

The trail before you holds pools of rainwater in its divots. Budding trees are cast in the reflections, where you see a squirrel scurrying up one of the trunks in a rippling blur. Each of your steps sinks slightly into the worn path, while above you the clouds slowly unweave and allow a few threads of sunlight to lighten the world around you. A Pileated Woodpecker taps on a tree in the distance. It echoes through the woods, melding with the steady sound of the creek to your left. The wind pulls a few loose leaves—left over from autumn—across your path and into the small patches of grass that are beginning to gain their color back, as if getting over the sickness of the winter. Welcome to Oxford in spring.

American Sycamore
Platanus occidentalis
Platanaceae

With white, skeletal limbs extended towards the sky, the American Sycamore is a symbol of time. As it grows, it sheds parts of its bark, revealing the smooth bones of its trunk. These figures loom over you as watchful beings while you meander the paved path of the DeWitt Peffer trail. The other trees seem to sink into a sea of green, but the Sycamores stand as if already faded and worn into floating driftwood.

You came from Peffer Park, where a grassy area and pavilion welcomed you to the trailhead. Before catching your first glimpses of the Sycamores, you wandered under a bridge, the traffic of Route 27 rumbling above. With Collins Creek on your right and a few abstract foxes running across the cement of the bridge wall on your left, you slowly entered a new world. You pass benches, disc golf baskets, and a few groups of people who nod and say "hello." Then, the tall Sycamores begin to appear, leaning towards you and beckoning you with their zig-zagged twig fingers. The trail turns, following Four Mile Creek upstream. Still, the skeletal beings watch you—here and there, hidden up on the slopes towards Western Campus of Miami, or rooted near the water of the creek. They aren't unsettling, at least anymore. As you walk, you come to understand them as the pioneer species that they are—welcoming and restoring, guardians and greeters of their home along the trail.

Bur Oak
Quercus macrocarpa
Fagaceae

You see DeWitt Cabin—old wooden boards and mortar—then the horses in their pasture. Birds flutter between the

trees in the enclosed area of the bird blind to your left. The breeze smells earthy, the rain from a few days before still intermingling with the dirt and the pollen scent of spring. You wave as a cyclist passes you.

The path diverges into other gravel ones, but you follow the paved one back in the direction of Four Mile Creek. A few runners pass you, their headphones covering their ears. As the pattering of their cadence fades in the distance, you hear the chirping of the cardinals and finches resume. A robin hops on the forest floor searching for insects to eat. The trees bend in a gust of wind, branches creaking and cracking as they stretch and dance beside you. Suddenly, a tree fills your vision from periphery to periphery. A Bur Oak with a trunk so thick you wonder how many measures of your arm width it would take to wrap around the tree in an embrace. You believe it to be wise. It was here before the Bonham DeWitt trail was carved. What did it see of the wild things before us runners and cyclists and walkers arrived?

Common Daffodil
Narcissus pseudonarcissus
Amaryllidaceae

In the damp woodlands above Four Mile Creek, which the spring storms and spiraling winds have been unable to touch, tall stems of green sprout from the ground. Atop them, yellow, orange, and white tubular coronas with a crown of petals. You slip down the muddy hill, momentum carrying you until the roots of a Black Cherry jerk you back with a halting shudder. As you gather a breath and assess the mud that has been painted up your pant legs, you notice the familiar spots of yellow in the distance.

You saw the fields of Daffodils near Conrad Formal Gardens before your adventure into the woods, but something about the little patches among the shade of the

trees along Marcum Loop makes the flowers even more endearing. When you make it to the bottom of the ravine, crossing a few wooden bridges along the way, you notice another patch of flowers near the water. As you get closer, you see their yellow faces gazing at their reflection in the flowing creek, quite in love with their little slice of Oxford.

Eastern Red Cedar (the Juniper)
Juniperus virginiana
Cupressaceae

You trek up the sloping paved path, where the sun breaks through the trees as it sets in the west. The sound of rushing water fills the air to your right. You follow the curves of the new Peffer Woods trail, evergreens prominent in the nature that encases you. The air is still—it smells sweet and hopeful. A man and his border collie pass you, heading back to the parking lot. You offer a wave. The dog wags its tail and pants, mouth stretched in a playful smile.

After a few more curves of the path, you venture off on one of the unpaved trails that branches back to Collins Creek. There, you spot a Juniper—the greenest thing around among the trees still getting their grasp on spring. Little green cones yet to mature are sprinkled in the awl-like needles of the tree. With time, you know that the cones will change and become a dark blue. The light of the day continues to fade into dusk as you wander back in the direction of the parking lot at Peffer Park. You stop at a bench, watching the silhouette of a hawk cross the darkening sky, before continuing with your walk—and your life—just as the evergreen Juniper promises.

White Trout Lily
Erythronium albidum
Liliaceae

From the earth grows two-by-six boards in lines. They tilt upwards in a gradual slope, forming a boardwalk that curves and weaves through the trees towards Four Mile Creek and the marshier bits of the bank. Your shoes clop along the boards of the Ruder Preserve Boardwalk. Over the edge of the railing, you can see the underbrush of the forest floor beginning to flourish in greens and flower buds. The White Trout Lily colony catches your eye as you near the creek. Its mottled leaves reach skyward while the stamens in the center of its petals tilt down towards the damp dirt below. A few bees buzz around the petals, bobbing through the leaves and undergrowth. You take a seat on one of the wooden benches to pause on your way to the Black Covered Bridge just north of Yager Stadium. The air becomes warm in the late spring sun, and you find your chin dipping to your chest. Like the Lily, you droop in a peaceful slumber among the sounds of nature.

From dog parks to people parks, bird blinds to boardwalks, paved paths to tumultuous trails, the natural areas that encircle Oxford are meant to be explored. Meander on a trail, illuminated with summer sun. See the flourishing trees blot out the deep blue sky and the clouds that dot the expanse. Each of your steps will press softly into the Oxford soil, which will stick to your soles in little flecks of earth. You may hear a Wood Thrush whistle above you. The sound will carry on the warm breeze, blending with the ensemble of birdsong deeper in the trees. The wind will pull a few loose flower petals—leftover from the peak of spring—across your path and onto the soft green carpet of grass.

It beckons you to wander, to explore. Welcome to Oxford in summer.

You close the journal. As you look around you, you notice that, while the trail is still around you, no wind, no voices, just the low hum of insects and the occasional creak of tree limbs shifting overhead.

For once, the silence doesn't feel like something to fill.

You decide to return the journal, carefully putting it back where you found it. It feels right to leave it here; no point in taking it when this is where it belongs.

You start walking again, not toward any destination, just farther into the forest.

You think of the buildings you passed earlier. The voices, the stories, the confusion. And you realize that none of that felt as honest as this. Here, in the beauty and silence of nature, something inside you finally stops searching.

You were never meant to find all the answers.

You were meant to find this.

The trees accept you without question.

And for the first time since you woke up in the fields, you don't feel lost.

You feel at home.

The End.

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You hesitate for only a second, but then you decide to cross the street and step through the door into the café.

Springtime in Oxford is filled with basic Midwest weather: unpredictable winds, rain, and the occasional sunny, 70° day. Today, Mother Nature has decided on sideways rain and twenty-mile-an-hour winds that threaten to topple you as you hurry down the cement sidewalk. The red and blue "Open" sign beckons you toward it, and you duck beneath the overhang, prying the coffee shop's door open to escape the weather.

It's comfortably warm as you enter the café, and the smell of ground coffee, fresh pastries, and old wood permeates your nose as you inhale. There are fewer people here today, understandable with the weather the way it is. Your eyes scan the room, looking for an empty table to drop your book bag, and you spot one in the front corner of the room. It's a two-person table. One seat for you. You smile to yourself as you weave through the other tables, some filled with people, some not, to get to yours.

It's time to head up to the counter to order. The menu looks like it's been changed recently, new spring flavors replacing the old winter ones. The barista greets you warmly, and you take a second to look through the menu. The options are a bit overwhelming, but as your eyes scan the board, you mentally decline a few of them. Brewed coffee? No, you don't need the caffeine right now. Cold brew? Same as before. Hot chocolate? Could be yummy, but too sweet for your current mood. Tea? Huh. Tea could work. You browse the tea menu, noting the multiple flavors: English Breakfast, Earl Grey, Peppermint, and Green Tea. Wait, peppermint might be the one. The barista waits patiently for you to decide, and you finally come up with a 16-ounce cup of hot peppermint tea, a chocolate croissant, and a piece of avocado toast. She hands you your croissant, mentioning that you can heat it in the microwave to the right of the counter. Then she rings you up, and the machine beeps when you tap your credit card.

"Your order will be out in a few minutes," the barista says, and she turns away to make your drink. You thank her, deciding not to heat your pastry, and move back across the room to your table, the old wood creaking lightly with each step.

Most tables are within viewing distance of the counter, so when your drink is ready, you can see the barista set it out. They also have a sugar and creamer station with all the fixings, straws, and lids. When your tea gets set out, you grab it. The smell of peppermint is potent, and you set the cup down next to the sugars to grab a packet or two. The café doesn't have the 2% milk pourer set out, but you ask the barista and she grabs it for you. Once your drink is made up, you take it to your table, and as you sit down, your avocado toast is announced. One last trip to the counter, and then you can enjoy your snack.

You arrange your food on the table. Time slows as people enter and exit the café. You watch two women, college students by the look of their stuffed backpacks and Miami University sweatshirts, type ardently at their computers, occasionally giggling at a sparsely interchanged word or joke. They sip at their drinks, and you hear snippets of conversation about some sorority event they will attend over the weekend. Your focus shifts to an older man who seems to be reading through a stack of papers. A professor, if you had to guess. His hand moves to fix the glasses perched on the edge of his nose, and then he sips his drink, one of the smaller mugs with a design on the top of the coffee.

Your stomach grumbles, pulling you from your people-watching, and you cut up your avocado toast. The toast crunches beneath the knife, and you get a piece covered in avocado and microgreens. Some sort of seasoning is sprinkled on top of the spread. It adds a bit of zing to the whole bite. You hum, savoring the bite.

Time passes quickly, and people move in and out of the café. The thunderstorm outside worsens, and the thunder reverberates through your eardrums. You take a moment to admire the storm. The rain always brings a fresh start, and the flowers around campus, mostly multicolored tulips, will likely begin to sprout in the spring.

A little while later, the rain lessens, and you quickly clean up your dishes, placing your plate and tea mug in the dirty dish bin by the counter before walking to the door. You brace yourself for the wind and rain and push out the door into the spring weather. The café that has become your haven bids you farewell until the next time, and you promise to return soon.

Kofenya, you decide, is a wonderful place to stop by at any time of the day. If you need a pick-me-up or just a place to relax, this café will provide a welcoming atmosphere with seating of every type: booths, chairs, sofas, and picnic-style benches. You feel right at home amongst the crowd, and the bar staff are kind and helpful. Whether you are a permanent resident, a student, or a visitor, Kofenya is definitely a spot to revisit.

As you leave Kofenya, you feel its warmth still lingering in your mind. Something about the café comforted you: be it the hum of conversation, the mismatched furniture, or the way the lights never seemed too bright or too dim. It gave you space to think, not just about where you are, but why you're here at all.

But the moment passes just as quickly as it comes to you. The stillness has done what it needed to do, but you still need more.

You look back at the window, then at the street in front of you: people crossing sidewalks, voices rising and falling, the low rumble of music drifting from somewhere farther down High Street.

You feel it: a tug. The next step.

To your left, you see a familiar red fence and the soft glow of neon. Something about the place feels charged—like it holds something strange, or someone you're meant to meet.

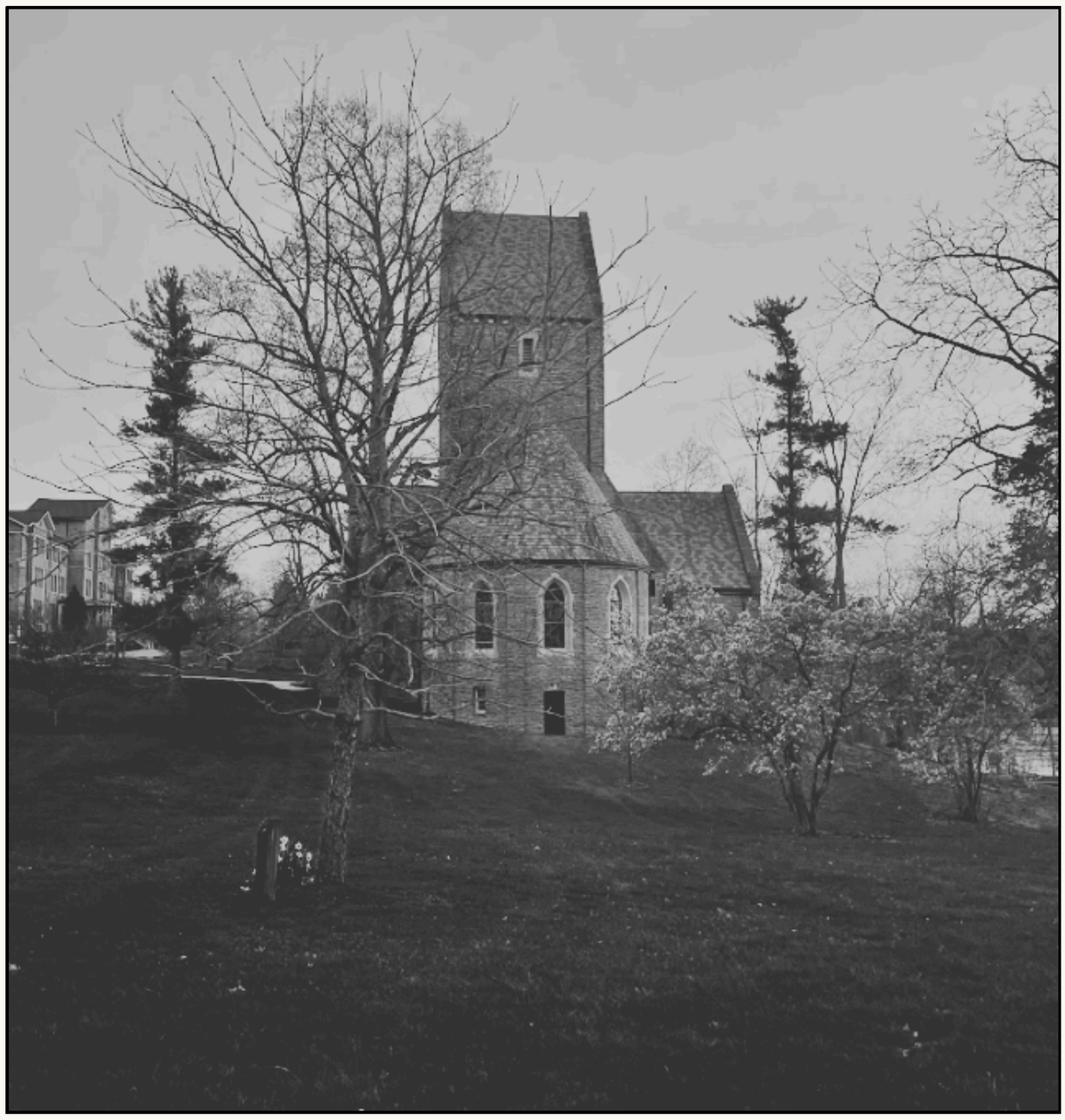
To your right, across the street, you spot a cluster of posters flapping on a crowded bulletin board beside a brick storefront. There's something playful about the display: loud fonts, overlapping tape, torn corners. The name "Bagel & Deli" flashes at the top of more than one.

You take a breath.

It's time to move again.

To follow the pull of the red fence and see what waits inside the building, turn to page 165.

To investigate the posters outside Bagel & Deli, turn to page 158.



Your walk to Western Campus begins at the bottom of a hill. A swinging, rickety bridge takes you from the manicured lawns of the main Miami campus over a creek and into the pond-ridden, tree-filled woods of Western. Ahead of you lies a climb, almost straight uphill and miserable no matter the season.

As you trudge up the hill, you start to see the first sign that the journey is nearly done: the stone crossing tower of Kumler Chapel, rising over the hillside. Perched precariously at the top of the hill, the side of the building is covered by trees, but the windows poke out like little eyes between their trunks.

You spot a woman (maybe the groundskeeper?) passing by the door. Walking up to her, you smile and wave a hello.

"Hi there! Isn't the chapel beautiful?" she says. You can't help but agree, tilting your head up to take in its towers.

"I love it here. I've worked here for twenty years. Are you interested in learning more?" the woman asks. You heartily nod your assent.

"Built between 1917 and 1918 by architect Thomas Hastings for the Western College for Women, Kumler Chapel, with its Transitional Gothic style, has become an aesthetic fixture of Western Campus. Kumler Chapel was originally dedicated on November 10, 1916 by sisters Anna Kumler Wright and Ella Kumler McKelvy, both alumnae of the Western College for Women. It was built to honor their parents, Reverend Jeremiah Prophet Elias Kumler and Abbie Goulding Kumler. The chapel replaced an older chapel on Western campus. Construction on the building began in 1917 but met an abrupt halt at 4:20 p.m. on February 26, 1918, when the building's iconic tower suddenly crumbled and collapsed.

"The tower was rebuilt and construction resumed in June of that year; it was finally finished in September of 1918. Kumler Chapel's Dedication Day was celebrated on November 28, 1918. After over a year of work and significant struggles, a piece of ivy from nearby Peabody Hall was fixed to the east side of the chapel, and the building was officially declared complete. At the time, the chapel was used for church services, baccalaureates, and convocation for the Western College for Women.

"Hastings's inspiration for the chapel's design came from a church called Église-Saint-Pierre in Bazoches-au-Houlme, Orne, Normandy in France. The church was built in the ninth century, and looks nearly identical to Kumler Chapel.

"The exterior of Kumler was built with gray fieldstone, a naturally-occurring stone collected from the surface of fields. It is laid in a fishbone pattern similar to Église-Saint-Pierre. From a bird's-eye-view, the chapel is in the shape of

a Latin cross with a steep slate roof."

Surrounded by the trees and greenery of Western Campus and coupled with the close proximity of the serene Freedom Summer '64 memorial amphitheater, Kumler seems like the perfect space for students to congregate at. There are several dark wooden doors set into the sides of the building, begging passing college students—and you—to go in and explore. The groundskeeper unlocks a side door and holds it open for you, following you in.

In contrast to the cold gray exterior of the building, the inside whispers warmth. The building is only one story, but there is a balcony. The balcony seems like a perfect vantage point from which to view the chapel. You find the stairs hidden in the shadows just inside the front door. There are no lights, and the steps are barely deep enough for a foot. You try not to think about how many spiders hide in the corners.

There is wood everywhere in the chapel. Between the doors and the front of the church are rows of bare wooden pews, enough to seat 235 people. The floorboards creak underfoot with each step when you walk across them. From the balcony, you can get a good view of the ceiling, too: dark wood constructed into soaring arches with heavy beams, chandeliers hanging intermittently along it with lights that look like burning candles. The ceiling reminds you of the belly of a Viking ship, flipped over and sat on top of the church, enclosed under the sloping roof.

The pulpit and choir seating are nestled into the rounded end of the chapel, and to the left is the grand organ.

"The original organ was built in 1918, but after a steam leak and subsequent damage, nothing was played on it for thirty years. While there is a new organ, some of the original

pipework remains, and the new organ incorporates some of the vintage sounds," the groundskeeper whispers dreamily.

On the wall behind the choir, five stained glass windows are set into the wall, perhaps, you think, the greatest beauty of the entire chapel.

"The windows of Kumler are done in a Romanesque style, featuring Gothic pointed arches and a lack of tracery. Three of the five windows behind the choir depict Biblical symbols, focusing on women of the Bible.

"The center window depicts Jesus Christ with Mary, Martha, and Mary Magdalene below him. It also features an inscription that reads 'But His teaching Christ brought the meaning of true womanhood to every nation and every home.' This window was dedicated by the Kumler sisters to their father. The western window illustrates the Old Testament, showing Deborah, a prophetess and judge. This window was dedicated to the sisters' grandfather, Elias Kumler. The eastern window symbolizes the New Testament and shows love expressed through Jesus Christ. This one was dedicated to their mother.

"The other two windows focus on the women of the Western College, depicting the arts and sciences.

"Opposite the organ, the Tillinghast Window is situated in the west transept. Previously a fixture in the library of the old Alumnae Hall, it won a gold medal in 1893 at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago."

Other memorial windows line the sides of the chapel, looking over the pews.

"It seems so empty," you remark. "What do they do there now?"

"Kumler Chapel is used as a venue for various events, such as weddings, special church services, and concerts.

Ceremonies for Miami's student organizations and Greek life are held there as well. Though the fuse box is filled with cobwebs and the piano sits unplayed most days, waiting patiently in the corner, people swarm around the grounds in every season. In the spring, girls in white dresses swirl around the outside of the building, heels dipping into the wet, muddy grass. In the fall, the spirit of Halloween fills the halls, spooky stories told from the pulpit echoing from wall to wall. And in the winter, it is a place for choir concerts, with the dim glow of candlelight and the hum of choral music as the snow starts to fall outside."

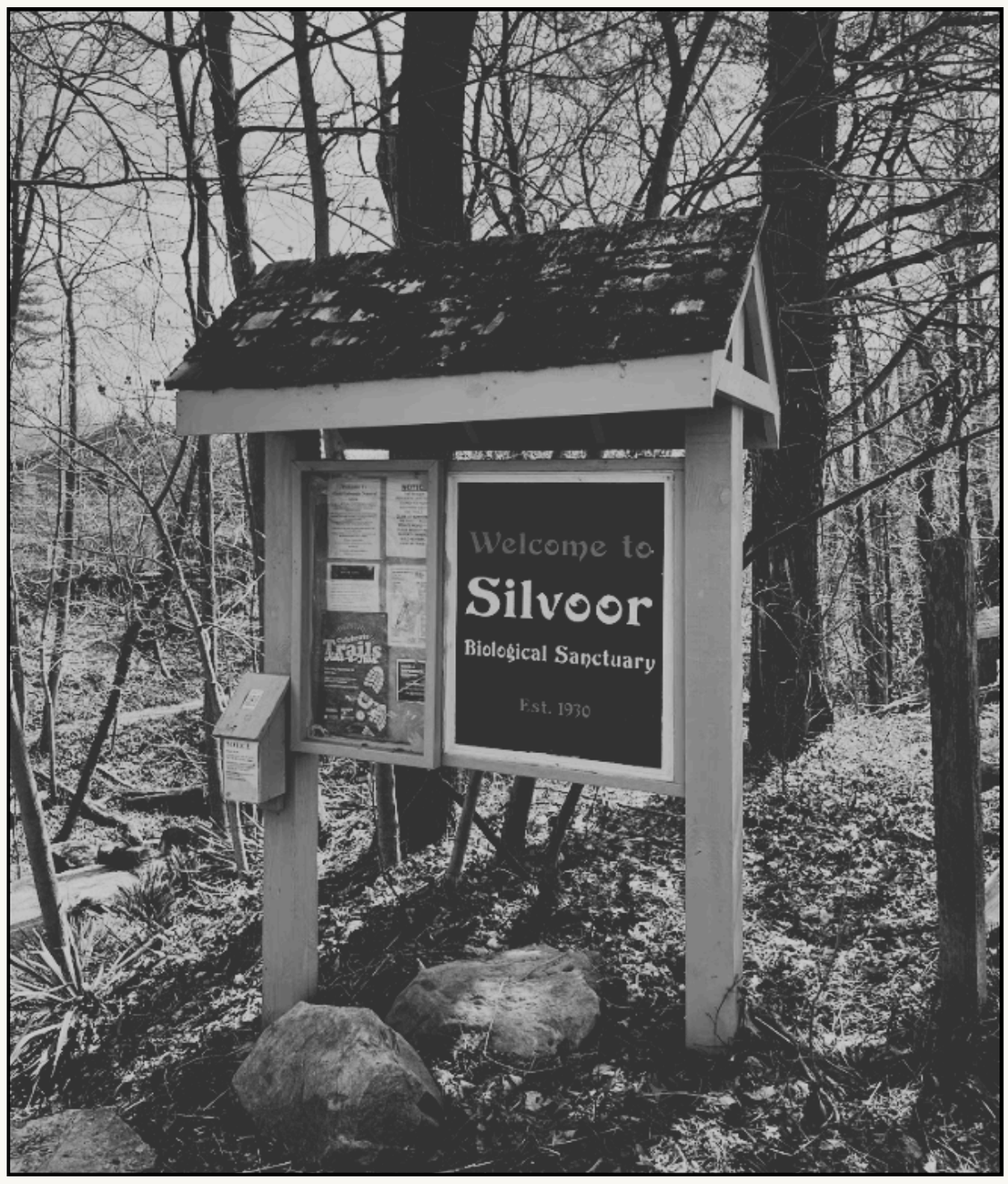
You thank the woman for her knowledge and decide to stay a while. You sit on a step and take in the beautiful scenery, imagining how each of the different seasons look on the rolling hill, colored by memory. You look behind you at the large stone building, the knowledge of its history warming your heart. You recognize that your reaction to Kumler is much different than your reaction to the Sesquicentennial Chapel. You're a part of something larger now.

Even now as sunbeams split through the trees, you still don't have a complete picture of your former life. You don't know that person, and perhaps you never will. But through your adventure today, you've created new memories and taken others' memories as your own. As of right now, that's who you are, a collection of others' experiences. That's what Oxford is. That's what Miami is. Even if you had your memories, this town would have altered your conception of you. Now, at the end of it all, you want to stay. You want to impress your memory onto this town that has impressed its memory onto you. You want to be the one someone asks, "Hey, could you tell me about this place?" You want to be part of Oxford's living memory. This revelation feels like a weight off your chest, and you smile at the future it promises.

It's getting dark now; the AWC meeting should be starting soon. You stand up and stretch, comforted by your own tangibility. You're here at Kumler Chapel, you're taking up space, and you're about to go back to Bachelor for a meeting. Not so that you can get to know other people, but so that they can get to know you.

Better get going. They're waiting for you.

The End.



Where the Honeysuckle Once Was

Silvoor Biological Sanctuary, Oxford, OH

On December 14, I walked into the Silvoor Biological Sanctuary wearing a wool sweater and thick-soled boots that had seen better days. The ground was half-frozen, somewhere between crunchy and soggy, littered with dead, ice-laced leaves thawing at the edges. It was the kind of cold that doesn't look particularly threatening but still finds a way into your joints and fingertips, sneaking past every layer you thought was warm enough. A handful of us had shown up for the honeysuckle removal—bundled up, tools in hand, a puff of fog billowing with every breath.

Even in winter, the trail felt alive. I followed it past the first bend, loppers in hand, where the trees grow close together and the underbrush dips low. There was no snow, just the muted palette of late semester: bare branches, leaf litter, and a few lingering red berries too stubborn to drop. Even in the hush, you could hear the place breathing. The occasional crack of a twig. Bird wings flickering just out of view.

Silvoor is small, only about two and a half acres, but walking through it never feels brief. Dr. Robert Hefner and his wife, Ilo, spent years transforming what was once Oxford's town dump into a haven for native plant life. With time and care, Silvoor grew from a lot once littered with trash into a trail that brims with quiet beauty. In 1980, the Fitton family added more land to the space with the promise that it would always remain part of the sanctuary. That area sits just behind a row of campus houses, where backyards descend right into the mouth of the trail. The moment you step down them, it feels like crossing a threshold. The stillness creeps up on you. Just a few steps in, and you feel miles away from everything.

That day, we were clearing honeysuckle—specifically, Amur honeysuckle, an invasive shrub that pushes out native species by stealing sunlight and soil. I'd learned in my botany class how relentless that stuff can be. The job is simple: cut it as low to the ground as you can, and try to yank out the roots so it can't grow back. I picked a slope near the edge of the trail, where the branches tangled into each other like wire. Some bushes came free with a tug; others held firm, like they'd decided they belonged there.

There's a kind of meditative rhythm to it: kneel, cut, pull, step back, make room. I start to notice things once the brush is cleared—small trees I hadn't seen, patches of moss softening the ground, prints in the dirt from deer moving through earlier in the morning. The smell of exposed soil. The way the light shifts. It's the kind of work that feels repetitive, but not empty. I'm removing something not to erase, but to make space. To give something else a shot at life.

I didn't think much of it at the time beyond the task. But months later, I came back.

It was early spring, late March maybe, and the same trail had transformed. Daffodils grew in bundles everywhere. They lined the path like a procession—bright and a little unruly. The trees still hadn't fully leafed out, so sunlight poured in freely, catching on every new sprout and petal. And it wasn't just daffodils. The wildflower garden—home to over sixty species—was beginning its show. The springtime special: mayapple, bloodroot, Virginia bluebells. Even Dutchman's breeches, their delicate white buds hanging like tiny laundry strung between stems.

Some of them bloomed in the very places we'd cleared. Places where nothing had grown before—not because it couldn't, but because the honeysuckle had left no room.

There's a lesson there, if you want to find it, about growth and what it really looks like. It's not always about adding more. Sometimes, it's about removing what no longer belongs. Making room. Cutting something down not to destroy it, but to see what might grow in its absence. I think winter makes that easier to understand. It gives you the pause you need to see the scaffolding beneath everything else—the bones of the forest, the architecture of potential.

I don't mean to romanticize the work, though. Cutting honeysuckle is cold, tiring, and repetitive. It leaves your hands raw and your legs scratched. But there's satisfaction in it—the good kind. The kind that makes you feel more like yourself afterward, like you've made something right even if no one was there to see it.

Silvoor isn't dramatic. It's not a national park or a vast, sweeping forest. It's a modest patch of reclaimed land behind a row of tiny homes. But it holds multitudes. You can walk it in twenty minutes and still come away with something new—an unfamiliar bird call, a glimpse of a fox at dusk, the sound of water moving over smooth rocks just

out of sight. A sense of quiet that stays with you. It's the kind of place that doesn't ask for attention but rewards it anyway. And that feels rare.

I don't know what the trail will look like in another ten years. Maybe more daffodils. Maybe different birds. Maybe the honeysuckle finds its way back again, and someone else has to start over. That's the thing about sanctuaries: they aren't static. They're constantly negotiating with time, with weather, with whatever we bring into them.

But for now, I think about the stretch of woods where I kneeled in the frost and cleared space. I think about how it looked then—bare, tired—and how it looked later, blooming and unbothered. I think about how we get attached to what we can see, forgetting sometimes that it's the space in between that does the most work.

We don't always get to witness the outcome. But sometimes we do. And when we do, it looks a lot like wildflowers.

You close the journal and return it to the bench. You glance around you and appreciate the beauty. The journal owner is right, maybe growth is all about cutting and pruning. Maybe you lost your memories so that you could come to Oxford and grow. Maybe you didn't have enough room in yourself previously to allow all of these new sights and people in. Maybe the sights of Oxford will be your wildflowers.

Maybe. But you still can't shake the dark feelings of loss and injustice still gripping your chest. These new sights, these supposed wildflowers; they feel more like weeds, invasive species like the honeysuckle that grows and overshadows the life that was previously there. This bitter revelation ignites your anger. None of this makes sense, and you're getting tired of wandering. What will you do when night falls? Where will you go? Who will you go to? You feel overwhelming loneliness as you wander your way back into town. You don't feel like you belong anywhere or belong to anyone.

As you trek slowly, you come across black iron gates opening up to a path. The gates are supported by stone pillars that read "Oxford Cemetery Est. 1855."

Finally, a location that matches your circumstances.

Turn to page 35.

You cross the street toward the softly lit building, its glass façade glowing against the night. The closer you get, the more certain you are: it's a library. Smaller than you expected. More inviting. Like it's here for reasons beyond books. As you step inside you see the name above you, "Oxford Lane Library."

Warm air greets you, filled with the scent of old pages. The bell above the door gives a soft chime, and you pause, letting the space settle around you. It's quiet, but not empty.

Someone stands behind the front desk, half-turned toward a cart of books. She glances up as you enter.

"You look like someone who doesn't quite know what they're looking for," she says with a small smile. "That's usually a good place to start." Her voice is steady, kind. She doesn't wait for an answer. "I'm Annie. I take care of this place."

You nod, unsure what to say. But something about her presence makes you stay.

"You've got the right kind of timing," she says. "I was just about to file something away, something personal. But you look like someone who might need company."

She doesn't leave or reach for anything, just meets your eyes for a moment longer, then continues. "Some places you learn through people," she says, "and some people, you learn through places." She gestures for you to sit, and you do, sinking quietly into the chair by the window.

Outside, the town is hushed. Inside, the library waits.

Then, Annie begins to speak.

"As a child, one of my favorite activities was going to the library. I would beg my parents to take me to the old brick building near our house, where I'd spend an hour browsing the stacks and walk out carefully because the pile of books in my arms was obstructing my vision. It wasn't until I got older that I realized this magical place of endless free books was so much more than a haven of literature. Libraries provide books and media free of charge, but they also offer services, programs, and events that help support citizens and bring together communities. They are more vital than many people realize, acting as a center for care and connection in areas all across the country, and Oxford is no exception.

"The local Oxford Lane Library is located off of South Locust Street, in the square across from Kroger and T.J. Maxx. Built in 2015, the two-story building is modern and inviting, full of natural light and cozy nooks. The first floor contains the front desk, children's and teen sections, DVDs, and new releases. The second floor contains both adult fiction and nonfiction, as well as study spaces and event rooms. There are many shelves to explore and books to flip

through—if, like me, library browsing was one of your favorite childhood pastimes, you'll be satisfied. Associated locations in Hamilton and Fairfield offer access to even more books available upon request. However, there is much more to gain from the library than just books, wonderful as they are.

"The library offers free Wi-Fi, printing and copying services, meeting and study rooms, and online databases and research support. Patrons can use and check out books, audiobooks, e-books, magazines, DVDs, and CDs, as well as items like sewing machines, instruments, puzzles, board games—even seeds for starting a garden! Additionally, the library staff puts on a multitude of events throughout the year for all types of audiences. They have weekly storytime for kids and tutoring for teens. For adults, there are multiple recurring book clubs to join. There are all kinds of creative classes and workshops offered, as well as special events like author visits, educational lectures, and (my favorite) a monthly used book sale. I've never visited the library when there hasn't been some sort of programming going on. There are always new interactive exhibits or topical book displays to explore. It is clear that much time, energy, and care goes into making the library a place for education and community.

"In a history class I took my sophomore year, I was lucky enough to visit the Smith Library of Regional History located on the library's second floor. The Smith Library houses an archive of Oxford and the surrounding area's local history, with everything from books and records on the area's development to the personal collections of local families. In my class, I worked on a research project that gave me the chance to comb through some of these collections containing photographs, newspaper clippings, personal writings, family genealogies, and more. Learning about Oxford's history and working with the tangible

evidence of that history was an incredible experience. The Smith Library is a vital piece of Oxford, representing centuries of living and loving. The archives contained within the walls of the Oxford Lane Library solidify its important role in the community as a hub of learning, culture, and connection. It is available to anyone who may be interested in the archives—the staff is friendly, incredibly knowledgeable, and excited to share all they know about Oxford's history. It is also an excellent resource for students to use in research projects or class assignments, offering a chance for local and regional archival exploration.

"The Oxford Lane Library is a hidden gem—many Miami students don't realize that they are eligible for its services. Yet anyone with an Oxford address (even a temporary one) can get a library card, and even without a card students can visit the library to study or attend an event. The King Library on campus is wonderful, but Lane Library has an entirely different vibe and is more community-oriented. The second floor is an excellent study space, featuring plenty of tables and chairs, desktop computers, study rooms, and a beautiful ceiling skylight. One of my favorite things about being in the Lane Library is sharing the space with Oxford locals—parents bringing their young kids to peruse the children's section, young adults typing away at their laptops, elderly folks reading newspapers. It's easy to feel trapped within Miami's campus bubble; going out and exploring the Oxford area can be a much needed break from school and stress. Supporting the library is also a great way for students to give back to the community that so generously receives them. I have always felt welcome and appreciated there—it is a place for all.

"Libraries are more than just books, and they are more than just spaces. Lane Library provides services for a free or reduced cost that people may not be able to afford elsewhere. It offers educational and social programming for

all demographics, bringing people together and fostering connection and learning. And it preserves local history through the Smith Library, ensuring that Oxford's legacy is not forgotten. The library's doors are open to everyone. It is a space where people can feel safe, comfortable, and cared for. In a time where library funding all across the country is in question, it is more important than ever to show support for our local library and advocate for its preservation. Whether you are visiting Oxford or looking to make a home here, consider stopping by to explore, talk with the staff, or attend an event. The Oxford Lane Library has been a community hub for years, and continues to serve Oxford with love and appreciation."

As Annie finishes speaking, she briefly pauses, letting silence enter the room. Her words settle in the air around you, like the last page of a book that doesn't quite close.

She smiles, but it's the kind that comes with knowing.

"I should get back to shelving," she says gently, and you nod, standing. She walks you to the door, her presence just as steady as when you entered.

Part of you wants to stay here for a while.

To process. To figure out what about Oxford feels so unfinished.

Is it you? Is it Oxford? Why are you here?

Still, another part of you desires to keep going. Surely, the answer will come to you if you keep going. You feel caught between discovery and recovery: discovery of your memories through Oxford and recovery of your present self.

To stay at the library to process, turn to page 108.

To continue exploring, turn to page 145.

After you finish your conversation with Annie, you decide to step outside the library. You feel yourself growing more confident. Smarter. Annie's words quickly leave you—I mean, you already figured it out. You conquered the archives. You faced the silence. You understood Oxford. In the end, everything was so simple.

Then, just as you begin to walk away—whoosh! A gust of wind slams into you, knocking you flat on your back. Before you, the air shimmers—and then, bam! There he is.

Tim Lockridge. In the flesh. Tweed coat. Knowing grin. Floating six inches above the ground (probably for dramatic effect).

His tone, like that of a scolding parent, bellows, "You've misused 'whom' for the last time!" His voice echoing all around you.

Before you can plead your case, he raises a massive hardcover copy of Garner's Modern English Usage.

The last thing you hear is: "Chicago 18th, baby. Do better next time."

Your head hits the pavement as everything fades to black.

The End.

You've been killed by Tim Lockridge.
Go back and make another choice.

You decide to go the other way and find Goggin. You begin to walk past the academic halls into a quieter stretch of campus. The air feels colder and the crowds begin to thin around you. Ahead, tucked against the edge of a parking lot and framed by tall lights, you see a low, modern building of red brick and glass. The letters above the entrance read, "Goggin Ice Center."

The building feels calm from the outside, but expectant, like it's been waiting for you.

You step inside.

The cold greets you first: crisp, dry, and unmistakably artificial. It's the kind of cold that clings to surfaces and settles in your sleeves. The lobby is bright and clean. A long wall of windows looks down into the rink, where a lone skater carves slow lines into the ice. Farther in, a few people linger on benches, chatting quietly or changing into skates.

You take a few steps toward the rink, your footsteps softened by the rubber matting underfoot. There's a mechanical hum in the air, layered with the clatter of blades and the occasional low murmur from overhead speakers.

Then, just as you reach the edge of the viewing area, you hear the crackle of a broadcast coming from the speakers above you.

"The Goggin Ice Center, affectionately known as 'Goggin,' opened its doors in 2006 as a state-of-the-art replacement for the original Goggin Ice Arena. Located on the Recreational Quad of Miami University's campus, the facility honors Lloyd Goggin, a former university vice president who helped build the original arena. Today, Goggin is not just a home for the university's nationally recognized ice hockey and synchronized skating teams; it's also a space where students, athletes, and community members can gather for competition and camaraderie.

"When you walk into Goggin, especially on game days, the energy is impossible to ignore. Students and locals crowd the lobby, dressed in red and white, ready to cheer on the RedHawks in the Steve 'Coach' Cady Arena, also known as 'A Pad.' Named for the founding coach of the hockey program, Cady was instrumental in the creation of this newer building. The arena seats up to 4,000 people, with a student section, general admission spots, club-level seats, opera suites, and private boxes. There is even a dining area,

known as the Club Lounge, for fans who want dinner with a view of the ice.

"But not every day at Goggin is game day. On a typical afternoon, skaters from the Miami Ice Skating Club and the Varsity Synchronized Skating program take to 'B Pad'—the second rink in the building, dedicated primarily to figure skating. Between them, they represent four teams: the Intercollegiate Freestyle Team, the Open Collegiate Synchronized Skating Team, the Miami University Synchronized Skating Senior Team, and the Collegiate Team. These athletes train year-round and compete at the highest levels, making the figure skating program one of the most decorated in Miami University's history.

"The senior synchronized team has represented Team USA in international competitions for over two decades, winning medals at events like the ISU World Championships and the Leon Lurje Trophy. The collegiate team has claimed more national titles (twenty-three) than any other team in the country. The Open Collegiate team is the three-time and reigning Midwestern Sectional champion. The freestyle team is equally impressive, sending skaters to national collegiate finals each year and balancing academics with high-level training.

"Outside of varsity and club-level skating, Goggin also offers a Learn to Skate program for all ages, serving as the starting point for many lifelong skaters and future competitors. Skating lessons run year-round and are open to students, faculty, and Oxford community members. The university also offers an Introduction to Ice Skating class, often taught by Goggin's own Skating Director, David Goodman. Additionally, ice shows and holiday exhibitions bring in families and alumni from all over.

"One of the coolest things about Goggin (no pun intended)

is how many people it brings together. Over 500 intramural teams sign up every year, with more than 8,000 students participating in hockey and broomball. The leagues are divided by skill—beginner, intermediate, advanced, and elite—so whether you've played your whole life or can barely skate, there's a space for you. The same goes for broomball, which is a Miami University favorite and somehow just as competitive as any varsity sport.

"If you haven't heard of broomball, here's the lowdown: it's like hockey, but instead of skates, players wear tennis shoes, and instead of a puck, they use a ball. The game is fast, fun, and surprisingly intense, with teams sliding and scrambling across the ice to score goals. It doesn't use the entirety of the rink; instead, a divider is lowered to make the 'arena' easier to navigate.

"Goggin is also home to the Jr. RedHawks program, Talawanda High School's varsity team, and a number of summer camps and clinics. In March 2013, it even hosted the USA Broomball National Championships, where Miami won the collegiate division, and a Minneapolis team called Furious beat Barrie's Tavern of Syracuse 3–2 in double overtime.

"Goggin was designed by 360 Architecture and GBBN Architecture, and took 104 weeks and over 41,000 man-hours to complete, making it the most labor-intensive project in Miami history. The center was constructed alongside a 500-car parking garage that ensured the facility was one of the most accessible and spacious venues on campus.

"When stepping inside the lobby of the building, you'll be immediately surrounded by Miami hockey history. Thirty-eight jerseys line the walls, each one honoring an alum who made it to the NHL. Nearby, large printed photos pay

tribute to the six former RedHawks who went on to hoist the Stanley Cup. But centered among the red and white pride is a fun little secret—on one wall, a massive RedHawk logo proudly faces left. It's the only RedHawk on campus that does.

"At the end of each academic year, Goggin undergoes a transformation that adds yet another layer to its legacy. Both sheets of ice are melted to make way for the graduation ceremonies of several colleges, including the College of Creative Arts, the College of Engineering and Computing, and the College of Liberal Arts and Applied Science. This is particularly special for students from the hockey and skating teams, many of whom belong to these colleges. For them, graduating in the same space where they spent countless hours training and competing adds a profound sense of closure and pride to their accomplishments.

"The Goggin Ice Center is more than just a venue; it's a tradition. From the excitement of cheering on the RedHawks to the thrill of skating with friends or trying broomball for the first time, Goggin embodies the heart of Miami University's spirit and community.

"It represents the long practices, the early mornings, the thrill of making it to nationals, and the simple joy of skating under bright lights on a cold winter evening. It represents a championship-winning team and a local youth program. It represents everything listed here and more, cementing the facility as a symbol of excellence, passion, and pride.

"As the site of countless moments, big and small, Goggin is truly a cornerstone of campus life. It brings together not just the Miami community, but the school's core values of 'Love and Honor,' with a touch of slapshot action and a whole lot of heart."

The crowd inside Goggin echoes behind as you step back into the night. Your breath clouds in the air. Laughter and music hum from across the street, but you find that you're not drawn to it—not anymore. Not tonight.

You start walking without a clear direction, your steps eventually carrying you away from the lights, the noise, and the crowds. It feels like something is tugging you forward, through the quieter neighborhoods where the pavement gives way back to nature.

While you don't have a destination in mind, you eventually reach a narrow trailhead tucked between houses, its sign half-hidden behind low-hanging branches, reading, "Silvoor Biological Sanctuary."

The path ahead is dim and hushed, the kind of quiet that surrounds you. You step forward anyway. It's darker here. The trail narrows before you as your feet sink into the soft dirt below.

And then, halfway down the slope, you spot something odd—an old journal left open on a bench, its pages fluttering slightly in the breeze. You pause. The hush of the woods seems to deepen around you, almost as if it's holding its breath. You reach out and begin to read.

Turn to page 97.

You leave Shriver behind and step back out into the afternoon light. The tour group is already moving toward Armstrong, voices low and scattered. You watch them disappear around the corner, then turn in the other direction.

The route the cashier gave you isn't complicated: down a brick path, past the art museum, and across a patch of trimmed lawn. With each step, the sounds of campus begin to thin out. The crowds fade. The buildings get farther apart, until you see it. The Center for Performing Arts peaks quietly from the horizon, its glass and brick exterior reflecting the sky. As you get closer, it feels like the kind of building you're supposed to discover on your own.

You walk in, feeling the cool air inside the building, while the lights inside are dim. There's no performance happening, no ushers or movement, just stillness. A lobby filled with soft lighting and wide carpeted floors, the kind of space where people whisper without meaning to. You walk slowly, letting your eyes adjust, the silence wrapping itself around your shoulders like fabric.

On a bench tucked along the wall, something catches your attention. A small, worn notebook lies there, the corner of its cover slightly bent, like it's been opened and closed a dozen times. You pause, then pick it up. The pages feel warm from the light. The first entry is already half-turned, like it was meant to be found.

You begin to read.

Acting Sunlight

There is only one building on Miami's campus that sings. Its music lives not just in the air, but in the lofty walls, the frequented halls, and the very bones of its foundation. The paneled steps seem to hum with memory, as if every note ever played there had soaked into its stone. Even the edge of the roof reaches like an ear toward the sky, catching whispers of harmony and scattering them like petals across the brick-laden quad. Even in silence, it all pulses with a quiet rhythm—a breath, a heartbeat, a cherished song still being written.

This building stands flat against a cluster of dogwood trees, their arms outstretched like dancers mid-pose, blossoms unfurling in a burst of stark white each spring. The petals glow like snow caught in sunlight, delicate and defiant. A litter of leaves brushes over the porch, doing gentle flips in the wind, kissing pink cheeks in greeting as they shuffle into the entryway. Beside the shimmering floor-to-ceiling

windows stretching across this building's face, a plaque divulges its history: dancers floating gracefully on pointed toes, singers belting rousing melodies, and performers inhaling bouts of passion to bow deep into audience hearts. A cluster of lives remain immortalized, printed in stone: Governor Celeste, President Shriver, Director Sexton, and architect Hilmer.

The building ribbon fell in 1971. When its sister was erected in 1986, its entrance only a few yards away, Miami celebrated fifty-seven years of art. Now, time has known thirty-eight more years of starry eyes and over 250 showtimes, flitting with energetic smiles and soaring elation. Today, we celebrate ninety-five years of art.

The doors are heavier than need be, as though the building is attempting to hold its breath, expectant. Their weight resists like a hush before a crescendo, a held note trembling at the edge of release. Inside, the space vibrates with life, saturated with the echoes of footsteps. Every surface—from the waist-high marble statues to the counters stacked with playbills—hums faintly, like a struck tuning fork, resonating with a life of its own.

Although nobody stands in the mirrored room, framed on all sides by windows exposing the world, several smiling faces loom from a string of vibrant photos on the walls. A group of students in capes, grasping wands, hug on their knees with their eyes squeezed shut. Two girls in pink and yellow hoop skirts prepare midair to land in the splits. A boy in early twentieth-century overalls sits on his knees, center, and weeps into his hands. The moments are a museum of voices and symphonies, stuck yet fluid in time: a glimpse of the past still in motion.

Sunlight splinters from the arched windows, pouring in with a softness that nearly feels sentient. It doesn't simply

enter the room—it glides, lingers, and plays. It ricochets off the polished wood and brushed metal, tracing long, slow arcs across the floor as the day marches forward. It is not golden—even in the brightest of sunsets—because golden is rich and deep, and this light is something else entirely. This light is pale and tender, like the underside of a petal or the quiet before the refrain of a lullaby. It drapes itself across shoulders, curling around ankles, warming fingertips. It embraces. This type of light brushes visitors in warmth, soaking into their skin and settling into their bones, friendly and insistent. It fills a quiet, home-shaped ache that newcomers often carry, as if it recognizes their longing and knows exactly how to answer it.

To the left, a door stands slightly ajar, as if extending a quiet invitation. Its plate displays Rows K–L–M. Beyond lies the theater, vast in all its glory. Four hundred red-cushioned seats, worn from decades of hushed expectations, fan out in arched rows. The light is dim, as if the building is dozing off, awaiting the electric start of a new story. The air is thick with the echo of applause, of whispered lines and held breaths, just distant enough to be unsure whether or not it's truly happening. Onstage, the great red curtains are parted just enough to reveal a half-built set of giant tree trunks with mossy paint—frozen in anticipation, like a crowd moments before the climax of the show. The space seems to exhale softly. Even without music, even without motion, it all thrums, quietly humming its history into the velvet and wood. Still quivering with talent, both old and new, the building simply awaits someone who will listen.

Far in a back row, a homesick student sits with her hands crossed in her lap, shoulders curled inward like she’s trying to take up less space in the grandiose room. She gazes at the empty stage, eyes tracing the outline of the wood panels lining the floor, watching dust swirl like peaceful storms under the overhead lights. The quiet wraps around her—

soft, like a blanket tucked in by an invisible hand. Her chest aches with the familiar weight of missing, and suddenly, she wishes she were home.

Then, from somewhere in the hush, the building answers. Not with words, but with presence. With creaking beams and soft groans of wood stretching after a long day, as if the walls themselves are sighing in quiet understanding. A warmth begins to gather, slipping in through the crack of the door, carried on the last rays of the sunset outside. The light seeps slowly across the floor, painting the entryway in gentle hues of amber and rose. The air thickens with the faintest whir, a reminder that even in silence, the building remembers. It remembers her, and it remembers all who have come before her. In a gentleness that hardly brushes against an ear, the building whispers not to worry, that the student has found home—not the one she left behind, but the one that finds you when you need it most.

The sign at the front entrance reads, "Center for Performing Arts."

In the hallway, a familiar voice tenderly sings the opening lyrics of "Once Upon a December," and from the basement, the first line of dialogue of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* floats through the building wistfully.

You close the journal and rest it on your lap. The words stay with you, like they've found something within you that you cannot yet recognize. There's something about the way it ended—unfinished, maybe, or simply open—that leaves space inside you.

You place the journal back where you found it. As you leave, you find that the sidewalk stretches ahead of you in two directions. You're not sure how long you were inside. But you know where you want to go next.

To the west, you recognize the name from the whispers of passing students, a nature preserve, nestled just behind the outskirts of town. You picture the edge of the woods, the feel of bark beneath your hand. The kind of place where a voice might speak softer, but more clearly. Perhaps it's time for you to go back into the forests you began in.

To the east, you spot a familiar slope in the distance. A white bell tower rising just past the hill. You remember the name now—Bachelor Hall—the last stop on Spring Street, tucked into the edge of campus. While you've already passed it, you find it now calling to you.

Two places. Two stories waiting to be told.

To walk the wooded paths of the preserve, turn to page 73.

To climb the hill to Bachelor Hall, turn to page 26.

You pause before heading in, not entirely sure what drew you here, only that something compelled you.

As you step inside, the cooler air and quiet focus of the space meet you all at once; the lobby is bright and open, lined with rows of books and scattered tables where students sit reading or typing. People come and go with ease, some carrying stacks of books, others with coffee and laptops, moving like they've done this a hundred times.

Then you notice it: on a small display rack near the entrance, tucked between campus event flyers and research brochures: a glossy pamphlet printed in bold serif type. You almost pass it by, but something about the language catches your eye. It's not just an ad. It's... thorough. Almost like it wants to teach you something.

You take the pamphlet, open it, and begin to read.

A Campus Fixture

When talking about Oxford's attractions, one would be remiss not to mention one of the town's most eminent: King Library: named after Edward King, Miami's library director from 1922 to 1956. Open from 7pm to 1am, King Library, colloquially "King" among the students, is host to a bevy of books and media, to suit just about any of the pursuer's purposes. Boasting a wide array of tools and resources across three floors, the amenities of King Library are both traditional, and on the cutting edge.

Originally Miami University's dedicated undergraduate library, King Library has a rich history spanning seventy years. But King has much more than its original litany of writing to offer. Refurbished for the modern day, and actively being improved upon, the King Library has since incorporated fixtures to facilitate the contemporary needs of students.

Acquainting Yourself

Whether you're new to Oxford or making the trip to a part of the campus you've never visited, if you're looking for something, it's helpful to know the layout beforehand. Thousands of materials are available throughout the library, including books, documents, music, films, and other resources across three floors and a basement level. Works that span the breadth of the human tapestry are conveniently organized and easily accessible. The first level has a spacious lobby wherein you can talk to an accommodating staff member for assistance, or use the kiosks preceding the aisles, to scry the library's network.

No Matter Your Needs

Regardless of which college your majors and minors place you in, King Library can easily help you achieve and excel, not just with the variety of academic works available, but in the valuable tools the library offers as well.

King's unique archives include: the Walter Havighurst Special Collections, the Miami University Archives, and the Western College for Women Archives. Not only is King the sole home of these curated academic resources from alumni and incorporated universities, but host to countless other facilities that promote a student's success.

Through King, one can access both the Microsoft Office and Adobe suites of products. For a more specific statistical task, SSPS and Minitab are available through the library as well. If what you're looking for needs to be presented outside of a document, then King Library provides you with audio and visual editing tools. King can also facilitate physical-to-digital conversions, or vice-versa.

The Library Facilities

King Library's contemporary technologies aren't just limited to software. A student can opt to make use of the various tools that the library boasts.

On the first floor, one will be greeted by the spacious Sidley Lounge, and further in, the Center for Information Management (CIM). This computer lab offers you high-end tools that enable your digital productions and help with analog conversions.

You will also find the Howe Writing Center. Operating from the library to serve the campus, here you can broaden your writing horizons with the Center's speakers, projects, and tutors. The writing assistance one can gain from immersing themselves in the HWC is invaluable.

Going up to the third floor, King Library hosts other facilities that help students realize their goals, such as the Center for Digital Scholarship, and MakerSpace. The MakerSpace is an experimental, hands-on laboratory that emphasizes the freedom of the student. With access to the laboratory, you can make use of the available laser cutters, engravers, 3D printers, and textile machines, and more.

Nearby is the audio/visual lab, an environment where use of the aforementioned AV editing tools is most effective. A dedicated podcasting station allows one to record in a sound-tailored space. Working with visuals, a backdrop, camera, and microphones all enable you to create whatever you need to put on the screen.

Whenever a student needs to sequester themselves in a more productive environment, the King Library is home to many study rooms. Students are free to make reservations in person or digitally at their leisure, for any reason that

demands the tranquility of King's quietude. And for a break, one can go down to the lowest level, where King Cafe's refreshing coffee always awaits a student, no matter how busy.

Modern Developments

As an institution dedicated to ensuring the help it can provide is always relevant, King Library continues to iterate with plans for the future. As part of a comprehensive plan, King Library finished the restructuring of its first floor, focusing on the Sidley Lounge.

King Library has since seen additions to the Inez Kamm Electronic Classroom, and the CIM. This floor has also seen the introduction of a new conference area, with a new classroom and breakout room to accompany. Subsequent phases of renovation will continue to facilitate the preferences of modern students, with changes such as freer access to the lounge, and a refitting of the windows.

Make Your Way

King Library is Oxford's treasure trove of knowledge, and familiarizing yourself with the library's resources first-hand is more effective than any alternative. Whether one is a potential visitor to the town, or a Miami attendee, a trip to the library is worthwhile. If you're looking for a great way to realize your endeavors, visit King Library.

You close the pamphlet and rest it back on the stack, careful to place it just as you found it. You glance once more around the lobby. It's quiet again. Or maybe it always was.

Feeling refreshed, you exit the library, feeling the night glow wrap around you, seemingly softening the edges of the buildings. You walk without thinking, letting your feet guide you past lampposts and down familiar brick paths. The hum of the library fades behind you.

Then, ahead, a new shape rises. It's tall and formal, with white columns and a wide stairway leading up to heavy doors. Something about it feels different from the others, not just historical, but performative. A place that holds voices. Or memories. A plaque by the entrance reads "Hall Auditorium."

You pause, then climb the steps.

You decide to step inside and see what waits beyond the doors.

Turn to page 151.

The building ahead rises slowly into view: tall, brick, with wide steps and heavy wooden doors. Its arched windows catch the light unevenly, reflecting the street in softened reflections. The glow inside is warm, but the building itself feels older than it lets on.

A plaque by the entrance states:

Oxford Community Arts Center

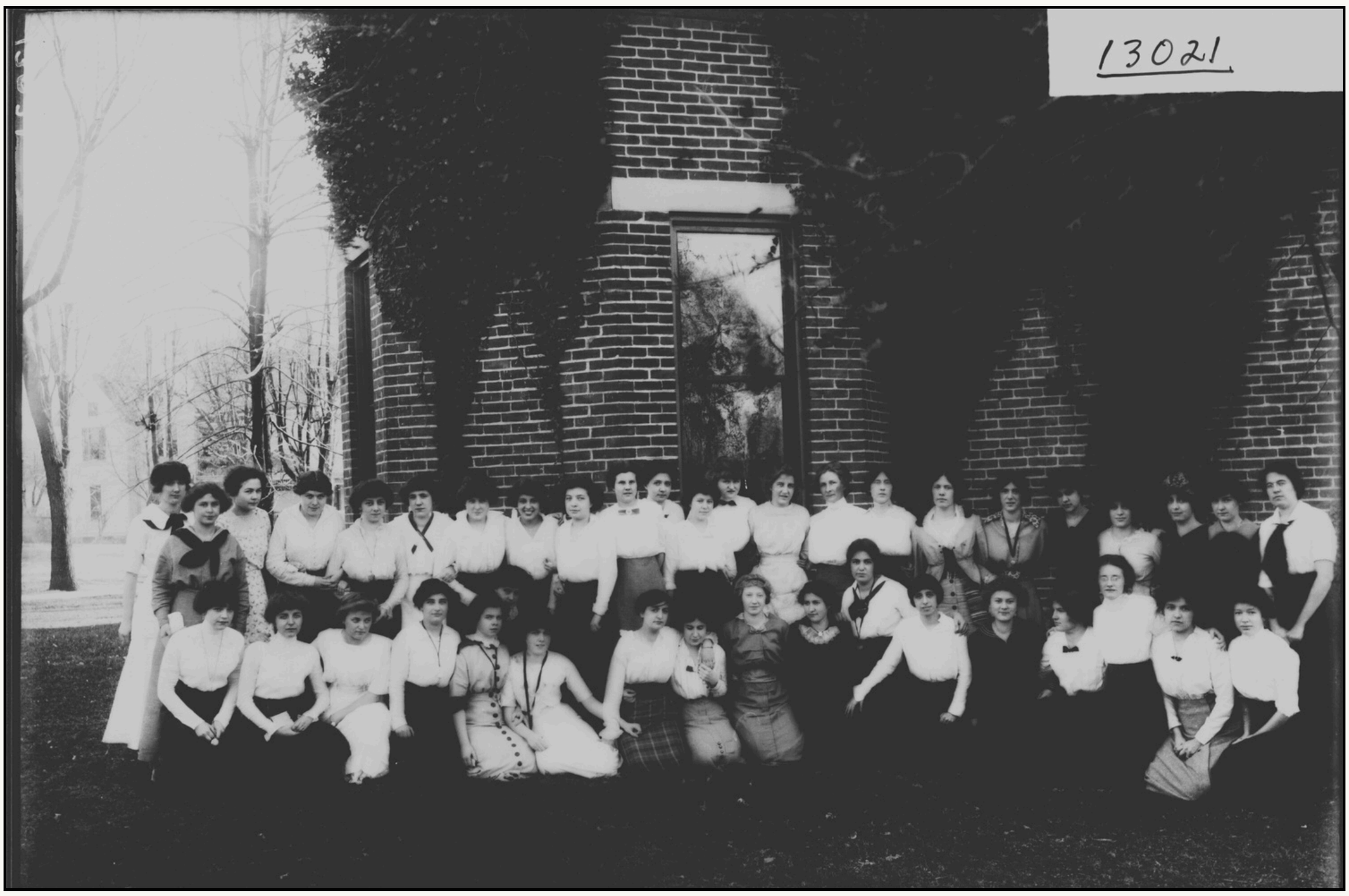
You step inside.

The air is cooler here, touched by stone and varnish. The echo of your footsteps follows you through a long hallway lined with old photographs and framed programs. Dust clings gently to the corners, but everything feels cared for, lived-in without being forgotten.

At the end of the hall, you find a door propped open, a small sign beside it, reading, "Past & Present: Oxford Community Arts Center."

Inside, the lighting is softer. A few display cases stretch along the walls. Mounted text panels break up the space: stories printed in serif type, photos faded at the edges. There's no one else here. You walk farther in, drawn to a particular display near the back. Something about the arrangement—the angles, the captions, the deliberate care in how it's placed—makes you stop.

You lean in and begin to read.



Exploring the Oxford Community Arts Center's Rich History

What is the OCAC?

The OCAC is an arts organization serving the greater Oxford area, including Butler, Preble, Franklin, and Union counties. While the OCAC is small, they are not alone in their aim of reaching out to Oxford residents, ensuring the community is a more lively place. Partnering with over twenty different nonprofit partners in Oxford alone, including Opening Minds Through Art and Oxford Community Theater, many programs fulfill their mission of bolstering community involvement and collaboration, such as an annual gala and a range of art classes. These programs and the collaboration they invite within Oxford and the greater Cincinnati community cement the OCAC as a cornerstone of Oxford, as well as open a door to the community's past.

The Beginning: The Oxford Female Institute

Caroline Scott Harrison was born in Oxford, on October 1, 1832, to parents Mary Potts Neal and John Witherspoon Scott. Since Caroline, who went by "Carrie," aged into college before the American Civil War ended in 1865, Miami had not yet been forced to admit women into the institution due to low enrollment. Thus, Caroline was refused admission, and her father began the Oxford Female Institute in 1949. John Scott chartered the Institute within a small two-story brick building on the corner of College and High Streets. By 1856, a new three-story building was constructed south of the original school and joined with the existing structure by a latticed walkway. By the end of the 1800s, the two buildings were fully connected with additions including a north wing, library, chapel, and other rooms. During her time at the Oxford Female Institute, Caroline studied languages, music, and drawing, later graduating in 1852.

Miami University's board of trustees did eventually approve a resolution to permit the admission of women in 1887, five years before Caroline's passing in 1892. Within that same year, five women were admitted to Miami as "special students" by trustee resolution, with Miami admitting seventeen women in 1891. However, the first women would not graduate from Miami University until 1900, when three of the sixteen women at Miami were awarded bachelor's degrees.

The Next Chapter: The OCAC Becoming a Part of Miami University

In 1867, the Oxford Female Institute and the Oxford Female College merged and were eventually rechartered as the Oxford College for Women in 1906. In 1902, the Ohio General Assembly passed a bill mandating that all Ohio public schools, including Miami University, become

coeducational. While Miami's Board of Trustees had already approved a resolution to admit women to the university in 1887, the bill protected this resolution by law to ensure women's access to education for generations to come.

By 1928, Miami University acquired the Oxford College building and remodeled it through architect Robert Harsh, who unified the different parts of the building with a Gregorian façade to match the rest of Miami's brick campus buildings, tearing down the signature Victorian turret structure. Miami turned the building into a women's dormitory, known informally for the next sixty years as "Ox College." The ballroom, the final addition to the building, was added by Miami University in 1929 with the help of funds raised by the Daughters of the American Revolution in honor of Caroline Scott Harrison.

In 1976, the building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places and listed by its original name—the Oxford Female Institute. The building continued to be used as a women's dormitory until the mid-eighties, when it was converted to graduate student housing. Miami University closed the building in the early nineties, which sat vacant for several years until members of Oxford's theatre community first suggested the idea of a community arts center to the City of Oxford.

The OCAC Today: OMA, Ox Act, and More

Soon after the building's closing in 1998, Oxford residents came together to establish an arts center and begin work on preserving the historic building. Today, the OCAC is a multigenerational gathering space with over 11,000 participants annually, about half of Oxford's total population. Many organizations find their home in the OCAC, including Opening Minds Through Art (OMA), an intergenerational art program for students at Miami University and people with dementia founded by Dr. Elizabeth Lokon at Miami's Scripps Gerontology Center.

The Oxford Area Community Theatre (OxACT) also finds its home in the OCAC. Beginning in 1980, OxACT had been performing its three-show season at a variety of Oxford venues until finding its home at the OCAC. OxACT began performing in the OCAC at the end of 2004 with their production of Guys and Dolls on platforms in the ballroom, with audience members sitting in folding chairs, before the building was sufficiently heated for a winter production. OxACT rests at the heart of the OCAC, as the organization continues to stay true to its founding principles and commitment to the community.

Since 1998, the OCAC has provided the greater Butler County area with a theater, ballroom space, and classrooms, along with dance and art studios. In fact, the entire third floor of the OCAC is still lined with dormitory doors, only instead of living spaces the rooms contain artist-in-residence studios for artisans to continue their work. Like a dream world, each door is decorated in the medium of the artist that lies behind it, creating a hallway of color and whimsy that fills one with curiosity and wonder. Further, artists are able to sell their works to the community in the OCAC's art shop and community gallery. There are currently twenty-nine artists, writers, and musicians in Resident ArtistStudios, with a yearlong waitlist. The OCAC puts no limit on how long residencies last but are limited as to how many spaces they can offer due to the building's second flood being unrenovated.

You take one last look at the exhibit before stepping away. The story lingers with you, not as something finished, but something carried. It doesn't demand anything from you.

You make your way back down the hallway. The photographs on the walls feel different now. You slow your pace, letting your eyes catch on to small details you hadn't noticed before: a name in the corner of a frame, the edge of a smile, a year that suddenly means something. You don't recognize anyone, but for some reason, that doesn't matter. It feels familiar.

And through that familiarity, you feel a need to move, to channel it into somewhere new.

You decide to move.
Turn to page 145.

Something draws you in the other direction.

Away from people, from paved lots and apartment mailboxes. Away from the thrum of daily life. This time, it isn't confusion that guides you—it's quiet. Not the absence of noise, but the kind that lives beneath it. A kind of knowing.

As you begin to follow this path, it guides you farther away from industry. Trees begin to grow closer. Grass overtakes what was once concrete around you. The buzz of traffic fades behind you, replaced by the rustle of wind through leaves. A short stone wall marks the edge of the space, low and moss-covered.

Then, the trees open up to something else. Something new.

The temperature shifts slightly: cooler, softer. It's as if the noise of the world has been turned down a few notches. Flower beds line the edges of the stone paths, and carefully placed benches rest beneath tall trees. You can smell the earth here. Everything feels intentional, but not artificial. Cared for.

You pause near a wrought-iron sign that creaks faintly in the breeze. The letters, slightly worn, are still elegant:

Conrad Formal Gardens

Below it, nestled in a small weathered display box, you spot a folded newspaper clipping, tucked behind a sheet of glass, as if it's meant to be remembered. You lean in and begin to read.

Welcome to the Conrad Gardens

The History of Miami University's Serene Slice of Heaven

OXFORD, Ohio—The Arthur F. Conrad Formal Gardens has been a serene staple of pure bliss for many students throughout the years. Located on Miami University's Oxford campus, they were established in 1931. Arthur F. Conrad, the university's groundskeeper, had a passion for enhancing the campus's natural beauty, creating a picturesque and historically significant spot on campus. Over time, the gardens have become a symbol of the university's commitment to incorporating nature into everyday campus life. Serving as a historical landmark, the gardens also play a role in the university's traditions.

Conrad began working at Miami in the 1920s, where he held a vision to create a space that provides a tranquil environment for the university's community. He was influenced by the prominent national City Beautiful movement during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which addressed rapid urbanization and the industrialization of American cities by integrating nature through parks, gardens, and tree-lined streets into urban

areas. The dreariness of industrialized cities and urban areas was met with the passion of nature and the goal of uplifting the human spirit. Conrad's passion and dedication to beautifying the campus has resulted in one of the most beloved spots at Miami. Sitting near the center of the Oxford campus, the gardens host an array of carefully placed plants, pathways, koi ponds, flower beds, and stone archways. The meticulous planning of the gardens is a testament to Conrad's belief in the importance of nature in university life.

Though the beauty of the Conrad Gardens is a significant aspect of the university, the garden holds important history for the university as well. The remains of Robert Hamilton Bishop, the first president of Miami University, were moved to the gardens in 1959. Bishop had originally been buried in College Hill, Ohio, at Farmer's College—a precursor to Miami University. However, after the closure of Farmer's College, his remains were relocated to the Conrad Gardens in Oxford. This was a significant moment in Miami's history, as it acknowledged the importance of Bishop's role in founding the early years of the university. In his honor a monument was placed in the gardens, known as the Bishop Memorial Stones. The Highland Pipes and Drums organization of Miami University helped bring the stones over from Scotland to the campus, honoring its past and embracing its future.

The site is also used for honoring Miami alumni, faculty, and students who have passed away. The gardens have been home to many memorial services and tributes, marking the spot as a place of celebration and reflection. The tranquil atmosphere of the gardens provides a home for those seeking peace and the remembrance of loved ones.

The gardens host a variety of ornamental flower beds, pathways, and annual and perennial plants. The rose garden

is a beautiful feature and was donated by the Beta Epsilon Chapter of the Gamma Phi Beta sorority in 1974 in honor of their centennial. The rose garden hosts many events, particularly weddings, due to its beauty and fragrance which provide a romantic appeal. The donation of the rose garden is another example of the community's enduring support of beautifying the campus. In total, there are around thirty types of annuals, fifty varieties of trees, and a collection of shrubs and other plants. The design invites visitors to stay for a while, enjoy a book, or a stroll through the gardens. The open areas of the gardens invite group activities and celebrations.

An escape from the hustle and bustle of university life, many students flock to the gardens for a moment with nature. Students can be seen stacking hammocks in scattered locations around the garden, picnics frequent the open areas, and harmless catch and release activities at the koi pond occur. The beauty of the gardens and their central location on campus gives visitors a place to gather and to celebrate important events, sharing experiences and creating memories. The careful design of the garden ensures everyone has a place to enjoy, without feeling crowded.

The Arthur F. Conrad Formal Gardens are an integral part of the lives of students, faculty, staff, and visitors. Their cherished grounds offer a place of rest and relaxation. From their creation in 1931 to their current state, the gardens continue to reflect the university's commitment to the integrationof nature and beauty into everyday life. Whether you're a student seeking a place to de-stress or a couple tying the knot, the Gardens are a place for everyone to enjoy and make memories.

You step back from the display box. The piece you just read rests quietly behind it, but you find its words lingering within you. There's a strange warmth in your chest, not comfort exactly, but something gentler. Recognition. Almost as if something deep and old is nodding within you. This garden was made to soothe, to honor, and to preserve. And in its own way, it did all of those things.

But again, it didn't answer your questions.

You sit for a while on a low stone bench, letting the quiet settle in your bones. The air smells of rain on stone and blooming things. A few people pass through, quiet figures moving gently along the paths. No one speaks here. The stillness is the point.

And yet, you feel it again, that familiar stirring. That sense that somewhere, just beyond the edge of what you can see, there might be more. Not just memory, but meaning.

A narrow path leads away from the garden, back toward the trees. But beyond the branches, you see shapes forming: structures, buildings, brick, and shadow. They rise behind the tree line like something waiting.

You rise from the bench.

You decide to follow the path toward the buildings beyond the trees. Turn to page 48.

You're interested in seeing the anthropology labs. You go inside and immediately run into a campus tour group. The guide looks at you and smiles. She asks if you're new since you look a little lost. You nod and ask her if she knows where the anthropology labs are. Her eyes brighten, and she tells you that her group is going there next. She invites you to join, so you tag along.

As you follow her around the bracket-shaped hallway, she introduces herself as Kathryn. When she asks for your name, you hesitate before admitting that you're not really sure who you are. You just ended up here. Kathryn chuckles and tells you that's pretty typical for freshmen. After all, that's what college is for. Even though you meant something else, you don't try to correct her.

You and the tour group stop at a classroom, and Kathryn raises her voice so the whole group can hear.

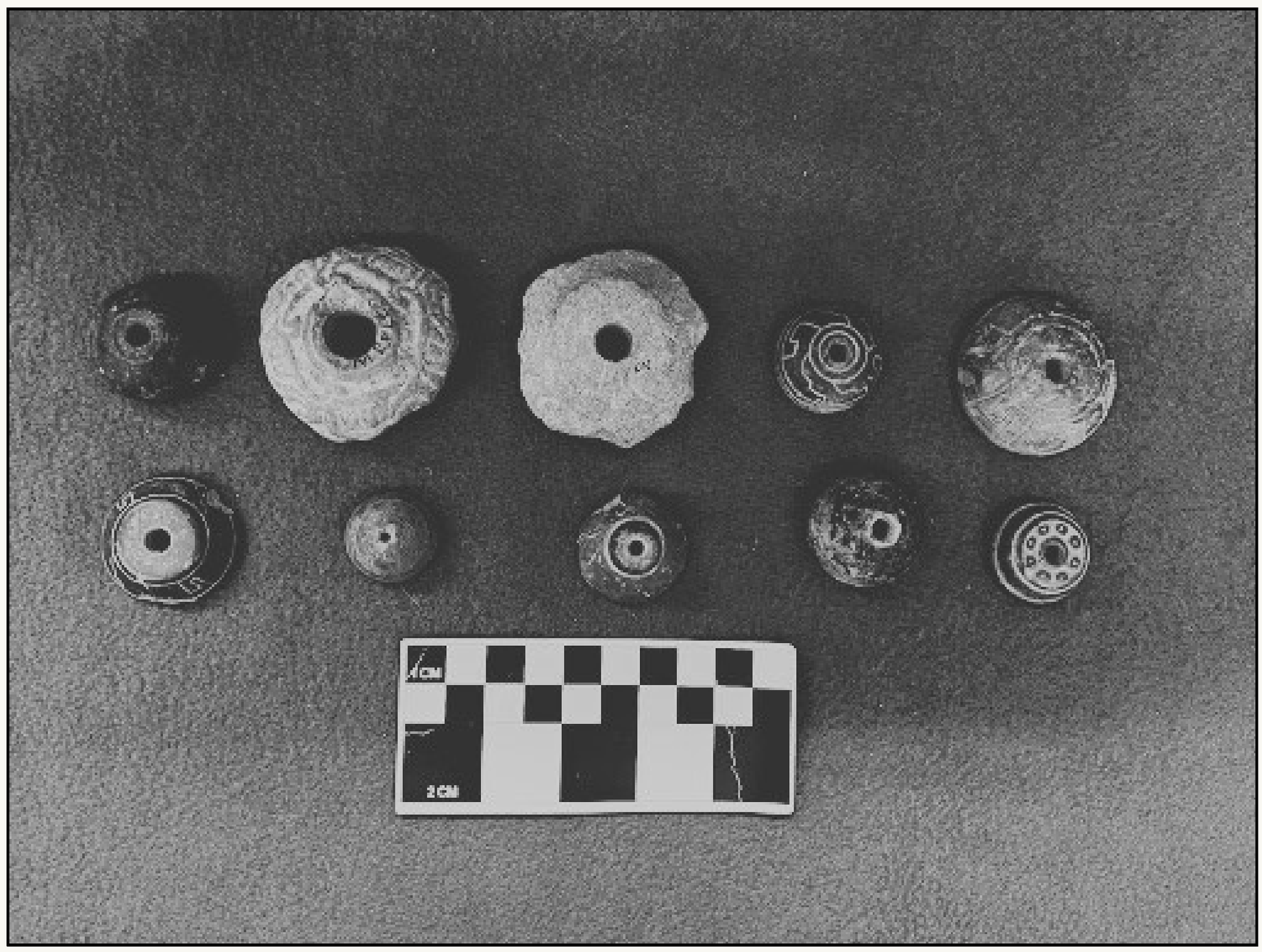
"Welcome to Upham Hall 180–the center of all anthropology labs. Split into three separate rooms, each space is distinct in subject and practice while seeking to instill a broader perspective in all our students. 180A, 180B, and 180C bustle with life and opportunity entirely unique to the Department of Anthropology.

"First, let's explore 180A, the first room you encounter after walking into the lab's central space. Here you can find cultural and linguistic anthropological lab sessions taking place, wherein students discuss various media, such as ethnographies, documentaries, and even forms of popular media like songs and films. Students and professors engage in back-and-forth discussion and analysis in order to further our comprehension and appreciation of the complex sociocultural intricacies of our world. Developing a holistic perspective and understanding of our environment is an increasingly important skill that can help our students navigate the ever-changing and evolving world.

"Our second stop is at 180B, the biological anthropology lab. The atmosphere here is immediately different—primate specimens fill the cabinets, line the walls, and can often be seen atop the lab stations. Each week, students in the introductory course learn about primate variation, which then leads to human evolution. Following physical differences through primate anatomy reveals much about humanity's past and closest relatives. These specimens speak volumes about human evolution, adaptation, and our interconnectedness with the primate lineage. This is one of the largest courses in the Department of Anthropology—as it fulfills a biology requirement; students from a wide range of majors take this course to avoid the standard courses offered by the Biology Department. Once students arrive, they meet Dr. Kelsey Ellis and the number of academic opportunities she offers. Every semester she takes on a number of undergraduate assistants for this introductory course, allowing previous students the opportunity to gain hands-on experience instructing courses and managing labs. Such experience is extremely valuable, especially for students interested in furthering their education. Additionally, Dr. Ellis takes a small number of students interested in primatology to the field with her every summer, allowing them to gain field experience in primate observation and study. This allows students to develop their own research project, which they manage entirely independently, save for the guidance Dr. Ellis offers. Spending the summer studying primates in the Amazon rainforest is an opportunity few undergraduate students will ever get to experience, but here at Miami University, the first step to doing so is just inside this room.

"180B is also the home of the Miami University Primatology Club. Members meet biweekly to discuss primatological areas of interest, and the club organizes trips to the Cincinnati Zoo and attends annual meetings such as the Midwest Primate Interest Group meeting each fall

semester and the Academic Association of Biological Anthropologists meeting each spring semester. These conferences are a great opportunity for members to socialize with graduate students and researchers working in their own fields of interest. Along with networking, students also have the chance to present any undergraduate research projects of their own.



"The third and final room we encounter is 180C, the archaeological lab. Artifacts cover the counters, and students can be seen taking measurements and recording data during class. All the courses that meet here are taught by Dr. Jeb Card, who keeps courses fun, yet engaging. A couple of the courses you will find in here include the foundational archaeological course, which introduces students to the basic methods and practices of archaeology, as well as introducing students to the study of artifacts. Another course would be the archaeological practicum, where students gain hands-on experience with excavation as they conduct a dig of their own behind McGuffey Hall. Then, they complete an analysis of the artifacts collected from the site, gaining skills in dating

and analyzing artifacts. The Department of Anthropology has over twelve thousand artifacts, most of which originate from North and South America, within their collection. Though a good amount of these artifacts can be found in 180C, the rest are stored in the lower level of Upham Hall. Anthropology majors interested in artifacts can join Dr. Card's Anthropological Collections Management group, a small number of students that meet weekly to catalog, restore, and analyze artifacts. Additionally, members of the management team work with 3D scanners to create 3D images of our artifact collection which are then made available online. Members of the team also work with 3D printers to print either copies of our own collection or copies of artifacts from other universities or museums.

"In conclusion, Upham Hall 180 serves as more than just a physical space for learning; it symbolizes the heart and soul of the anthropology experience at Miami University. The diverse activities and specialized instruction offered within rooms 180A, 180B, and 180C equip students not only with theoretical knowledge but also with practical skills essential for future academic and professional success. Whether your interests lie in exploring diverse cultures and languages, understanding biological evolution and primatology, or uncovering the hidden stories of past civilizations through archaeology, Upham Hall 180 provides unparalleled opportunities for growth, discovery, and scholarly engagement. We invite you to immerse yourself fully in these labs, embrace their unique offerings, and become part of our vibrant anthropology community at Miami University."

Kathryn announces that the group will be heading to Western Campus next, but you still want to explore the area you're in. You decide to part ways and exit Upham. You enter the sidewalk and follow it to the nearest road. Reaching the road, two buildings catch your attention. To your left is a large building labeled "Armstrong Student Center" with waves of students moving in and out of it. Across the street to your right, you see a beautiful little building titled "Sesquicentennial Chapel."

Both look interesting to you, which do you choose?

To check out the student center, turn to page 72.

To explore the chapel, turn to page 41.

As you leave, you're not entirely sure where you're headed, only that the streets feel slightly different now, familiar and strange all at once. Buildings start to shift around you. The storefronts give way to quieter blocks, where porch lights glow dimly and wide trees lean over cracked sidewalks. The houses here are older: tall, slightly worn, each one different from the next. Some have wide bay windows, others lean with age; porches sag gently toward the sidewalk. There's no clear pattern, no repetition. But each one bears a small plaque near the door, naming it like a person might name a memory.

You recognize them, though you're not sure how. As you pass each house, one catches your eye. A small sign near the steps reads, "Slow Idaho," the name somehow both strange and familiar. You feel yourself drawn toward it, as if it already knows you're coming.

There's no sign, no lights in the windows. But something about it pulls you in. Old wood creaks beneath you as you step up onto the porch. It's quiet inside, but not abandoned, almost as if time itself had stopped. The smell meets you almost immediately: old wood, citrus, and something else you can't quite put your finger on.

As you make your way through the small house, you find that there's no clutter, just a quiet rhythm to the space. You see a coat rack leaning in the corner and a worn rug on the floor, thin in its center. This place feels well lived-in, familiar in a way that makes you wonder if you've been here before.

Near the back of the room, something catches your eye: a single sheet of paper, folded neatly and resting beside a ceramic mug on a low table. It isn't hidden, but it doesn't call attention to itself either. It feels placed. Waiting.

You pick it up. The handwriting is careful and deliberate. At the top, a title that shares a name with the house.

You sit down and begin to read.

To the past, present, and future residents of Slow Idaho,

In the bubble of Oxford, Ohio, thousands of students live in houses and apartments scattered throughout uptown and its various neighboring streets. These houses—or homes, rather—entertain some of Miami University's richest traditions and student body cultures. One aspect that makes the college houses of Oxford stand out from other universities is a unique plaque and name attached to the front of each house. Throwing addresses out the window, the name of a home and the four walls holding it up seep into one. These names stand as an ode to the group of college students who first christened the house and bestowed a name upon it. In this case, each time the name "Slow Idaho" is yelled through an alley or stands as the answer to the question "where do you live?", it represents so much more than the current group it houses.

Slow Idaho

It has been twenty years since the house at 115 East Walnut Street was bought, painted a pale yellow, and named Slow Idaho. With some quick math, this means it has been called home by around 140 college students throughout the years —20-odd groups of twenty-somethings who will always have a year of their college lives defined by Slow Idaho. So, I'm writing to let you all know that not much has changed around here; there are little pieces of all of you etched into the walls.

The Porch

To start, the house is still yellow and the front door remains a bright, firetruck-red. On the warm days that live in the first weeks of fall semester and the last weeks of spring semester, there is almost a 100 percent guarantee that the front door will be propped open, an invitation to any and all passing by. The front porch continues to exist as the first place of getaway when a house resident is feeling stressed, in need of some vitamin D and fresh air, or simply wants to enjoy the beloved porch swing. White-painted wood with navy cushions, the porch swing is still hanging sturdy under the weight of endless morning chats and evening homework sessions.

The Living Room

After walking through the red front door, you'll look to your left and see a wall scattered with memories of the current residents. Posters that indicate where each of the current eight girls who live there are from—Cleveland, Chicago, Cincinnati, and Columbus, to name a few. Every school year, a new couch, a new television set, a new rug, and new decor are moved into the Slow Idaho living room, and while the room's appearance may change, its purpose

stays true as a place to come together.

The sentiment of never being alone at college proves to be one of the truest statements. College students will spend entire summers collecting furniture and decor for their bedrooms, just to spend 90 percent of their time at home in the living room. The living room of a college house is a host to weekly movie nights, parents getting to know each other on Miami's Family Weekend, hangouts, and the in-between moments where roommates get to simply exist together.

The Pink Kitchen

Soon after moving past the living room, you'll be greeted by the one and only pastel pink-painted kitchen. Sometime between Slow Idaho's conception and the current date, the single kitchen of this college home was painted an opaque light pink that stops anybody in its tracks; a fitting addition next to the pale yellow exterior, red door, and banana yellow bathrooms of the home. There is often an addition or edit made to Slow Idaho when each new group of residents calls it home. The kitchen was painted pink by one specific group of girls, and it has stayed and become one with the house, and the bright orange couch that sits below the balcony was placed years ago by one group and then left to forever live in Slow Idaho.

The Glass Bottle Wall

There is a specific essence to college that calls for tradition, regardless of whether the purpose is to create unity, a community, a place of belonging for students far from home, or it simply boils down to humans being creatures of habit. Tradition lives within Miami University. There are big traditions, like each and every student avoiding stepping on the seal at the hub of campus, believing that if you step on the seal you will fail your next exam. Traditions also run

deep within the large Greek community on campus, where students spend weeks of the school year dedicating themselves to their respective philanthropies and getting the entire campus to join in. The Greek community has its own traditions, particularly in terms of a housing procedure called "passdowns." These are Oxford houses that are consistently lived in by someone of a specific sorority or fraternity—Slow Idaho being a strong standing passdown. Just three years after its naming in 2005, Slow Idaho became a Phi Mu Beta Eta passdown and continues to be so today.

With the passing along of a house like Slow Idaho from group to group comes mini traditions and memorabilia that are collected. One specific reference of memorabilia that Slow Idaho is well-known for is the Glass Bottle Wall, a tradition that started when Slow Idaho was given its name. When you walk through the pastel pink kitchen, you will be presented with an entire shelved wall of glass bottles that have been collected and preserved by all of the previous tenants. This serves as a little reminder of all the people who have come before.

So, as I stated before, every resident's impact on Slow Idaho shines just as brightly as the house's impact on you all. To the past residents of Slow Idaho, I am glad to report that your legacy lives on as a standout Oxford college home. To the current residents, take as many pictures and make as many memories as humanly possible—living at 115 East Walnut Street is a one of a kind experience. Lastly, to all the future groups of Slow Idaho residents, we ask you to foster the traditions and embrace memorabilia.

From,

Slow Idaho

When you finish reading, you don't move right away.

The words stay with you, not demanding anything, not offering a neat resolution, but, in their own way, comforting you.

You look at the rooms around you. Nothing has changed, but somehow everything feels different. The quiet isn't empty anymore; now, it's full of life.

You fold the letter carefully and place it back where you found it. For a long moment, you sit quietly to yourself, reliving your journey. There's no voice telling you what comes next. No map. Just this moment. And somehow, that feels like enough.

Outside, the light has shifted. You stand and walk to the door, briefly looking back. The air smells the same, wood, citrus, memory, but something in you has settled. You still don't have all the answers. The past is still missing pieces. But for the first time, that doesn't feel like a wound.

You don't know everything. Maybe you never will. But you feel peace.

You step outside.

The door closes softly behind you.

The End.

You climb the steps and pull the door open.

A hush greets you on the other side, cool air, still and dense, as if the building has been holding its breath. It isn't cold, just quiet in a way that makes you softer in your movements. The hallway is dim, lined with muted carpet and lit only by the glow coming from a set of double doors left slightly ajar. Following the light, a strange feeling wells up in your chest—almost as if the space ahead is already aware of your arrival.

Stepping inside, you find yourself in an auditorium. It's almost full. Rows of seats stretch out in front of you, filled with faces you don't recognize, or maybe just don't remember. No one looks your way. They're all focused on the stage, where a single spotlight burns through the darkness. The rest of the room is hushed, as if the whole place is holding its breath.

You find an empty seat near the back and sit.

The house lights dim. The stage brightens. The curtains are already drawn, revealing a large backdrop of Miami's campus. You didn't know you were arriving for a performance. But it seems to have been waiting for you.

A woman walks onto the stage and stands in the center. She's wearing all black and carrying props with her. What is this called again? The words snap into place: a one woman show! You settle into your seat, ready for her to begin.

"The pavement beneath my feet was the only thing I was sure was real as I stood in the long, dark shadow stretching many feet behind my head, past the sidewalk and into the grass. A shadow that was leaving me cloaked in a darkness I knew I should step out of, should run from, should never look back on. And yet there I was, out in the middle of the night when it was nearly freezing with nothing but a light jacket and pajama pants on because I couldn't get that feeling out of my head. That beckoning voice I knew was a sign I was going insane. I needed to get inside, needed to see what lay beyond the walls of Hall Auditorium.

"The music students could say it was just a place to perform, nothing but a stage and a few rows of seats where parents and friends would crowd themselves to listen to the sound of finely tuned performances. But if that were true, if there was really nothing to it beyond pressing the keys of a piano or blowing into the mouthpiece of a flute, then why couldn't I get the place out of my head? Why, since the first day I'd walked past its soaring pillars and worn brick exterior, could I not get the place out of my head?

"I let out a heavy sigh as I stopped my incessant pacing, eyes narrowing as I looked to those glass doors with their wooden frames and brass hardware, barely clear in the night. But I knew them, I knew them all too well, just like I knew every brick that built the outside of the place. I ran a hand through my mess of hair, glancing down at the device I'd just pulled from my pocket.

"I was typing before I could even understand what was happening, eyes wildly scanning the screen until I'd found the number I needed. I pressed call without another thought, holding the device to my ear and not letting the building out of my sight the entire time.

"'Oxford Police Department, how can I help you?' The voice on the other end was bored, tired, and it reminded me I was making the call after midnight on a Wednesday.

"'Hi, I uh, I'm just calling about my phone.' My throat was tightening, a layer of sweat building on my skin as I buried my nails into the palm of my free hand. 'I left it inside of one of the academic buildings. Hall Auditorium?'

"As the name left my dry mouth, I waited for some sort of sign. An uptick in the officer's voice, a shake as they spoke, tripping over their words, anything at all. Something to tell me I wasn't the only one who knew there was something different about this place.

"'You need it tonight?' It was the skeptical question I should have expected, but it still somehow left my insides feeling like they were on fire. Like I was burning from the inside out.

"'Yeah, yeah, I'm sorry.' I took a moment to catch my breath. 'I need to keep in contact with my family, grandma's in the hospital, and—'

"'Yeah, we'll send someone over. Just wait by the door, they'll unlock it for ya.'

"I thanked the officer, quickly shoving my phone into my pants in an effort to hide the device for when help arrived. I'd already concocted another story about borrowing a stranger's cell who was walking by.

"I looked down to my feet that felt nearly buried in the cement by that point, but quickly lifted my head, knowing I could not afford to let my eyes leave the building for too long.

"By that point, I'd stopped willing myself to think of anything but Hall. All the overdue assignments I had piling up, the papers I wasn't writing or the quizzes I wasn't finishing because there was just something much more important. The laundry I wasn't doing and the showers I wasn't taking because I needed this, I needed to see what was behind those doors. Not in that auditorium, not in that lobby, but beneath the surface. Down that spiraling staircase, far from the Philosophy department or any concert being put on.

"It didn't matter if no one else could feel it, could feel the heat that engulfed my body every time I passed the place. They didn't need to in order for me to finally understand what was inside.

"Heavy footsteps pulled me from thoughts, causing my head to whip over my shoulder as I took in the sight of a man who was raising an eyebrow at me. His eyes dragged over my unkempt figure, jaw moving lazily as he smacked on a piece of chewing gum.

"'You the one who called about the phone?' he called from a few feet away, like he couldn't stand the thought of being

any closer to me.

"I nodded, and he let out a sigh as he approached the door. I watched as he pulled a set of keys from his pocket, flipping through the clanking metal until finally he reached the thing that would bring me to the end of my torment. The end of agonizing hours spent wondering why me, why I was the one one who could sense this dread when no one else could?

"I listened to the creak of the door, waiting for him to step inside with me, but he simply nodded ahead. He wanted me to go in alone.

"I drew in a deep breath as my feet roughly dragged against the tile floor, my head nearly spinning as I turned it in all directions. I could hear each beat of my heart as I took in the sight of the cream walls, could feel my lungs emptying and refilling with air as I stared at the unlit light fixtures, and I could sense that heat rising up from the surface of the ground below me.

"I allowed my feet to guide me, not giving a second thought as to how long I might be gone or if I'd even return at all. Within a minute, I stood at the mouth of a spiraling staircase, looking down into the never ending abyss of darkness, and willed myself forward.

"In this early hour of the morning, I would uncover the true purpose of Hall Auditorium."

The lights come up slowly.

For a moment, no one in the audience moves. Then people begin to shuffle around you: quiet conversations, the rustle of coats, slow footsteps heading toward the exits.

You stay a little longer, mulling over what you've just seen, trying to make sense of it, or maybe just feel it fully before it fades. The details already blur at the edges, like a dream you're trying to hold onto. You remember the stage, the voice, the way the air shifted—heavier at certain moments, like it was trying to press something into you. Not all of it stayed. Parts have already begun to slip.

But something remains.

You don't feel answered, exactly. But you do feel steadier than before. Seen.

Eventually, you rise and make your way toward the aisle. The auditorium is nearly empty now, quiet in a different way than before.

As you step out of the auditorium, you again feel the nighttime air. Streetlights buzz faintly around you, casting shadows that seem to shift and stretch with the breeze.

Farther down the block, you notice a small sign swaying gently near the sidewalk. Though the writing is hard to make out, it stands in front of a low, modern building with tall glass windows. There's something about its quiet posture that reminds you of a library.

However, on the opposite side, you spot another path, catching the flap of a worn banner draped over an iron fence. The fabric shifts gently in the wind, just clear enough to catch a few words: something about history, something about art. Behind it stands a broad brick building with arched windows and a soft amber light

glowing from within. It looks like a place where people gather, or maybe once did. A community space. Possibly older than it lets on.

There are no instructions here. No right path. Just places that feel like they might hold something.

To follow the sign and explore the possible library,
turn to page 102.

To follow the fence line toward the building beyond the banner,
turn to page 127.

You cross the street, drawn by the flicker of movement and color.

The posters are impossible to ignore. Some are glossy, others curling at the edges. Sharpie bleeds through paper. Stickers half-obscure hand-drawn arrows. It's chaotic. It's obsessive. It's weirdly magnetic.

They all seem to center around one theme: Bagel & Deli.

You stop in front of the board. One giant poster dominates the wall, printed on thick cardstock and duct-taped in place. It looks newer than the others—someone must keep replacing it.

You step closer and begin to read.

How to Make the Wall of Fame at Bagel & Deli

The six steps to make the Wall of Fame at Bagel & Deli

Step 1: Know where you're going

In order to learn as much information as possible about Bagel & Deli—located at 119 East High St., Oxford, Ohio—you can talk to almost anyone in the small town about this highly recognizable establishment. Founded in 1975, it quickly gained popularity for transforming a well-known breakfast food into a cuisine consumed for not only breakfast, but lunch, dinner, a late night snack, or even dessert. However, their menu, which has vastly expanded over the years, can come with some intimidation, causing people to retreat into the familiarity of what they get every time. To combat this, and to encourage the consumption of some of their less-ordered menu items, the wall of fame challenge was created.

Step 2: Know what it is

Bagel & Deli has approximately ninety-six different bagel sandwiches on their menu, all of which are a variety of the different bagels (see a), spreads (b), meats (c), cheeses (d), toppings (e), and condiments (f). While this extensive menu does inevitably bring along a bit of intimidation, the step-by-step challenge of trying to conquer every combination that Bagel & Deli has to offer is one some attempt, and few succeed at. So at this point, the question may arise: What is the motivation to complete such a feat? The answer lies in a coveted Bagel & Deli sweatshirt. Retailing for $49.95, this piece of clothing can frequently be spotted on Miami University's campus, more likely than not being worn by a sleep-deprived undergraduate. If that is not enough motivation, upon the completion of the challenge a Bagel & Deli employee will snap a picture of the freshly minted bagel all-timer. This picture will join the wall of fame, joining a select group of only twenty-six other participants who have succeeded throughout the company's fifty years of existence.

a. Banana nut, blueberry, bialy, jalapeno, combo/everything, egg, garlic, onion, plain, pumpernickel, raisin, sesame, sourdough, rye, tomato, whole wheat, and gluten free

b. Plain cream cheese, veggie cream cheese, spinach cream cheese, and hummus

c. Turkey, ham, bacon, pepperoni, salami, sausage, meatball, roast beef, corned beef, and chicken salad

d. American, pepper jack, provolone, swiss, smoked cheddar, and colby

e. Lettuce, tomato, avocado, spinach, banana peppers, onion, cucumbers, green peppers, and pickles

f. Italian dressing, mayonnaise, spicy brown mustard, hot sauce, pizza sauce, parmesan peppercorn, horseradish, oregano, cinnamon, peanut butter, jelly, salt, pepper, and butter

Step 3: Live where it is

If one is attempting to have their picture on the iconic, maximalist wall of fame inside one of Oxford's most populated eateries, it is preferable that they live in Oxford, work in Oxford, or, ideally, both. This could include attending or teaching at Miami University, or residing in the surrounding area. Now this might not seem like a necessity, but if one's goal is to consume all ninety-six of the bagels needed to have their picture on the wall, a residence, as well as family, friends, or colleagues, in the aforementioned 6.7 miles of land in southwest Ohio is preferred.

Step 4: Know who to go with

To accomplish eating over ninety bagels, it is highly recommended that adventure be taken on in the presence of company. Not only will pride motivate one to continue their quest when they feel as though they can't look at, let alone eat, another bagel, but it will also allow for the strengthening of relationships. It is a well-known phenomenon that the act of sharing a meal can greatly aid in the development of human connection, but further, this will make the experience infinitely more enjoyable. It is possible that going with different people might invite a variety of orders, but it's also largely possible that one would hear multiple orders of the same thing. There's a fair chance of a Crunch and Munch bagel, their most popular order, which consists of turkey, cheddar, lettuce, tomato, honey mustard, parmesan peppercorn, and the customer's choice of Doritos. Regardless of the orders of any family or friends, or any temptation that may come to order the same thing as the

last time, it is crucial to remain focused on the mission if one wants their picture among Bagel legends.

Step 5: Have a stable source of income (trust me on this)

This step may seem a bit out of place, but Bagel & Deli, though greatly beloved, is not known for their low prices. A singular bagel with nothing on it is sold at $2.50; the various different combinations of toppings, meat, cheese, or condiments can cost up to $10.75. Prices will vary depending on what bagel is ordered, but it's reasonable to deduce that these small expenses will add up, and could be detrimental to one's finances if there is no proper source of income to fund bagel-buying habits.

Step 6: Plan out your visits

It is not this writer's place to police the time of bagel consumption; however, it would be most beneficial to spread the visits out at different times of the day. Opening at 8 a.m. sharp every day and closing after most bars to catch those seeking a late night snack, it is recommended that if one is accepting this challenge, the times that the bagels are purchased should vary. This challenge in and of itself encourages people to employ variety as the spice of life, so why not add even more variation with the time of the day the bagels are consumed? That being said, it can be reasonably inferred that certain bagels will suit certain times of the day. When rolling out of bed for the first time at 11 a.m., a Sam's Sunrise might be your best bet (scrambled eggs and American cheese on an egg bagel). If one is taking a friend from home to lunch, an All-American (ham, American, lettuce, and mayo on a plain bagel) may suit your fancy. If a sweet bagel is what's craved, a Cookie Monster (cream cheese, cinnamon, and a chocolate chip cookie on a blueberry bagel) could be the right fit. Whatever time is

chosen, it rings true that to make that wall of fame, it is crucial to keep the flavor of variety alive in the quest.

You step back from the wall of posters.

You almost feel as if they ripple behind you, full of static energy and inside jokes. For all their chaos, there was something oddly sincere in them, like someone had poured real history into laminated paper and Sharpie.

You stand still for a moment, not sure what to take from it all. Not sure what to keep.

Then something catches the side of your eye. You glance down the street, seeing a faded mural painted on the side of a building. While the letters are too far away to make out, the color sticks with you. Familiar in a way you can't explain. Not memory exactly, just a feeling.

Without fully realizing it, your feet begin to move.

You follow the feeling toward the mural and what lies beyond. *Turn to page 60.*

You head east down High Street and stroll your way to Skipper's. Entering the patio area, you spot a young man sitting at one of the picnic tables with a beer tower. He narrows his eyes at you. Something about his hostile expression makes you curious, so you walk up to the guy and introduce yourself. He grunts at you with suspicion but tells you his name is Benny.

"You seem down, Benny. May I ask what's wrong?" you ask.

"I almost had it, almost!" he grumbles, sipping his beer. Deeply intrigued, you sit down across from him and ask him if he will tell you about it.

"It was my first day at Skipper's. It was a chilly afternoon.

"I never thought I would see the day. Striding in my new employee T-shirt, I approached that renowned red fence. The buzzing glow of the neon sign greeted me, promising me opportunity and knowledge. The two sun-faded signs that read NO BAGELS flanked the double doors, like hostile guardians protecting a noble castle. Taking it all in made me want to cry, but I needed to keep it together. That day would be the day I learned the secret to customer happiness. That day, I would learn the Skipper's chipotle ranch recipe.

"I passed through two sets of double doors and made it inside. I took a deep breath. The place smelled of fryer grease, sticky beer, and bleach towels—the smell of unadulterated success. Anxious to get started, I headed to the back. I was received by the manager, a man wearing glasses and a red Skipper's-branded polo. He tossed me an apron and told me how to clock in.

"'Welcome, I'm Mark,' he said. 'Let me show you around,

and then I'll leave you with Justin for the rest of the shift. Since it's slow, you'll do prep work until it picks up.' He pointed at a smeared white board on the wall with a list written in shorthand. 'Start with the more urgent stuff, and then—'

"'Excuse me, but when will I learn how to make chipotle ranch?' I cut in. Mark raised his eyebrows at my interruption but responded anyway.

"'You'll learn as you go. We need a couple tubs portioned this afternoon, so maybe you'll find out today.' Reassured, I happily listened to the rest of my training orientation. Mark led me down to the basement and showed me the stockrooms, walk-in freezer, and beer cooler. It was all pretty standard, but I made careful note of the chipotle ranch in the beer cooler. Filled with little cups of chipotle ranch, the tubs were piled into wobbling towers beside other portioned sauces. I had never seen a Miami student able to resist this special ranch at Skipper's, so I could only assume that the process to make it bordered on sacred. I told myself I had to get every step right so I could recreate this wondrous magic. After my tour, Mark brought me back upstairs and showed me to Justin, who was in the kitchen sending out an order.

"'Mark said we need to make chipotle ranch,' I told Justin as soon as the manager was out of earshot. He ignored me and craned his neck to look at the front patio. I followed his gaze and saw a group of people sitting outside eating from those unmistakable foil wrappers. Bagel & Deli. He shook his head and grabbed the overhead microphone.

"'The patio is for Skipper's customers only. Unless you're eating a gyro or buying a beer tower, GET. OUT.' We watched the group gather their things in shame and sit down on the steps of The Den next to Bagel & Deli.

"'That was overkill,' I told him. 'Not everyone has a gated space like you guys.' Justin simply shrugged and turned to the back, saying, 'Bagel has their own tables.'

"I followed him, kind of irritated, and asked, 'If no one's at Skipper's, why can't you just let Bagel customers use your tables if there's nowhere else to sit?' Justin approached a shelf in the back that housed a couple empty tubs that looked identical to the ones in the basement.

"'Think of it this way,' he explained, grabbing the tubs and handing them to me. 'Say we let a couple Bagel customers take up a table on the patio. Another group sees them and decides to join. Soon enough, the whole patio is full of bagels, and there are no tables for our customers.' I rolled my eyes.

"'It's not Bagel's fault that it's popular,' I said. Justin paused and looked at me.

"'And it's not Skipper's fault Bagel has a smaller patio. Look, if it really breaks your heart to kick people out, ask someone else to do it. Just don't come crying when someone walks up to you pissed you're letting someone else—who didn't pay to be here—take up the last table.' I opened my mouth to make another snark, but then Justin opened the walk-in fridge and pulled out a large five-gallon bucket, smacking it down on the prepping table.

"'What's that?' I asked.

"'Chipotle ranch,' he responded like I'm stupid. He pried open the lid and revealed a full tub of that speckled orange sauce. My heart dropped in utter disappointment as I stared at it. I felt thwarted.

"'Why is it already made?'

"'Why is it already made?'

"'Someone must have made extra yesterday when they portioned,' Justin said, 'Good for us, we won't have to make any. Go get some portion cups and lids.' I slowly turned away, dragging my feet across the kitchen, returning with what he had asked for. My hands felt cold, almost numb. I tried to keep it together. Maybe it wasn't not over yet. Maybe I could still learn the chipotle ranch recipe before the shift was over. Maybe I could get him to tell me. But the doubt continued to grow in my stomach. My sorrow must have been evident because when I returned, Justin let me lay out all of the cups in an array.

"'Cheer up, this is a gift. Just like the old days when we didn't have to make our own chipotle ranch.' I stopped and trained my eyes on the rows of cups in front of me. What did he mean?

"'What do you mean?' I repeated, careful.

"'I mean, we didn't have to,' Justin stated simply. 'We just collected the stuff in buckets and portioned it out later.' Bewildered, I tried to press him further without looking desperate. He just shook his head. 'If I tell you, I'm gonna have to kill you. It's ancient Skipper's history. Caused a huge scandal and everything.' I nodded along and waited to see if he told me without any further prompting. I find that in most cases, it's more difficult for the person keeping the secret than the person anticipating its juicy, juicy details. All I would have to do was act disinterested, maybe throw in a line of doubt about his credibility—really get him going. But then again, tea tends to taste better after brewing for a few minutes. Perhaps Justin was teasing me, drawing out the wait until I broke down and begged for more. Yes, that was it. That was what he was doing. Well then, if that was the case, I would play his game.

"'You mean we outsourced the chipotle ranch from someone else? That's no big deal. Mark told me the bosses used to drive all the way to Chicago to pick up the right brand of hotdogs.' Justin shook his head.

"He said, 'No, no. It's bigger than that.' I crossed my arms to look unimpressed, though I was starting to buzz on the inside. To think that the legendary chipotle ranch changed over time? I could hardly fathom it.

"'Then where would we collect chipotle ranch from?' I asked, making my eyes flash in annoyance. Justin side eyed me, probably wondering if I was trustworthy enough to learn this valuable secret. Yes, I was almost there. Finally, he cracked. He glanced around with hesitation before turning to me.

"'When the owners opened up shop in Oxford forty or so years ago, they kept having this leak in the basement. It came from the ground in the back next to the freezer. Every time it rained, it got worse. It turns out that leak came from a massive reservoir of *natural chipotle ranch*. Pure as gold. They hired someone to dig down and install a well.' My eyes widened, and I couldn't contain my awe.

"'Well, what happened to it?' I said, racking my brain for any memory of a patched hole or piece of rusty machinery in the basement. Justin leaned back and sighed with a twinge of regret.

"'Dried up, I'm sure,' he said. 'The stuff was so popular, they ran out in five years.' I shook my head. It was a shame. It was a damn shame. I wondered what it tasted like, pure and unfiltered. 'I bet it was magical,' Justin echoed my thoughts. I muttered my agreement, lost in an experience I would never have. I mourned, for I would never be able to recreate the original chipotle ranch sensation.

"'Y'know,' he said, returning my attention to the present. 'That reservoir was pretty close to Bagel & Deli. Sometimes I hear the bosses talk about Bagel's owner; he's always complaining about a sticky leak he just can't get rid of in the basement. I wonder if he'll ever figure it out.'

"Suddenly, I couldn't take it anymore. I erupted, tearing away the shirt from my chest and revealing a bright blue one beneath. The Grateful Dead bear on my sternum grinned wickedly at Justin as his eyes transformed from surprise to betrayal to anger. I took out the everything bagel I had crammed in my back pocket for good luck and chucked it at Justin.

"'BAGEL ALWAYS FINDS THE HOLE!' I roared as he gestured rudely to me. Cackling, I made a beeline for the door. Gary would be pleased with the news. Yes, he would be very pleased indeed.'

Benny shakes his head bitterly. You ask him what's wrong. He got the chipotle ranch secret he wanted, right? Benny bursts into tears, and you're taken aback. He tells you that the well was a farce! A ruse meant to protect the secret recipe and make any Bagel & Deli moles look stupid. You look at Benny with pity and stay a while to comfort him. But after forty-five minutes, you wish to keep exploring Oxford. You buy him an order of mac and cheese bites as a parting gift. You thank him for sharing his story, but he can't hear you over the sound of his sobbing. You leave him there with his head in his hands and cross the street.

You walk between two pillars and find yourself on a diagonal sidewalk. You spot a large building with multiple stories to your right and want to check it out, but to your left is a building with a bunch of robots on wheels going in and out of it. As you near both of them, you see that the multi-level building is called King Library, and the building with the robots is called Bell Tower.

To check out King Library, turn to page 121.

To explore Bell Tower, turn to page 173.

You're so curious about the robots, you head toward Bell Tower. The six-wheeled robots are white with orange stickers on the sides and an orange antenna sticking straight up. As you approach the building, the sea of robots gets thicker, and it's hard to walk. Each time you get in the way of a robot, it beeps at you, pivots, and shoots to the side to get around you. But every time it moves, you move out of the instinct to get out of its path and end up an obstacle again. You have a hoard of robots screaming at you now, and you're getting frustrated. You just want to see the building.

Out of spite, you kick one of the robots out of your way. The hunk of metal is pretty heavy, but you still manage to send it toppling to its side. The thing lets out a screech, and suddenly the surrounding robots swarm you. Their antennas bob back and forth as they tilt to stand on their back wheels, trying to climb you. One of the robots zooms at full speed into the back of your knees and brings you to the ground. The others take the opportunity to run over your fingers with their wheels, the cameras-for-eyes staring at you with calculated coldness. One of them rams into your head as you try to pry your hands from beneath the robots' weight. You go down, falling limp on the concrete sidewalk. The last thing you hear is angry beeping that you're sure is the robot version of cursing.

The End.

You die in the robot uprising.
Go back and make another choice.

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Nicholas Bermudez is a Professional Writing and Creative Writing double major. In addition to his undergraduate degree, he is pursuing a career in law. His favorite dessert is chocolate chip cookies, and his dream vacation is Milos, Greece.

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Letha Blair is a Professional Writing major with minors in Fashion and English Literature. Their plans after graduation are to take a gap year before attending graduate school for English Literature. A fun fact about them is that they are named after their great-great grandmother who was accused of witchcraft.

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Becca Blanco is a third-year Professional Writing, Creative Writing, and Spanish triple major at Miami University. She spends her free time reading, writing, hiking, rewatching *Star Wars*, and filling the walls of Sesquicentennial Chapel with her a cappella group's many arrangements. In the future, she hopes to find a fulfilling job in the field of editing.

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Caleb Chun (he/him) is a senior undergraduate student at Miami University, majoring in Professional Writing and History with a minor in Anthropology. He is interested in East Asian history and translated Asian historical sources. A fun fact about him is that he has no idea what he's going to do with his life.

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Mikayla Clinger (she/they) is a current English Literature student at Miami University. She adores reading and writing just about every genre from neoclassical fantasy to dystopian horror. When not writing, Mikayla enjoys singing, talking with their family, exercising, and being out with their friends and partner.

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Sophia DeVillez is a junior at Miami University double majoring in Creative Writing and Professional Writing as well as triple minoring in Arts Management, Entrepreneurship, and Literature.

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Alaina Fitch is a senior Creative Writing and Professional Writing double major with a minor in Communication Design. After graduation, she plans to work in book publishing and develop a career as an editor. Outside of her academics and work, Alaina is an avid hiker, weight lifter, writer, and fine artist with an affinity for all things to do with nature and God.

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Kai Green is a senior Professional Writing major with double minors in Creative Writing and Business Management. In their free time, Kai is one of the Co-Editors-in-Chief for Happy Captive Magazine and a member of Phi Chi Theta, a business fraternity. They enjoy hiking in the woods, rock climbing, and writing fantasy fiction short stories. After graduation, Kai is moving to California to pursue a career in Sales Management with PepsiCo. A fun fact about them is that they have a cat named Lumi. She's a menace to society.

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Emma Henderson is a student at Miami University. She is studying Linguistics and Professional Writing with minors in Creative Writing and English Literature. After college, she hopes to edit fiction books.

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Annabel Howe is a third-year student majoring in Literature with a minor in Rhetoric/Writing. She is on staff with Happy Captive Magazine, and a member of the Phi Nu chapter of Sigma Tau Delta. After graduating, Annabel hopes to pursue a career in publishing to share her love of reading and storytelling. Outside of academics, she enjoys bullet journaling, drinking coffee, and spending time with friends.

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Cassell Presnell is a junior at Miami University with a Creative Writing and Psychology double major and a minor in Rhetoric/Writing. She writes fiction and poetry, and loves all things fantasy, backstage theater, and true crime. After a 2026 graduation, Cassell hopes to pursue law school in her home state of South Carolina.

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Kathryn Keeley is a senior student studying Anthropology and Professional Writing. After graduation, she plans to spend her summer studying primate vocalizations in the Amazon Rainforest. In her free time, she is a member of the Miami University Equestrian Team, enjoys spending time in nature, and listening to music. Her favorite flavor of ice cream is Moose Tracks.

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Liz Stevens is a second-year student at Miami University with majors in Creative Writing, Professional Writing, and Spanish. She loves all things language, communication, writing, and anything that allows her to be creative.

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Olivia Voelker is a junior at Miami studying Creative Writing and Professional Writing with minors in Political Science and Spanish. When outside of class, she enjoys reading, listening to music, and spending time with friends. Her guilty pleasure is watching reality TV and yelling at the people on screen as if they care what she has to say.

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Aslynn Wetzel is a third-year Professional Writing and Creative Writing double major at Miami University. After graduation, she would like to pursue a career in marketing or graphic design. When she isn't staying up too late watching Korean dramas on Netflix, Aslynn enjoys doing everything crafty, from embroidery to book binding.

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YOU AWAKE IN A CORNFIELD WITH NO MEMORIES...

You've found yourself in Oxford, Ohio, a place of bricks, ghosts, forests, and more. You're not quite sure how you got here. You might be a student, a visitor, or someone else entirely. But one thing is for sure: you don't remember. But don't worry—Oxford has a place for everyone, even you.

So, where will you begin?
If you walk into the cornfield, turn to page 10.
If you sneak into the ice arena, turn to page 109.
If you block the path of the Grubhub robots after everyone told you not to, well... you've been warned.
What happens next is up to you.

You'll encounter the stories and voices of Oxford. Some will be folded into footnotes, memories hidden in libraries, and secrets whispered through loudspeakers. Some paths loop. Some vanish. Some lead to truth.
Will you find answers?
Will you make it out?
Or will you fail?
There's only one way to find out.