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ARTIFACTS

A Journal of Undergraduate Writing

Shitshow

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Jessica is a sophomore Journalism student from Kansas City, MO. She wrote *Shitshow* as an in-class write for her English 1000 class and decided to submit it. *Shitshow* refers to the highs and lows of Jessica's first year at Mizzou.

What. A. Shitshow. I think to myself upon reading our final prompt. If I were to write any other paper, it would follow a strict narrative. My writing would be planned, organized, and methodical. It would have a beginning, middle, and end—all good things come in threes, right? Well if that's the case, maybe that explains why my time at college has seemed so foreign—nothing has been coming in threes. No, it comes in infinities multiplied by other larger infinities. Papers don't just come at you at convenient times, they come the weekend your boyfriend is coming and the weekend you were supposed to accompany that friend to that place and it's also the same weekend you got high for the first time. The same weekend your best friend tells you she was roofied in a fraternity. That's also the same weekend mom and dad come to town so you better put on a happy face.

In college I am floating in outer space free of gravity. You see college is this ‘amazing’ place where we all get to be ‘ourselves’. We float through the classrooms and the parties free of gravity. Free of our parents’ nagging and free of that old stupid suburb we once loved as children. And like a child, I am free of responsibility again. (Apparently.) Apparently it’s so easy to make friends here because we are all in the same boat. Apparently not everything they tell you about college is completely true. What I can tell you is that college really is one of the most insane, intense, laugh until you cry times you could ever experience in your lifetime. It’s not all good, but it’s not all bad either.

I began this college thing at Missouri State University last semester. Growing up a Kansas City girl with a Jayhawk family I detested anything Mizzou. I had never really given much thought as to why I hated it, Dad and Uncle Matt just told me to. I first visited Missouri State in February of 2014 and I decided to attend that same day. After being rejected by Colorado College and Washington U in St. Louis, I felt like Missouri State was just fine enough for me. Never mind that walking on campus made me feel homeless like an old soul moving through a transient town. However, I made several friends there. I was a double major: environmental plant science—horticulture and French. What a combination right? Wrong. I thought that if I could try to force myself into the sciences I would fit the stereotype that everyone was looking at me to be. Everyone said that I was a “genius”, but none of them recognized that I was an artist. Throughout high school I was praised for my grades and know-how, but people seemed to overlook my position in the theatre. I was the lead in several of our school’s successful musicals—I even received a Blue Star nomination for one of them. But no one ever thought theatre was “cool” so I decided it better that I reject that part of myself. Agriculture school here I come! On my first day of agriculture school I walked into a large lecture hall filled to the brim with cowboy boot-wearing, rhinestone worshipping, cattle herding country gals and guys. I was the only one from a major city and I was the only one with absolutely no experience on a farm. Don’t get me wrong, I love being outside and since I was a child I cultivated a love for plants and growing them.

Unfortunately, that did not make me special in this crowd. Weeks went by before I made a friend in the agriculture school. I was literally known as “Blondie” or “Goldilocks” everywhere I went and I had no one to turn to when I needed help in a class. This was until I realized one small girl sitting at the front of the classroom one day. Her name was Rym and she was about to give a presentation. “Students, we have a foreign exchange student in our class now. She is from Tunisia. Her name is Rym.” The students clapped and I watched her presentation in wonder as the small-towners seemed confused and maybe even a little offended that there was a Muslim woman in our classroom. After class I approached her and immediately struck up a conversation in French (her second language after Arabic.) Before I knew it, Rym and I were in class together every day; our dorms were even next to one another! We started helping each other with compositions in French and English—I would help her in English and she would help me develop my French skills. It was from this partnership that she made me realize what a *good* writer I really am.

Honestly I wish the story of how I got to Mizzou as a journalism major could be a little more poetic than it actually is, but I can’t rewrite history. To tell you the truth, I woke up on October 16th, 2014 and I knew I had to leave Missouri State. I knew I had to be a journalist. I knew I had to come to Mizzou. It was in a literal instant that I became Missouri’s biggest fan and to my surprise my parents were right on board. I finished up with finals at Missouri State, held my roommate (and one of my high school best

friends) as we said our sad goodbyes, and packed all my things in my car. I applied one day before Mizzou's Spring 2015 deadline and I received news of my direct admission to the J School shortly after. My mother, being the giving goddess that she is, scoured the web for parking spaces, apartments, and all arrangements I would need to be most successful here at Missouri. In no time she hooked me up at Brookside Downtown with some Chi Omegas, and I fit right in. My parking spot is one block away from my apartment and I have everything I need right here at Mizzou. I was ready to start my second semester of college and begin my new life.

I have been here for three months. *Three months*. In that time I have established myself in multiple social circles, I have formed meaningful relationships with multiple professors, and I have truly grown into the person my skin was made to enclose. I have cried tears of joy and I have cried in the shower. (By the way, if you are ever feeling extremely alone and don't want anyone else to know you are crying, cry in the shower. That's college.) I have made mistakes—huge ones. And I have made a difference—a huger one. I have engaged in meaningful discussions about race, gender, poverty, and homelessness. I have listened to some of the smartest people I have ever met lecture me in front of a classroom every other day. I have been given the opportunity to get a degree from the most prestigious J School in the world. Most importantly, I have had the time of my life. I do not intend to live my life wishing I were back in college, but I do not intend to take my time here for granted. College is like floating in outer space—free to be yourself, free to cut the strings, and free to take initiative in your own life to be the person you were always destined to be: You.

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About *Artifacts*

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