

Final House Minutes of the Year  
Friends, Hitchcockers, students, lend me your ears;  
I come to bury House meetings, not to praise them.

On Thursday the last meeting for this year was held. Mike Spence stepped down after fifteen tireless weeks of public service and four tireless years of public bitching. He said one final goodbye to all of us in the dorm and then threw himself in botany pond. Amanda is said to have cried. Minnesota was rendered speechless. Mitch—the former resident soon to be known as Poor Man’s Singer from the B-52s—was left wondering what had happened to the dorm. Others were left wondering “Who is that guy with the glasses? Does he live in Section 5?” Christian pledged to fill Mike’s shoes as House movie presenter. If he lives up to his promise we will have “bad movies” every Sunday next year.

Since then, reading period and the eat and run have flown by. The show on the Hitchcock quad appears to have gone well. Rumor has it that it that the success of a feminist fashion show has inspired the Hillel to have a pig roast on our Quad. A bake sale run by the economics club to help the disadvantaged has been planned as well, but it may interfere with the math club’s bachelor auction. I suggest that you all keep your eyes peeled.

A not too true tale from the not too distant future...

The dorm gathered at the edge of the river Styx, waiting to be ferried into the Underworld. Some began to panic as the boat drew near and they realized they had no coin underneath their tongue to pay for their passage. Fortunately a quick House vote approved funding for up to the first ten students who wished to be ferried across and all was good. Only Erik was left without fare for the boat. Charon, the ferryman, was not sympathetic. “Is there any reason why I should let you in and not all of the others without coins who I make use the paupers’ entrance?”

Erik laughed.

“What are you laughing at, mortal?”

“Ya, well, um, in Freiburg...”

“I know the German expression you are about to use and it will do you no good.”

Rob Walsh cried out from on the boat. “Damn Gina!” Charon looked around to see how this Gina girl got on board. Erik then snuck on himself.

The ferry left the shore. Someone felt the need to hum “I’m Sailing Away” in a Cartman voice. In a surprising display of dorm unity, we all threw him overboard. We were paired off at our seats and had trouble talking when “What classes are you going to take?” and “What are you doing this summer?” couldn’t be used as icebreakers. It felt like the bus ride on some weird house trip: first years talked to first years, second years to second years, third years to no one. Oddly enough, Diem Vo was there.

The fourth year John Whitehead talked to Mike Monroe. “Take a look! All of those years studying and we are finally here! Hades! We are about to enter an Underworld that is just the way the great writers imagined it.”

Mike looked over. “Yes. I bet Ned is regretting those Classics major jokes he made in the Minutes. Do you think knowing about the Bolzano-Weierstrass theorem is helping him much right now? I was willing to major in Classics many times if the things I read about the Underworld were true, since especially spending time there would be wondrous: whenever I happen to meet Hesiod or Ovid, or anyone else of the ancients who wrote about this place, I will compare my experiences with theirs.”

The boat beached on the other side of the river and Cerberus barked and snapped at us. The Underworld lay before us. Fish saw so many old people to laugh at and/or emulate that he nearly died a second time from pure joy. The Furies tried to give Laura Schechter some shit but they backed off when she threatened to become ghetto. Sick of Stairmasters, a group of girls ran off to find the bench that Hercules had pulled Theseus off of. Legend had it that generations of Athenians owed their lean thighs to Theseus leaving some meat behind on that seat and these girls hoped it would work for them, too. Mike Spence struck up a conversation with Sisyphus in order to tell him the true meaning of misery.

A powerful figure approached James Seward and company. “I don’t think we’re in Section 4 anymore.”

“No you are not. You are in my realm. I am Hades, the King of the Underworld.”

“I’m afraid that this is not quite the reception we were expecting in the afterlife.”

Eric Stortz offered. “We always thought of the afterlife of a wondrous time. We would be basking in the Lord’s warm glow and be reunited with family members. We could meet

those great men we have heard about our entire lives and play Mafia with St. Thomas Aquinas. Instead we are left in a cold, grim place with nothing to do but spend time with the people in our dorm and play Dungeons and Dragons with Aquinas Hobor.”

“Trust me, I have seen more unpleasant receptions.” Persephone, Queen of the Underworld, said. “But there is little that you guys can do.”

“There is little yo’ momma can do.” Dan called out.

“My momma made sure that I can spend half of the year in the world of light and the living. You all should learn to accept your fate, eat a few pomegranate seeds and live with us down here.” Dan was surprised, pleasantly so. From these humble beginnings a friendship was born. The Section 4 guys would spend many hours with Persephone. Persephone became born-again, even though she wasn’t really born that way the first time around. She even began to joke around with Hades, saying things about his mama, the Titaness Rhea. Hades, not amused, never said booya back.

For my part, I am kneeling before the River Lethe, the river of forgetfulness, and looking at all the friends I had made. One takes a sip of this river before they enter the Underworld and forgets the living world. I know that I will see these friends later, after I have drank, but it will never be the same. This year changed us all, including my own naive self. I came here thinking that I was some cross between Good Will Hunting and Mr. Darcy, ready for the brilliance and goodness trapped beneath my misunderstood and smart-assy exterior to be found. It never occurred to me that a comparison with the mind of Cliff Claven and the attitude of Jerry Seinfeld might be closer to the truth. I said that I was cynical and implied that I was a sophisticated New Yorker whose self-referential humor was too hip for people in the Midwest; people who I said couldn’t even understand sarcasm. I was content to poke fun at other people and project what were really my own foibles onto them. I may have seemed bitter, exasperated or confused at times. Perhaps I was. But as I take a sip of the forgetful River Lethe, something occurs to me: the only reason I couldn’t sleep was that I was having too much fun with all of you while I was awake.