

Folly at Yale:
The Art of Foolishness at the University (Sneak Peak)
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We had just finished kissing the baby doll and were getting ready to heed the monkey's advice.

This followed a long journey through campus—silent, serpentine marches to dorm rooms; an elaborate game of follow the leader militant in intensity but Seussical in movement; loud and rhythmic chanting; an encounter with a wolfman; christenings with bottled water; and sacrifices of Anne's Mac and Cheese. The initiators wore matching jumpsuits. The initiates wore matching graphic tees.

We sat in a circle in Hewitt Quadrangle. To our left was the Beinecke Rare Books and Manuscripts Library, a tome to some of the most influential political, religious, literary, and philosophical works of all time, including two Gutenberg Bibles, original Shakespearean tomes, and ancient papyrus scrolls. To our right was Woolsey Hall, where generations of brilliant and distinguished students and future leaders received their first-year convocations and senior baccalaureates.

In the middle: 13 of the biggest fools I've ever met.

Velcro, as we knew her throughout the night's ritual, put away the toys and looked up at us: "And with that, the crazy shit can end!"

Screams erupted. People clapped. Woodchip banged on the ground.

I (Camelot) was now officially a member of Just Add Water (JAW), Yale's best (and only) musical improv comedy group.

What I remember most about that day was not the pomp and circumstance of the initiation or feeling proud of my audition that landed me a spot in this group or even kissing the baby doll. What I remember most was something that Velcro said to us that night as we sat there under the New Haven stars in this new place that would be my home for the next four years.

She said, "In a place as scary and serious as Yale, where you can easily get caught up in the stresses of classes and academia, it's so important to have a space like JAW, where twice a week we can come together, not take ourselves too seriously, just act like a bunch of idiots."

As the semesters passed by, I found that this maxim held true for almost all aspects of my Yale career. In many ways, I learned the most during my time at Yale not in a classroom or from a book, but in foolishness. And I had a sneaking suspicion that this may be the case for others, too.