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AN ODE TO THE KAIMIN OFFICE

Andrea Halland

ON THE second floor of Don Anderson Hall, you are greeted by a neon sign at the door. As you enter, there is an old seafoam couch with intensely soft cushions blackened by years of

newspaper ink—at least, it helps to think that’s what it is. You are also greeted by a tall, green, human-like cutout with three antennae and large, far apart eyes. It has crab hands and holds a pointed spear. It is unknown where this cutout comes from.

Aside from the old couch and the odd green man, the room looks as any newsroom should. Down its center are cubicles of four, now accommodated with green Purell handsanitizer, for pandemic purposes. At each cubicle is a monitor and keyboard. Sprinkled within them are journalism students. Some working on homework, others reporting, others editing.

In the center is a set of four cubicles with a box on top. A box meant to hold the pages of a newspaper for the copy editors to mark up with fresh commas and capitalizations, names spelled correctly, and quotes punctuated properly. The box has a handwritten “copy cats” sign on it, with a doodle of a cat’s head with whiskers and pointed ears.

This is where I found my happy place on campus. Hired by a curly-haired redhead part way through the semester to help with the copyediting load. This is where I used my favorite purple pen to mark up the first page of news I had the privilege to read before publication. To which I had a duty to refine every detail to make the writer look better than they actually are.

This is where I now sit—with one red, hard-cushioned, wooden-armed chair (being used properly) and a green one directly in front of it (being used as a footrest). It is the most productive seat I have ever sat in. It is here that I spend hours working on homework, furiously typing essays, articles and assignments on my rose gold MacBook Air. Headphones and a cloth face mask frame my face, currently mandatory because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The room is filled with the sound of interviews and typing and scribbling. The distant murmur of a photography class wafts in from the hallway. Photographs line the wall above the multimedia editor’s desk.

In the back of the room, there are tall, wide windows letting in natural light for the students who spend far too much time here. The design team’s desks are back there, another cubicle set of four. Behind them is another couch, less worn than the one in the front. A reporter sits on a cushion that envelopes him as he works on his most recent sports article.

It smells of paper and ink, of a room full of hard work and occasional tears

and tuna from the features editor's lunch. The room is filled with inside jokes and laughter and friendships that were forged in frantic late night design tweaks, headline changes, fact checking, and whole-hearted work to get the paper done on time for printing.

This room, this second home, named after a student whose life was taken much too soon, is where I find my peace, my motivation. I did not know the T. Anthony Pollner Newsroom existed until last fall. I did not know the importance it would hold in my life, the time I would spend here. Editing the paper, attending meetings, eating lunch, doing homework.

My favorite doors to walk through on campus, the ones that are always open, have "Montana Kaimin" in black Times New Roman font stickered to their glass windows.

The last time I walk through these doors, I will surely be accompanied by tears.