Yes. So far, I had no lead. No clues. No ultimate solution to this seemingly supernatural mystery. But I was not going to give up. As mentioned before, my entire investigation was inspired by a TV show. Particularly, a Ukrainian scripted reality concerning a team of private investigators debunking supernatural events. Just like me, the team often seemed to have hit dead ends, and was struggling with deadlines on whom even a human life could depend. So in that difficult moment, I asked myself: What would the protagonist do now? And my own brain gave me the answer: Instead of coming up with theories I could not prove, I had to start eliminating theories. Since I had no witnesses of the events, I could now officially dismiss the rumors about Sophie More’s wanderings through the building as campus legends, fueled by possible cases of optical pareidolia. The ghostly happenings in the Mildred Dunnock Theatre were most likely a combination of pareidolia and electrical problems. The Brashear/Fernandez case was still to be investigated. The same went to the group of students being trapped by the archive door. But what I had to focus on solving now is the totally mysterious 2-year disappearance of Sophie More. To ultimately figure this out, I decided to revisit the Alumni/ae House. I arrived and waited for a while, since there seemed to be no one there. Finally, two women came to my assistance. The testimonies of both did not make any sense after what I had previously heard. They claimed, in one voice, that during the time period indicated by Hannah Dowling, the doll remained in her case the entire time. They swore that they had seen the doll at least several times, and when I made one of them, Jenna, listen to Ms. Dowling’s recorded testimony, she was really surprised at her colleague’s words. I was confused. Who was telling the truth? And for what reason the other wasn’t? I requested to once again speak to Hannah Dowling, and the staff told me that she had just completed her work in the Alumni/ae House and moved on with her life. Disappointed, I left once again. But this time with a plan: Find Hannah Dowling’s personal email, and interview her again, this time paying special attention to her every word.

My next stop was, once again, the Blackbox theatre. I had to find evidence that would finally prove my electrical disturbance theory. All of the previous times I had come to the theatre to find someone to speak to, everyone seemed to be absent, mostly due to Sabbatical. However, this time, I was directed to a lady with whom I had failed to speak the last time. Ms. Rebecca Free, Associate Professor in Theatre, welcomed me politely, and listened to my request with patience. And then, she told me what I had hoped to hear from someone through the whole timespan of my investigation. The night before my visit, Mildred Dunnock’s ghost, had struck again. Ms. Free shared with me that the previous evening, her, her colleagues, and several students, were completing some work in the building. At first, everything was fine, and nothing pointed to what was about to happen. Suddenly, lightbulbs on opposite sides of the theatre began flickering. They did so for a time long enough to stir concern, and stopped only when one of those present yelled “Millie, stop!”. Intrigued, I began asking Ms. Free about all the details and history of the electrical disturbances. And some really interesting facts were revealed. She indicated that fifteen years ago, the problem used to be much more severe. Lights would go out, or flicker, much more often. That prompted the college administration to change the entire electrical system in the theatre, and the problem was reduced by a great degree. But if Mildred Dunnock really haunts the theatre, why would she reduce her pranks to such a great degree? The answer was obvious: Most probably, there wasn’t a ghost. But Rebecca Free indicated that even though the problem was reduced, electrical problems still occurred, including ones with the sound system. I explained to her that rather than being found in the college-installed electrical system, the problem could be found within the outlets themselves. I also explained that in the case of a circuit overload, devices called “circuit breakers” enter the scene. Circuit breakers are a type of mechanism that prevents an electrical circuit from excessive damage, by shutting it down completely. Though that wouldn’t explain the flickering lights, what my new witness told me next certainly did. She said that, due to convenience, lights in the theatre are kept on during the day as well. Immediately, it became apparent that such an operation requires too much pressure on the system, and, like the eyes of an exhausted human, the lights sometimes struggle to stay on. That made sense. Not only was it more interesting to blame it all on a ghost, it was also much cheaper, in the case that the college ever had to change the system again. To test this theory, I requested her to show me the lights that had fallen victims to the ghost the previous night. Though I took some pictures just in case, the situation was apparent from where I was. They were four lightbulbs on the top four corners of the room. There was nothing unusual on their exterior, which worked in support of my theory about the outlet problem, which would not have been noticed by any of the maintenance personnel. But as I was looking around for more clues, my glance fell onto a wire on the opposite wall. The same wire I had seen during my first visit to the theatre. As I mentioned before, its position had seemed very strange to me: It started somewhere inside the booth overlooking the area, went through a somehow narrow opening in the wall, and got lost from sight by going into the floor. To prevent it from dangling freely, it had been stuck to the wall with tape. When I asked Ms. Free about the purpose of the wire, she told me that it was part of the sound system, which she had previously indicated as having a tendency to malfunction. I couldn’t believe what I had just heard. Everything made sense. The opening in the wall was too narrow for the wire to fit. It did fit, but with the sides of the wall pressing on it. The pressure most probably causes interruption of the signal that goes through the wire, resulting in its failure to reach the sound equipment, causing malfunctions that are subsequently blamed on the ghost of Mildred Dunnock. There was only one thing to solve now: What was to blame for the things being knocked over and the doors mysteriously shutting in the theatre? I received the answer to that pretty quickly, as Rebecca Free indicated that due to wild imagination, and being affected by the rumors, the theatre cast and crew had a tendency of blaming every single mishap happening to them, on Millie. Even a strange smell in the theatre was once attributed to Dunnock, and everything seemed to be exaggerated. Extremely satisfied with finally getting somewhere, I thanked Ms. Free, and promised to keep her informed. Another woman had also suggested that I speak with the new theatre technician, whose email was given to me shortly, and I happily accepted the offer. At this point, however, I was certain: The mystery of the Blackbox Theatre has been solved.

Next stops on my journey were the basement of Julia Rogers, and Gamble 314. I had to finally get my lead tests. As mentioned before, they both turned out to be negative, and I did not get any new information from my visit to Gamble, besides the fact that a student named Jack now lived in 314. His door was open, but no one was there, and I didn’t get a chance to examine the room, as entering without permission would have been a privacy breech.

The night after my visit to Julia Rogers for the lead tests was spent putting all of my clues together and writing this paper. My deadline was the exact next day, and I prayed to God that I could finish it. But despite my efforts, I did not make it. I had focused so much on the actual investigation, that I now had no time of describing it to my audience. Furthermore, there are very few things I had managed to actually figure out. I still had no way to explain Sophie More’s disappearance, and the mysterious door that had trapped students in the archives during a haunted tour. I was disappointed. Perhaps I had taken on too much. Perhaps my paper would be a report full of guesses rather than actual results. Perhaps I had thought too much of myself and considered myself the hero I am not. The next morning, I desperately tried to put a conclusion, but despite my most sincere efforts, I submitted my work (18 pages at the time) in mid-paragraph. I was about to let it go, and congratulate myself of having had an amazing adventure, when my professor, Mr. David Zurawik, whom I consider “chief” of my investigation said, that I could continue writing this piece for the entire semester, with the continuation being considered my second assignment, or, if I wanted, I could move on to another topic entirely. I, of course, stuck with the first option. And that same day, the debunking of Goucher College’s paranormal stories, was officially back on.

To get all conspiracy theories out of the way, I revisited the Alumni/ae House, and asked Ms. Satterfield’s permission to take a detailed look at the finance books I had seen earlier. I wanted to make sure the drama department, or any other department for that matter, hadn’t had any financial shortcomings over the years, which would drive someone to pulling off little supernatural tricks to boost Goucher’s reputation. But again, two hours of careful examination brought me to nothing, as the books contained only finance information about individual students. However, as Ms. Free had told me, the crowds in the theatre didn’t get any bigger following the alleged paranormal phenomena. But some of them still continued. This, along with the fact that some of those phenomena would drive students and faculty away instead of attracting them, indicated that no publicity stunts were involved. This theory was therefore rejected. After several more days of unfruitful research, I decided to revisit Gamble, in order to see if I could get a second chance to inspect Room 314. I had no idea what kinds of unsettling surprises I had signed myself up for. Climbing the stairs with the help of a maintenance worker, I headed straight for the mystery room. This time, the room was locked, and I still couldn’t get in. However, my eye caught something quite surprising. On my first visit, the sign on the door said “Jack”. Now, however, it wasn’t there, and a completely different sign near the door said “Lilian and Dev”, the names of my two witnesses. I was confused. Jack had moved? They had changed rooms? How, in a week or two, did they all manage to collect their things, change their location, clean everything up, and set their new things in? Okay, perhaps it impresses me because I am a slow mover myself. But why would the two girls want to move back into the room that had terrified them so much? While I was wondering all this, something else caught my attention. A student named Antonio had a sign on his door. A sign that wasn’t present on any of the others. It was shaped like a little ghost, and on it, with black letters, was written the phrase “We’ve been booed”. Was this a way of designating the rooms in whom supernatural activity had occurred? I couldn’t tell for sure, but all signs pointed to yes. Even so, I was amazed at my bad luck. Most of the rooms were locked, and students were attending classes. But even so, I did get a chance to collect more witness testimonies. Testimonies that completely changed the game.

Junior Katherine Shane claimed she once saw someone trying to open the door of her room in Mary Fischer, but did not see any shadows or feet in the small opening underneath. She also reported hearing strange noises, and even what sounded like a slam on her desk without anyone being in the room with her, and with nothing falling off. Other things she experienced included a bottle being knocked over by an unknown force, even though the windows in her room were closed, and wind wasn’t getting in. However, as Ms. Shane herself admits, there might have still been a current entering from some other opening.

Maintenance worker Lorelei Everly was next on my list of witnesses. Having had many paranormal experiences in the past, she relatively calmly explained some really unsettling events. She claimed that in the early 2000’s, when she was working in Julia Rogers, she heard mysterious voices that seemed to be coming out of thin air. This was accompanied by shadowy silhouettes. Then, as recently as two years prior to my investigation, she was vacuuming the floor of the Academic Center for Excellence, and the strangest feeling came over her:

“…all I felt was something up standing behind me. I turned the vacuum off, I turned around, there was…no one there.”

Strangely, she was the second person to tell me about feeling a presence in the building. The other was one of my early witnesses, maintenance worker Tom Gill. Earlier, I could ascribe his testimony to some hidden individual medical condition. But two people who are not possibly related, are very unlikely to suffer from the same thing. Furthermore, unlike Mr. Gill, Ms. Everly used the phrase “felt a body up against me” to describe her experience. This would mean that what she felt was some form of physical pressure on herself. In order to try and rid my witnesses of a terrifying experience, I decided to dig into the potential psychological causes for what people call “ghostly presences”.

In the article *Feeling of a Presence, is There Someone Here with Us?,* published on the website *Exploring Your Mind*, the feeling of someone else being present in an empty room is described as being common among humans, and is said to have been recreated in a revolutionary experiment. A whole 48 people who volunteered for the procedure were allowed to actually experience feeling someone around them. This was done by blindfolding the participants, and allowing them to operate a robot with their hands. At the exact same time, a second robot behind them was repeating their exact movements(*Exploring Your Mind*). As long as the second robot kept copying them, they did not report any unusual feelings. But as soon as it started moving in its own way, the volunteers claimed a ghost was in the room. Some of them even requested that the experiment be terminated, as the feeling of fear was overcoming them. Scanning the brains of 12 people who had had the feeling before, revealed that the parts of the brain affected by the experiment were those associated with spatial positioning of the body, physical movement, and self-awareness. This confirmed the theory that the movements of the robot changed the function of the brain. Thus, what likely happened to both Ms. Everly and Mr. Gill, was that their brain failed to correctly identify the position of their own body, identifying it as belonging to someone else. Thus, a second manifestation of our own body is created by our own brain when a perceivable or non-perceivable neurological disturbance occurs within. The article mentions that “This presence performs the same movements as the individual and maintains the same position.” (*Exploring Your Mind*). This sounds like the exact feeling described by Ms. Everly, with any physical pressure possibly explained as a sensory illusion fueled by the fear and surprise of the experience. It also states that the people who believe in ghosts and spirits are likely to immediately perceive this neuronal disturbance as being one. Ms. Everly has described herself as a woman who believes in spirits after having had many previous experiences, and, being an Orthodox Christian, I share her position. But my research into the topic has suggested that what both her and Mr. Gill experienced was, at least this time, not a ghost.

And so, I had practically solved three of my multiple cases: The Mildred Dunnock theatre was “haunted” by circuit problems. Brashear and Fernandez most likely experienced pareidolia, and the invisible people reported by FMS workers were examples of neuronal anomaly. But there was still something that didn’t fit in. What about the ghostly voices and shadowy figures reported by Lorelei Everly? I had to set out looking for answers once again.