Hi first year. What's up. How's your dorm? How do you like grounds? Have you been to the corner yet? Do you like your roommate? I'm sorry that this is life right now. If it makes you feel any better, I'm watching my fourth and final year fly by from the confines of my twelve by thirteen-foot room. Shit sucks, but you already knew that, so let me tell you about some stuff that doesn't suck.

Trin burgers on Thursdays. That deal is sick and all second year my friends and I would meet up around 5, split some pitchers, grab some burgers, and get a little too tipsy for our 7pm discussions.

Gamedays. Football season is hype regardless of our team, and on Saturdays in the fall everyone's dressed up and drinking, walking around on the corner with friends, frats are popping off playing Led Zeppelin and Rainbow Kitten Surprise, the sun's out, you're hungover from Coupes last night and life is good.

Halloween. Goddamn I love Halloween here. Local kids trick or treat on the lawn during the day and by nighttime the corner is full of hilarious group costumes, everyone is in a great mood, you can light some Trader Joe's pumpkin candles and the weekend goes on forever.

Foxfield. If you ever find yourself here, you better be eating canes, wearing something fun, and sipping champagne. Getting a third-degree sunburn from lying face down in a field is character building at its best.

Breweries. The most fun I've had at this school was spent 30 minutes away from it, playing cards and drinking ciders with my best friends. Or keep it local, like we sometimes did, get the breakfast pizza at Crozet and cross your fingers that they don't run out of champagne for the \$15 mimosa pitchers.

Because I'm feeling sentimental, I also want to include somethings I didn't realize I'd miss. I miss lecture halls. I miss walking into a huge room with 200 kids, searching for a seat and climbing over everyone to get to it, feeling like everyone was staring at me the whole time. I miss going to the libraries and the comradery of grinding out work with Greenberry's coffee in your hand. I miss Mem gym. I miss that stupid old building and it's dingy feel, working out in the dusty basement and avoiding eye contact with the frat guys. I miss walking to frats, legs freezing in a skirt, adjusting my wristband and worrying about the line at the door. I miss arguing with the Boylan bouncers about an alleged crease in my ID. I even miss office hours, knocking on a professor's door and feeling awkward sitting at their desk, looking around at all of their little knick-knacks and bookshelves to get a better idea of who they are. I miss feeling like grounds were too big. I miss running into people I didn't want to see on the way to class. I miss eating shit Newcomb food and spending \$20 at Five Guys in the Pav.

But hey, don't be sad. You, too will experience the awkwardness of office hours. You will walk all around Clem trying to find a seat not next to a boy you hooked up with or an awkward semi-acquaintance from high school. You will get your ID creased. You will get burgers with your friends at Trin. You will dance drunk in some yard wearing UVA colors on a Saturday afternoon. You will come up with the perfect Halloween costume. You will spend way too much money on a Foxfield ticket and get sunburnt. You will try the Crozet breakfast pizza. Or maybe you won't do any of these things. You'll find your own favorite restaurants and you'll make your own traditions and soon enough you'll be as washed up as me, writing to some first year about them. I know it's easy to sit in that tiny dorm on that twin bed and think about all the stuff you can't do and the stuff you'll never get back. But I'm writing this because I want you to start thinking about the things that one day you will be able to do. You'll have more than enough time

to fit it all in, trust me. Even if four years from now you didn't get to everything in the precious time you have here, I promise what you did will have been enough. Being in this incredible place full of laughter, love, color and light will have been enough. Being a student at the University of Virginia will have been enough.

College is dope. You can blackout with all your friends on a Wednesday at 2pm and no one can tell you shit. You can stay up until the sun rises taking bong rips and blasting SoundCloud remixes. You can go camping, run away to the mountains for a little, and streak the lawn. You can debate philosophy and physics, learn more about yourself that you ever though you could, and bake a cake at 3am. It's also hard. Fuck, it's hard. It can be lonely. You can drown in work and question how you even got into this insane institution where everyone seems to be smarter than you. If you're not careful you can start to eat terribly, feel guilty about never working out, and compare yourself to all your friends. You can feel left out and miss the comfort of your hometown. You can feel like you're not having the time of your life. There is no right way to spend your time here. There is no straight path to maximizing your experience, no rulebook to follow. Nothing is certain. You might wind up in your parent's house in a month, I know. But you still have 3+ more years here and they can't take that away from you. So, for right now, lay low. Focus on meeting your hallmates and figuring out how to do well in your classes. Take care of yourself, little first year. Mentally, physically, emotionally. But, at the same time, challenge yourself. Try to do stuff that scares you. Leave your door open. Walk up and down the halls and comment on people's wall art. Show your RA some relatable tiktoks. Strike up a conversation with a stranger daily. Befriend the dining hall staff. Take risks and be yourself, even when it feels scary. It took me four years to finally feel confident here and with myself, but I bet you can do it sooner. Keep me in the back of your mind. Throughout your time here I want you to

imagine yourself writing this same letter to a first year, telling them what your time here was like. What would you want that letter to say?