I was raised in one of those deep-south cities, where words like sorority, fraternity, rush and squeal are steeped thick into our vernacular. Growing up, I couldn’t have defined them for you, nor could I decipher the foreign language with which the clubs were labeled, but I knew it had to be a big deal. After all, despite my little-girl pleas, Dad would never let me in on his secret fraternity handshake, though it’s not like I would have told anybody.

But those letters started to un-muddle as I entered high school. Some girls seem bred for this kind of system, which became evident as the Greek whispers began our junior year. Word of squeal-worthy successes and horror-stories drifted back to the city social scene as our friends went off to huge southern state schools. Before summer began, the Greek alumnæ in Montgomery had ensured that I had plenty of letters of recommendation sent to Samford.

By the time I arrived on the fifth floor of Lena Vail Davis Hall, my best friends had already conquered Rush and pledged a sorority at Auburn and Alabama. They promised a fun experience, but admitted that Rush lived up to its whirlwind name. I had to wait three more weeks to be pushed out of my nest, but our newly formed bonds were strong enough for my friends and I to withstand Samford’s Rush. I was ready to exchange a hug when I passed Creek upperclassmen I knew; stifling a “hey” and ducking our smiling faces was getting old.

So halfway through September, we shuffled into Reid Chapel and soaked up Panhellenic’s advice and instruction as they prefaced the upcoming weekend, right down to the outfits we should select. We were divided into groups of about fifteen girls, “Rho Gams,” they were called, each complete with a leader whose Greek affiliation was to remain a mystery. The group served as a microcosm of the Rush system, as each girl in my Rho Gam group was a little different from the next. We ranged from sporty to glamorous, but we were looking for similar qualities: lasting friendship, Christ-centered relationships, role models, and obviously, opportunities for fun.

After wiggling through a day of classes, we pulled on Panhellenic issued t-shirts and curled/straightened our hair for Day 1: Philanthropy Day. I stood with my girls in Rho Gam Group #12, queued outside the first house on Sorority row. Suddenly, fists began banging on widows and grinning faces emerged in the windows around the door as sisters proudly shouted out their letters. After the initial shock, all the rushers took a collective deep breath and hustled inside the house to run our mouths with strangers for a quarter hour. We attended all five houses over two days, embracing a plethora of songs and videos while we learned about each sorority’s selected philanthropy. We had multiple one-on-one conversations as the sisters “rushed” us. I was loving every minute; how would I ever pick one if each house seemed loaded with cute girls that treated me like a celebrity? But the second day my heart fell into a certain house, this one had to be my fit. I just hoped they didn’t think the massive smile stuck across my face the whole time was weird.

Day 3 approached, and crossing our fingers that this list would match our own rankings, we were handed slips of paper with the houses that wanted us back. Crestfallen faces were scattered amidst the beams other girls wore, but as a group, we were ready to tread on though Rush. This was Theme Day, and our crisp sundresses whisked into houses as we learned more about sisterhood. Overnight, the houses had transformed, each looking like a room I had never stepped foot in before. Lights, candles, and chiffon-swaged ceilings created whimsical and inviting atmospheres. It was a challenge to remember that the decorations were temporary, and the conversations needed to be the true selling factor. By now, I was sold on “my” sorority, I had found the fun, Godly group of girls that I wanted to learn to become. The other houses I visited were amazing, but I couldn’t help where my heart had already fallen. Once more, we ranked the sororities...

Monday meant that Pref Day had finally arrived! We pranced over to West Campus in our classiest of dresses, anxiously eager to discover the one or two houses that wanted more of us. I was happy to be asked back to my top two, but I knew that so much hinged on this important night. The sororities held a solemn attitude tonight; they would be showing us what it really meant to become one of them. The rushers were excited, apprehensive, bleary-eyed, and exhausted. As I set foot into my desired house that night, I couldn’t have been more at peace. Everything felt right, and the tears running down my face only meant that I had found what I wanted. The other house also had stunning decorations and sweet girls, but every girl told me over and over, “Go with your heart.” As I filled out my final rankings that night, I couldn’t understand why some rushers seemed torn because I was so in love with my top choice.

My Rho Gam stopped me the next day to tell me that I had indeed received a bid, but it could have been from either of the two houses I “prefed.” Nerves ran rampant among all...
were relieved to finally enter Bashinsky Fieldhouse at dusk. The gym was already stocked with people: sorority girls in color-coordinated groups on the floor were chanting, our parents along the sides with digital cameras ready, and guys leaning over the elevated track railing attempting to grasp this crazy ritual or maybe just to laugh.

The members of Rho Gam Group #12 and I restlessly sat on our bid cards until we would be allowed to rip through the envelope. Finally, the countdown began and my fingers received an extra dose of adrenaline. Three...two...ONE! I slashed through the envelope and jerked out the card. I'm not quite sure if my scream came when I saw my name, the azure blue and white crest, or the name of my number one choice, but I now understand why it is called Squeal Day. As I ran over with my new pledge sisters and was showered with hugs from the sisters, I knew that this choice was perfect.

I have to tip my hat to girls that survive rush at state schools; if five houses drained me, I would hate to see what sixteen could do. Samford's Rush was quite an experience. The bonds we developed were uniquely formed under bizarre circumstances. But perhaps that is why Rush is such a big deal down here; Southerners always have been associated with quirks and eccentricity. So I proudly flaunt my Greek letters, and finally I have my own secret handshake that I can't show to Dad.