QUICK INTRODUCTION

This book is different from your typical photo editing manual in that it acknowledges the promise that exists in every photo. No image cannot be salvaged. Hopefully the raw images you are shooting aren’t THAT dreadful, but even if they are, this guidebook will give you the essential knowledge you need to turn them into masterpieces.

There is a 4-step-process that I recommend all photographers go through for every photo they edit (which should be all of them). The first step is just the basics of editing: adjusting brightness and contrast, boosting color, bending the curves, rearranging layers, shadows, highlights, masques, etcetera. You know the drill. The second step is one that most editing manuals don’t acknowledge: experimentation. The photo can literally be whatever you want it to be. Try moving around bits of the image, erasing parts of it, throwing in parts of another image, there are no limits. The last step varies depending on the photo. It is for the photographer to determine. What is groundbreaking about this formula is its flexibility; it morphs to fit the exact needs of each individual photo!

My editing is based around the theory that most photos are missing something before they have been edited. This book will take you through 5 images that are lacking in some way and give you an idea of what you can add to an image to perfect it!

Happy editing!

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Thank goodness for shameless self-promotion.
LESSON ONE

Here is a fairly generic image of Scripps College’s Bowling Green lawn in the late afternoon. Let’s start with step one: make it a bit brighter and enhance the colors, etc. Lovely.

So now it’s moderately more aesthetically appealing, but still not particularly interesting.
Onto the infinitely more fun step two. It seems as though it would be better with either more people or no people. The current number just seems a little random. Come on guys, please either leave or bring your friends. I’m going to go with the more people option. I’m a people person.

That’s way more exciting! The number of people added is entirely up to personal preference. So now let’s crop it for better framing and maybe make it a teensy bit brighter! Yeah!
Scripps’s Bowling Green now looks like a bustling hub of activity! Way to go! Who wouldn’t want to hang out there? Probably introverts. But that’s not us.
The marvelous Balch Hall at night! Although we are here to make it even more marvelous. It’s an okay enough photo, but nothing about it really stands out.

Tips and tricks: A good thing to think about before starting to edit is what are the best/most notable aspects of your photo, and then about what needs a little help. In this image, for example, the moon adds a nice, eerie touch to the nighttime shot, but we could definitely make it a little more noticeable. Keep this in mind.
Firstly just your average brightness + contrast fixes. Let’s also crop it a little to better frame the trees and building. How nice.

It’s already looking a bit better, but not quite perfect. Something could be added to give it more of a pop, make it stand out. Why don’t we focus on the moon. It’s a little blown out, let’s touch it up. While we’re at it, might as well make it full! Much more impressive.
You know what I love? Full lunar eclipses! How about if we make the moon a nice glowy red? Oh yes. Aren’t you just all about step two?? Me too.

Now it seems a little bit out of place, since the clouds are white from the glow from the white moon, so let’s add a sort of reddish tone to the clouds around it.
The rest of the image should also be a nice glowy red.

¡Vunderbar! Now all that’s left is to give the entire image a little boost, and we’re done! Maybe make it a teensy bit more contrasty and make the lights glow some more. Sahweet.
Some might consider this taking a few liberties with the original image, but I mean, look how much better it looks!!
Lesson Three

This is Denison Library. Scripps is quite proud of its charming little collection, but to be honest it looks a little dull from the front. Also it was a dreary day so the colors are also pretty dull.

Whatever to do.

Tips and tricks: Some images might be nice enough, and generally pleasant to look at, but you would likely forget them immediately after viewing. With such images, experimentation is key. What could be added to make it memorable? Give it some flair?
Hmm so we’ve done step one, but making it a little brighter and warmer only does so much. It’s a better image aesthetically, but not particularly more engaging.

Also, I think the sign is rather unnecessary. Something could definitely still be done though. Ready, set, brainstorm!
Uhhh...PAINT!
Woah sometimes experimenting works much to your benefit, try erasing parts of the image, throwing in bits of another image, etc. The results may amaze and inspire.

Spice it up a bit and we’re done! Whooo.
See what a difference throwing in a little extra can make? This initially uninspiring photo has become extraordinary. Let’s all go study there now.
Here is a panorama of Gabrielle Jungels-Winkler (GJW) and Kimberly residence halls flanking the Tiernan Field House.

It is generally acknowledged by the student population that GJW on the left is the most luxurious dorm, and Kimbo (what the locals call Kimberly) on the right the least so. How interesting. Let’s hold on to that little tidbit.

Uping brightness and contrast, blah blah you know the drill.

Tips and tricks: think about what are the most notable aspects of the image you are working about and how you could potentially use them to their greatest advantage, maybe to help take away from the less interesting parts.
Still on step one. The photo was taken on a rather dreary day (not unlike the Denison Library photo), so let’s make it a bit warmer. Hooray for yellow tones.

Enhance those colors. We’re working with a nice color palette here, check out those grass-greens and brick-reds and off-whites.
Onto step two. So we’ve determined that the much more attractive dorm on the left is what we want to focus on. The less attractive one on the right we could do without, so let’s do without it! Just turn it into the dorm on the left. Perfect. Symmetry is generally acknowledged as highly aesthetically appealing.

The thing about symmetry is that it can look a little too perfect and not entirely realistic. So let’s change the right side a bit: make it brighter, make that side on less of a slant. Eeeexcellent.
Wow. Just wow. Scripps really does have an incredible living situation. Check out those beautiful dorms. That architecture.
LESSON FIVE

Basic shot of the Scripps pool. Not particularly thrilling. Much better shots have been taken of it. Let’s back up the perspective a little to get a better look.

Tips and tricks: Think outside the box. Don’t think about what is immediately in frame, but maybe about what is just outside the frame. What could we bring in that is just lurking beyond the edges of the image?
Okay so now we can see some of the columns. Those definitely add a new feel to the photo.

Hmm it could be improved even more though if the sides were stretched out a little to show more of the columns and balcony.
Now to make it brighter.

The walls feel constricting. Better knock those down. Also it would be cooler as an infinity pool. Check. It. Out!

Great, now there’s a better view of Mount Baldy in the background. All that’s left is to enhance the reflection of the mountains in the pool!
Hey, you! Come to Scripps!

Not convinced? How about now??