

# COUGAR TALES:

## The Ultimate BYU Board Game

A new board game transports BYU alumni back to campus in minutes—with the help of a map and a few dozen stories.

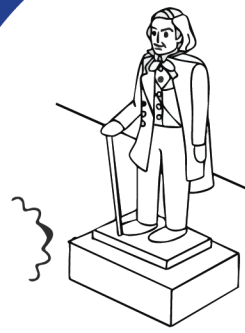
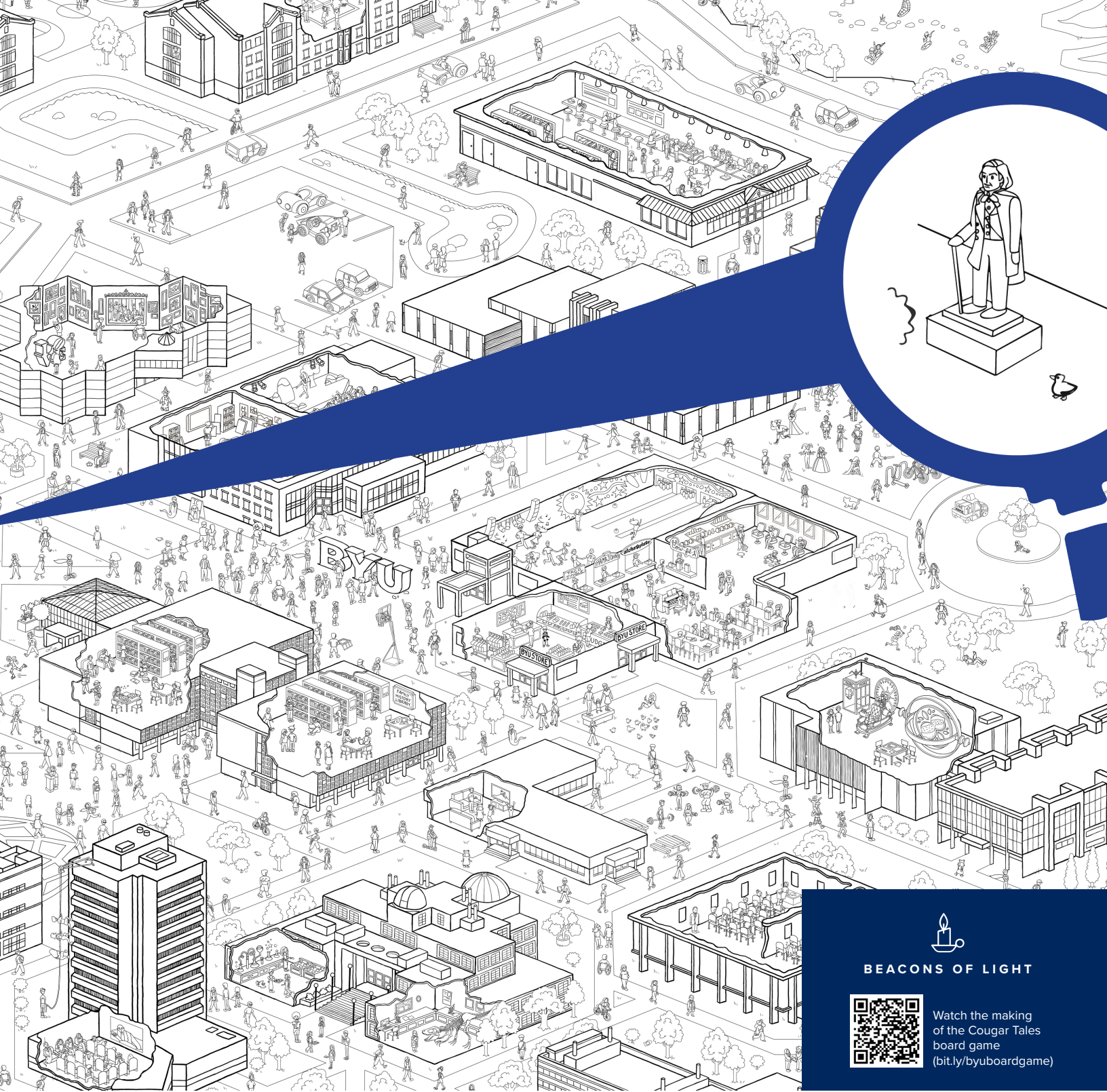
by Emma Mafi (Microbiology '25)

Illustration by Brian Croxall, Michael Call, Auria Dunford, and Melissa Nielson

**N**othing fights off gameday nerves better than a CougarTail; with one of these foot-long maple bars in hand, no game seems too daunting. This courtside concession was the only cougar tail on the market until Associate Professor Brian Croxall (Digital Humanities, Literary Studies) and Professor Michael Call (17th-Century French Art and Literature) created a board game to transport alumni back to their favorite moments at BYU: And it is called *Cougar Tales*. They believe their new game can evoke nostalgia

and school pride in students and alumni, not with a sugar rush but through the power of stories.

Croxall and Call started the project in 2023 with a team of students who created and wrote stories about life at BYU. The group then created a detailed map of campus for players to explore using a myriad of vibrant fictional tales. “It’s not a traditional board game,” Call explains. “Think of *Where’s Waldo*—an activity where you spot things happening. In this case, you spot stories that are playing out all over campus.”



BEACONS OF LIGHT



Watch the making of the Cougar Tales board game  
[bit.ly/byuboardgame](http://bit.ly/byuboardgame)

These stories represent students’ core BYU memories and highlight transformational college experiences, and the professors say their student team played a large role in identifying and reviving the moments that would resonate with players the most.

Undergrads working on this project helped in every aspect of the product’s development: Some helped brainstorm and write stories, and others dreamed up the game map. “Not only was it an opportunity to hone my technical art skills and confidence in what I do,” says

Melissa Nielson (Animation ’26), a student who helped with the board game’s design, but “it was also a great opportunity to learn how to be a leader, a follower, a contributor, and a partner.”

By the end of the project, the team had created more than a board game—they had encapsulated dozens of memories and experiences packed into four years at BYU. “Anytime I open that [Cougar Tales] map, and I show it to people, their faces light up as they recognize campus,” Croxall says. “That makes [all the work] worth it.”