

William Li  
Delbarton Valedictorian Speech  
June 6th, 2021

Hello parents, teachers, and the Class of 2021. My name is Will Li, but most of you know me as Sir Squilliam. Before I start, I just want to say how much of an honor it is to speak to you all today. There's a lot of pressure up here on the podium, so just remember, if the speech stinks, blame Mr. Pillette, he's taught me English for 3 years.

I knew I was special from a young age. I learned to read before the other kids, I could move objects with my mind, sometimes I could even talk to snakes. So, you can understand my surprise when my acceptance owl for the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry never came. Tired of waiting, I did the next best thing and applied to Pingry where I was rejected, Newark Academy where I was waitlisted, and so I finally settled on Delbarton School.

Although I haven't grown much taller since 7th grade, my non-physical, personal, spiritual growth over the past 6 years has made me confident that **Delbarton was by far the best fit for me...** but I'm still upset about Hogwarts.

You see, here at Delbarton, instead of flowing wizard robes, we wore itchy khakis. Instead of Albus Dumbledore, we had Mr. Bitler. And, instead of chocolate frogs and butter beer, we got *SAGE Chicken*. But, through my ordinary time here at this non-Wizarding school, I've discovered some of the most magical experiences a muggle like me could ask for.

Entering Delbarton for the first time, we in the class of 2021 were spellbound by the rolling hills, the Whomping Willow, and the mighty castle that is Old Main— this campus seemed ripped out from the pages of a picturesque fairy tale. While we didn't have classes in jinxes, charms, and potions, Ms. Mainardi taught us how to cast chemical spells with beakers, Ms. Servilio taught us how to enchant the canvas with a paint brush, and Mr. Pillette, Mr. Pillette taught us how to start every sentence with "Here," "In this way," "In this example." Here, at Delbarton, we have a fantastical world like the one in Harry Potter, but I'd much rather watch Nico Nardone break backs or Gary Lewis eviscerate ankles, than a game where a bunch of nerds ride around on broomsticks.

But to paraphrase President Zebo, what makes Delbarton great isn't the classes, or the campus, or the "walls that surround us," but the brotherhood and the people here. The truest magic comes from the common moments we shared: the 4:30 "Caf" runs, the side conversations during Morning Meeting, the late nights playing Minecraft instead of writing the history year long. It's these mundane banalities that bring the most joy and feel the most magical in retrospect. Sometimes life feels like a dementor draining your spirit, but in my darkest nights, I knew I could count on a mental health check from Ms. Keller, a Tom Stauder meme from the senior group chat, and a smile in the hallways from a brother.

For that I want to thank each and every one of you: from my BTBs who get dinner with me every Friday, to the kids I've talked to once in freshman year. Thank you for the Zoom bombs and study guides. Thank you for the spike ball and beach trips. Thank you, especially to Thomas Fischer for camping outside my house at 6am for senior assassins. Together, we all gave Delbarton its magic and breathed life into a spell that even the dark plague of COVID could not break. Coming to Delbarton was the first time I felt like I could be myself and belong somewhere.

But, Class of 2021, no spell can last forever. I'd pay anything to rewind the time turner on our 4 years here-- well I guess anything less than 40k— but I'm afraid it's too late. We will soon enter the adult world where doing taxes is more important than knowing the mitochondria is the powerhouse of the cell. So, as we head off to bigger and brighter, and as 80% of you go on into investment banking like the Slytherins you are, I implore you to make those small magical moments we've created together for your adult selves. Cary these memories with you wherever you go, and recast the spell from time to time. Even when the road ahead is bumpier than the drive up from Lower Pond, you have a band of brothers

here who will build you back up when you're cut down. As Albus Dumbledore once said "Happiness can be found, even in the darkest of times, if one only remembers to turn on the light."

Declan Traynor showed us there is real magic in this world for those who seek it out. Don't let the flames of youth be snuffed out by the "trenches of adult existence." Don't live for retirement and for the grand moments, and miss out on the magic of the ordinary. They say life is a marathon not a sprint, but I'm confused why we are even rushing to the finish line— stop and smell the flowers. Even if you fulfil none of your dreams, what matters is that you enjoy the day-to-day journey. And for my final cliché, I leave you with: sometimes the real treasure, the real magic isn't beating Voldemort, but the friends and memories we made along the way.

Class of 2021, I love you. Let's do some magical things. Green Wave 'till I Die.