

## **Sophia Larney's address to her co-years at the Graduation Dinner – May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2014**

If there's one thing no one knows at UWC, it's how time works. And that's pretty annoying because, as IB students, we really like knowing things. We like being able to have this idea or concept and know exactly what it means, why it happens, and what the result of it is. I mean, we have to. Trust me, I've been in Istvan's math classes, and not knowing, not understanding is terrifying. So when it comes to time, we like to know. We like to count, we like to measure. We have our calendars, our agendas, pencilling in where we need to go, what we need to do, who we need to see.

So how? How can three months to finish a final EE draft go by so quickly, or one 70 minute class can go by so slowly? How can two years feel like two weeks?

If I asked you to think back to when you first arrived, when the bus came over teacher's hill and you saw the lights laid out below you for the first time, it's not so hard to remember. The moment of silence as everyone gasped in excitement, the overwhelming noise of the second years attacking the bus, pounding at the doors. Then absolute chaos – stepping out into a sea of people, hearing someone shouting your name over and over again, a stranger dragging you by the arm, talking way too quickly, and then being bombarded with so many introductions, realizing after about the fifth one that saying sorry, one more time was not going to make their name any easier to pronounce. So you just smiled and nodded like yeah, I am definitely not freaking out right now.

And it doesn't seem like so long ago, does it? And that's a little scary, and a little sad and really crazy. And you have to ask how time manages to make two years just disappear.

But then if I asked you again, to think back to everything that happened, everything you did, every person you talked to or hugged or kissed, every party, every class you went to, every class you skipped, every time you laughed, every rule you broke, every random adventure; it's impossible. It seems like we've been here forever. And maybe we didn't learn how time works, but, over these two seemingly short years, we have learnt a lot of other things

And I don't mean learning about logarithms.

I mean learning that Alistair can relate almost everything back to vultures, learning that there is always time for study breaks, especially if it's in the form of an epic dance party. I mean learning that the fjord looks best when it's completely still, and even better when you're looking at it upside down between your legs. I mean learning that you will never really be sure when Johnny's joking and that it's best to just take one banana.

I mean learning to love. Learning to love your roommates, for the way they put up with all your weird habits, for the way they wake you up in the morning when it's 10 to 8 and you're still asleep, and especially for the way they sing in the shower. I mean learning to love Saturdays, for sleeping in, for half price candy in Flekke, and for being the one day that you can procrastinate without feeling guilty because, hey, you've still got Sunday. I mean, regardless of how many weird looks you got when you told people back home you were coming to school here, learning to love Norway, for all the brown cheese and takk for matens and even for those ridiculously nationalistic Norwegians.

I mean learning that your country doesn't have much to do with your heart, that love is universal and that laughter sounds exactly the same whether it's in Nepali or Danish or Chinese.

And yeah, maybe I mean learning how to say "I miss you" in too many languages, but learning how to say "I love you" in so many more.

See, in two years a lot can change, and if you actually take a moment to look back, you realize that somewhere between teacher's beach and the island this strange place in the middle of nowhere became home.

It's a little funny though, there's not really one specific point where you're like, ah yeah, this is home now. It's just a series of moments where you are so wonderfully happy that you can't imagine yourself anywhere else. I seem to get those moments whenever the sun comes out. I mean, living in a place where it constantly seems to be raining, it's easy to forget that there is a sun way way way above all those clouds. So on the days that you actually get to see it, everything is infinitely more beautiful. And, even better are the sunsets. I always get those moments when the sun sets. When you're sitting studying in a classroom and you look up, and you could've missed it, but for those few minutes before it disappears behind the mountains, the sky is on fire, and everything, everything is magic.

I think what I'm trying to say is that we can try to keep track, try to schedule every detail of our lives perfectly, but things rarely work out the way we think they will. Because time is a crazy thing. And we try to measure, try to control it, try to tell ourselves that we are the ones who decide just how quickly it passes. But I guess maybe there are some things we don't get to understand. Moments will always become memories, goodbyes will always have to be said, and time will continue to rush by changing things we don't necessarily want to be changed.

So stop counting days on a calendar, stop counting hours you have left. Stop counting. Stop worrying. Stop stressing about time going by too quickly. Because this whole graduation thing is a bit like a Norwegian sunset. You were just sitting studying, and all of a sudden you look up, and it's almost gone. But if you've noticed here, even hours after the sun has disappeared, the sky's not completely dark, the sun never really completely sets. And I like that, that reminder, that the sun isn't gone, it just moves to next part of the world, days don't really end, they just go start somewhere else.

We, this, here, it'll never really, set, it'll never be completely dark, and everything you love, everything you feel, it won't end, it'll just go start somewhere else.

In one particularly boring biology class, no offense Jelena, we were all either asleep or almost asleep and Jelena was giving one of her famous "*peopplee, this is revisionnn, you should know this by now*" speeches that any biology student will be much too familiar with. And at some point she realizes that none of us are paying attention so she pauses. And if you've spoken to Jelena, you'll know that when she pauses to think it's usually to either tell us a story or make an inappropriate joke. But instead she said something that really stuck with me, and I'm going to end with it today. She said "*Look, this IB stuff? It doesn't matter, in a year you forget it. What you've got to do here is fall in love. You've got to love each other.*"

And I think I can safely say, and I'm sure Jelena would agree, that we have loved, we do love, and we will continue to love the hell out of each other wherever we end up. Because no matter who I meet, you are the only ones who know what it was like to live in this crazy, brilliant, frustrating, beautiful bubble we call RCN. And no amount of time will change that.

To sunsets and sunrises, to surviving the IB, and to us.

Congratulations.



The last Biology Class...



Sophia Larney