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Subject: Graduation Speech for the Class of 2005

Insofar as it does not stimulate me, I have been unfulfilled by high school. The *people, they* have stimulated me; the learning, that has stimulated me; but high school... not even for a second. It does not stimulate me because it is not *for* me. It seems like every task a high school student has to complete is proof of something to someone other than that student. Very little of high school life is really *for* a student. We slave away for 4—in my case 5—years in the dark hoping that we've learned something—hoping that we've adhered to the guessing games of what each teacher wants from us and rarely ever successfully receives. At the end of the day, if not careful, each student runs the risk of having nothing to show for themselves but a piece of paper, and if we're lucky, we get the bigger stamp, or the shinier sticker, or more papers than the guy next to us. But I know that there's more to it than that. I *know* that there *has* to be a reason—a purpose—for high school, and I deeply hope it's not just to graduate. I *really* hope it's not just to graduate, because I know—I think I know—that we've all gotten more than *just* a piece of paper out of Freemont. And so this is really why I deliver a speech to you all tonight; because this speech is proof to me, and no one else, that I am actually finishing the first societal stage of my life, not just to have finished it, but to have walked away from it, having learned something. And please don't let anyone tell you that high school is nothing compared to the "real world" (whatever that means)—and it may very well be nothing compared to the "real world". I haven't seen the "real world", and I assume it's harder, but relevant to my own experiences, high school was *not* a walk in the park. For the first time in my life I am proving, not to my teachers or to my parents, but to myself, that I may have learned something, and by standing up here tonight I present you with my very first final exam. And no high school assignment can justify that like this will.

Now, apparently I was supposed to have broken the ice with a joke. But, to be honest, I don't feel much like laughing. And, though, I suppose I could be Borgesian if it be necessary to crack a joke (no one understands his humor but Sean anyways), but I won't. I will admit that tonight is a proud and jovial event, and as much as I fear what days may come, I know that I should smile; we should all smile; and I know that when this night is over, regardless of how hesitant we all may be to see it pass, every graduating student will be smiling, if only for ourselves. And at the end of the day, in the greater scheme of things, the only person you have to prove yourselves to is you.

So, if you all don't mind hearing a little boy tell you a few things he's learned, I'd like very much to share them with you. I can't guarantee that they'll work for you, or that you'll agree with them, but at least hear me out.

The first thing is to keep your minds active, always. Never let your brain slack off, never fill it with garbage that isn't going to benefit you in some way or another, never retract from something because it's not as entertaining as you'd like it be, and with everything you do, question whether or not it'll make you a better person.

The second thing is to find something in this world that brings you immense joy and satisfaction. Once you have identified it, invest your entire life into reflecting your thoughts, emotions, and perceptions of your realities through it. Then build it up to be your strongest and most significant characteristic, and share it with the world. And on a side note, there's no point having a belief if you keep it to yourself. Let others disagree. But at least give them the opportunity to do that.

And the third thing is to help as many people (and animals) along the way as you can. And never forget how lucky you all really are. None of us here tonight are starving.

So, with that being said, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank a few people, because I would be doing myself a disservice not to let them know how I feel.

Firstly, I'd like to thank every person in this room—even the ones whom I have never met and may go the whole night without making even the smallest amount of eye contact with; you have all, in some way or another, helped shape the people I *do* know, and I am not sorry, even for a second, to have met any member of the Freemont family, even the ones whom I have corralled with and with whom I may never see eye to eye. You are all, whether you like it or not, part of the Freemont Family now. I don't think it's unimaginable to assume that we've all made each other better people, if only—and perhaps more significantly—through our differences. And if you think I'm wrong, we've still got tonight, the whole summer, and the rest of our lives (if we want) to learn something from one another.

The second people I'd like to thank are my parents, who die for me every day so long as I'm the biggest—who have done everything in their power to assure me the best possible education they could afford; and who I promised once, with no real sincerity, mind you, that I would graduate. And... I know that any kid, given the choice between Freemont and military school, wouldn't hesitate for too long while he made up his mind; but even so, you guys found me Freemont. And I owe you both the world for that. From the bottom of my sometimes seemingly ungrateful heart, I thank you. And just to ruin the moment... I'm gonna pick my nose.

And, last, but certainly, unequivocally, not least: The Big Daddy, The Shark, The Master: Mr. Sean Meggeson *il miglior fabbro*—who as far as I am concerned exceeds far, far beyond any expectations of what an educator should be. At a point in my life when people had just about given up on me, you did not. You took a chance; and I know that you're a bit of a gambling man, but I may never know what I did to deserve having someone like you in my life. You have taught me

more things in three years than anyone has taught me, ever. If I lived a thousand years I could still not conceive of an ample way to repay you. You have been my teacher, my mentor, and quite possibly the best friend I have ever had. You are truly a beautiful human being, Sean. And I thank you for everything you have ever done for me.

So. That all being said. I want to wish every Freemont student good luck in the new school year. Just remember to keep your heads above water, and when those little grade nine and ten twerps arrive next year, be as good to them as the seniors were to me, please? Look out for one another. It makes surviving just a little easier.

And to the graduating students: as you climb the ladder of success, just remember that it doesn't always have to be a race, and sometimes it's more important to make sure someone else isn't falling down, than it is to be the first on top. But, other than that, guys, I don't think I have anything left to tell you, other than that I wish you all the very best of luck next year, and every year to come after that. Those of you whom I've grown fond of, you know damn well who you are, and believe me when I tell you that there is a spot in my heart reserved for each and every one of you.

Congratulations class of 2005.

Have a fantastic future.