

## **Miss Hall's School Commencement June 5, 2022**

### **Remarks by Keely O'Gorman '22, Senior Class President**

I am going to be honest. It took me an absurdly long time to write this speech. Part of it was my natural procrastination, worsened by the senioritis that hit harder than expected, but the other truth is that I didn't want to write this speech because it felt like a final goodbye — a goodbye to my friends, beloved teachers, mentors, and Miss Hall's as the wonderful institution it is. I don't think I'm very good at goodbyes, and, honestly, I don't know if I want to be, either.

As I look back on my days at Miss Hall's, I keep returning to why I chose to attend in the first place. My first visit to MHS was actually when I was 4-and-a-half years old. I had recently been adopted from Ethiopia and needed help adjusting to my new life and country. I did not yet speak English, so my mom and aunt, who many of you know as Ms. Daigle, brought me to Miss Hall's to speak with some students from Ethiopia. They helped me communicate with my family and settle in.

A decade later, I was nearing the end of 8th grade and preparing for high school. I also felt a great deal of uncertainty and fear about graduating — like I do now. I knew I wanted to attend a prep school and was deciding between Miss Hall's and another boarding school close by. So, why did I choose MHS? Because, even after all those years, Miss Hall's felt like home. I was immediately in awe of all the students I saw laughing and chatting in the halls. I could see that, like any high school, students were stressed and tired and waiting for the next break, but the overall feeling I remember was happiness. One memory in particular that stands out is a speech I heard by former School President Jayme McGuigan '18 when I came for Accepted Students Day. I saw her standing up on the stage, holding everyone's attention and respect, and I thought "This could be .... This will be me." Eighth grade was not my best year, so when I found comfort and safety at Miss Hall's, that meant the world to me. I was excited, rather than fearful, for my high school journey.

Don't get me wrong, freshman year of high school wasn't the easiest year, either. There were many ups and downs, and I questioned myself constantly. My first year did teach me some important life lessons, though: how to use my voice, how to find community within your peers, and how to speak up even when you feel small. This was only made possible by the fact that Miss Hall's creates an environment of safety and encouragement. I have been so lucky to be supported by the most caring and dedicated faculty and staff. Thank you, all, for being with me through these past four years, for teaching me inside and outside of the classroom, and for encouraging me to be myself and to take up space that I previously thought was reserved for others. Last, but certainly not least, thank you to my lovely advisor, Jennifer Jordan, for your guidance, love, and company these past four years.

This next part, I want to direct to my class. Where do I begin? I am truly so lucky and honored to be here today graduating with all 47 of you. We made it! Forty-eight did, in fact, graduate! Saying that I'm going to miss you all next year is a huge understatement. I'm sure all of you (*the audience*) know already, but the Class of 2022 is pretty remarkable. We have talented artists, musicians, scientists, athletes, and more. You (*my classmates*), have all inspired me to be my best self. Thank you for sharing all your wonderful talents and personalities, for being engaged and listening to all of my announcements, no matter how boring or repetitive, and thank you for arriving at events *mostly* on time. Timeliness is one life skill we've yet to master, but we can't be perfect.

I would also like to spotlight my wonderful class officers who worked with me all year in leading my class: our class Treasurer Hava Methé '22, class Secretary Rebecca Dontje '22, and my one and only Vice President Olivia Kick-Nalepa '22. They, along with our amazing class advisor Kim Boland '94, have taken their time and energy in aiding me in leading the class. They have also kept me on track, given me confidence when I lacked it myself, and managed to understand what I meant, despite my numerous spelling mistakes and occasional inability to speak a cohesive sentence. Again, we can't be perfect.

Over these last couple of days, I have been hearing about how kind our class is. I think that is the best compliment we can receive. It's even more meaningful by the fact that it is 100% true. Each and every one of you are kind and honest people that will go on to your next communities and make them better than when you arrived.

I'm not sure about all of you, but I know that these past few weeks have been a roller coaster of emotions for me. I'm not afraid that the future will be unpleasant, but, rather, that it won't feel like Miss Hall's. And, that's true. No place will, because MHS is unique, and there is no place like it. So, even with all the trepidation I'm feeling about leaving the comfort of Miss Hall's, I am reminded that change doesn't mean worse. If there's one thing I've learned from MHS, it's to NOT fear the different, confusing, or unknown.

With this in mind, I encourage you all to allow yourself to feel your feelings, hug your loved ones, cry, laugh, and embrace the unknown. It's okay to be nervous, or even scared, of your next steps, but never doubt your abilities to adapt and make an impact on your new environment. I will miss all of you next year, but feel secure in the fact that each of you are fully capable and ready for what's to come.

Thank you for being your kind loving selves and for helping to shape me into the person standing in front of you today. I am a better person because of Miss Hall's, and because I am a member of the extraordinary Class of 2022.