Good evening Mr. Tompkins, Mr. Saks, Mom, family, friends and most important, the class of 2014! Today is the end of my fourth school year at The Perkiomen School. Counting my first years living on the third and fourth floors of Kriebel Hall, The Perkiomen School has been my home, since I was born. Some people, who believe in close-knit communities, know the African proverb, “It takes a village to raise a child.” Take some time, and look around the Chapel and know that, thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Dougherty, Mrs. Weir-Smith, Mrs. Barone, Mrs. Scherrer, and Aunt Carla and Uncle Paul Hausmann, in my case, raising me took a school. As a child, I had always hoped that I was going to Perk, and as I entered the building in fifth grade for the first time as a student, I knew that my next four years in the middle school would be great.

From the first day on, I was surrounded by some of the best friends a girl could ever have. My brother and I had built-in companions year round with the so-called “faculty brats”-Duncan, Megan, Cameron, Madeline, Johnnie, Isabel, Dagny, Anthony, and Hannah. Characters in the boarding community like Josh, James, Louie, and Oscar entertained us 24/7. There’s a line in the Alma Mater that says, “Bonds of union, bonds of friendship, bonds of endless love.” I could not agree more. That one line sums up my years at Perk perfectly. From day one, Maggie was there to guide me as she has been my whole life; Katherine and Dorita became my companions ever since fifth grade; and in sixth grade, the infamous Dagny Moll Barone arrived, my “partner in crime” since birth.

Students are not the only ones with whom I have made bonds. All of my teachers have left impressions on me that will last forever. Mr. Hoffmann taught me Latin, my first experience
with a world language. I am becoming, in Mr. Hoffmann’s words, a “Latin scholar”, and I would like him to know that Latin I and II have been a swashbuckling journey for all members of our class. Mr. Hauser taught math class with the same energy and style he puts into theater – singing opera to greet us we walk in the door, donning Elmo hats and wigs when appropriate and, of course, making sure we all understood. Even the infamous chapter eight struggle in seventh grade. Ms. Coons made history interesting, and coached our team in lacrosse with a positive, enthusiastic attitude. Mrs. Sweeney and Mrs. Barone helped make our Reading Olympics a success, blue ribbons both years. Mr. Klavon’s science experiments were pretty intense. Well, when he instructed a bunch of eighth graders to put on goggles, light chemicals on fire, and see how they react, you can bet his class wasn’t be boring!

I think of the faculty as parts of my Perkiomen family, and two members quite literally are my family. My dad and mom are my support and the people who love me. They complete my family ideal of this school. In my father’s family, there is a long tradition of storytelling. My father is famous in the upper school for his epic Perkiomen tales. Both of my parents are English teachers, so bear with me and enjoy a personal story.

An experience during my two week bike tour in Vermont last summer exemplified all my Middle School experience has done for me. The bike tour was the most physically draining challenge I have ever had. The leader, Nakita, had just told us that we were going to ride Terrible Mountain that day. I was sick of the older kids on the trip begrudging the fact that I could not carry a tent or cooler on the back of my bike in addition to the twenty other pounds of gear we had to carry each day. I was much smaller than everyone. I made a promise to myself that no matter what came before me that day, I wouldn’t walk my bike and I wouldn’t let myself stop. “Bring it on!” I was ready to carry a tent, mount my bike and prove myself.
The day was sweltering and a film of sunscreen covered my face, constantly thickening and seeping over my eyelids. I forged up the first few winding hills, not letting myself fall behind. If I went too slowly, I would surely lose control and take a backwards fall. After an interminable hour, the tent and everything else on the back of my bike was getting a ferocious, but silent bashing. When I came upon the next stretch of mountain, I grabbed my water bottle and swigged half of it down without hesitation. I gritted my teeth and forced my protesting legs to move, pedal by pedal.

I finally, finally, made it to the top. I was too exhausted to be glad. I sat on the dusty ground with unfocused eyes. Stephanie, one of the other leaders, looked at me and yelled at David to get me a water bottle. After I gulped the last of my water, I made my way over to the group. Then I heard what they were talking about. Tom, who was only a year older than me shrugged, and declared, “That really wasn’t that hard. I’ve been waiting up here for a while. “Not very hard?” I thought. I listened to the rest of the group murmuring their assent. None of them found the mountain challenging. I was the only one!

The conversation continued, and David asked, “Did you think it was hard, Emma?’ I wanted to say a whole lot of things, but I decided on the truth. “Yes, I did. It was extremely hard, and I didn’t think I could make it. But I did.” That’s what students at Perk do. They do not give up. We are a small tight knit community and everyone has to do his or her part. I realized there was a big difference between the bike tour group, and the Perk students. The Perk students would have cheered me to the top, the same way we ran with Ben Wang around the track in the Great Ziggy challenge. Perk students make things work, and they have fun doing it. Students who go to this school have the potential to do great things. Some people excel in academics, the Fine Arts, or athletics. But there are also other measures of a person’s character this school
completes: integrity, determination, and reaching your full potential. Our field hockey team celebrated the first undefeated season for the middle school girls. Captains Mindi and Maddy pushed us and united us. And Mrs. Bock and Mrs. Edwards never let us give anything less than our best. The first Middle School Musical was packed both nights and we raised over $1,300 dollars in Haiti relief after our performances. The class of 2014 can do almost anything in life. The opportunities are there, and we have the right attitude. Because of our friendships, unity, and drive, I am sure we will be proud of our accomplishments in our next four years at Perk. All we have to do is keep working and supporting each other. Some of us will find what we really love in our next four years at Perk if we have not already. Once we reach our senior year, we’ll be prepared for college, and ready to start the rest of our lives. Dagny will fulfill her dream and become a symphony conductor, Tim will use his acting skills to entertain people, and Jackson and Andy will invent new concepts with technology. Jason, JJ and Paul will someday dance at our reunion to “Again and Again and Again”, making us all laugh and join in on the fun. I hope we all achieve beyond what we have hoped for.

In closing, I’d like to sincerely thank everyone here, whether you’re a student, teacher, friend, or parent. This has been an absolutely amazing one, two, three or four year for us, and many of you sitting out in the audience have made that possible. We will fondly remember the songs we sang in the yurts in Chewonki, the gingerbread party at Beau’s house, and the dance tonight in Schumo. Friends helped each other, teachers engaged us, and parents supported the class of 2014 to grow in every way possible. We’re ready for anything. Good luck to all of the middle school students, especially the next eighth grade class-Brad, Sarah, Dylan, Olivia, Hannah, Alex, Eric, and Miles. You have a lot to look forward to; take advantage of the
opportunities. From this year, we can remember beautiful moments. As Dr. Seuss said, “Don’t cry because it’s over, smile because it happened.” Thank you.