

**Benjamin Tumin '12**  
Senior Class Speaker  
**Pomona College Commencement 2012**  
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I would be remiss and would not have a plane ticket home if I did not wish all of the mothers here a Happy Mother's Day, especially my own. Happy Mother's Day to all of you.

Yesterday Andre gave a great speech that is more than worthy of recognition here. To augment his words, there are a few people I must briefly thank. First, thank you to the dining hall staff and the many other employees of the college for all of the work that you have done on our behalf. I must also thank our professors for their hard work and for putting up with us. I have the honor of sitting next to Professor Samuel Yamashita, who has graciously offered to clean up the drool puddles that will accumulate around me over the next couple minutes. Lastly, I must thank Pomona for being so fantastically rich and allowing students like me to receive an outstanding education without having to pay off many student loans. It is truly a blessing in such difficult economic times.

To be quite honest, I think you guys—my classmates—got it wrong. Andre's speech was far more enlightening than mine will be. But now you're stuck with me, suckas. I can't tell you how tempting it is for me to speak in Dothraki for the next ten minutes.

But the truth is a man has to know his limitations. I do not think it is within my capabilities to deliver some amazing piece of advice to you today. I will leave that to Ambassador Munter who is wishing he were back in Pakistan right about now. I can, however, try to make the rest of the day more enjoyable for the graduating class, or at least for me.

My goal then is to change the tone of our last conversations as graduates, the hardest of which will be with our closest friends. No matter how great our accomplishments, no matter how many times we may have become world champions of the world, today is tinged with sadness. There are many here today we will want to see again soon but may not be able to. There are many here today whom we will never want to see again but will be forced to. I for one will miss some people here more than I can express in these few minutes on stage.

Last conversations—sometimes in common parlance referred to as goodbyes—are strange. What do you say to a hi-buddy from your freshman seminar whom you have not actually spoken to since the first day of school? Do you go with a lengthier version of have a nice day? For instance, have a good couple years. I really hope you enjoy the rest of your life. See you in...a long time. Or is it a confession of sorts? Jenny Heibein you have very long toe nails. Jesse Spafford your white shorts bother me. Megan Forey you smell like cat food. The bottom line is that the sendoffs to these types of relationships are awkward—and I might add, worth playing around with. I think my go to will be: I hope to see you modeling Under-Armor on a billboard in Pakistan sometime soon.

But that awkwardness and uncertainty is not something you have to worry about with your closest friends. Those relationships, like pretty much everything else, do not end today. Many

of us here are guilty of constructing a terrible, fear-inspiring deadline that supposedly arrives in T-minus two hours. But what is going to change about me? Will I suddenly fall out of love with Julia Roberts? Will I begin to hate sleeping and eating? Will I secretly start wishing that Voldemort had lived and Harry had died? I don't think so. Really what happens in a couple hours is like a birthday. Little is going to change: You will still be the same people. So I'm going to start seeing today as a giant, collective birthday for all of us soon to be graduates. Happy birthday, everybody.

I do not mean to belittle the accomplishment of graduating. This is one of our greatest and most important successes in life. Nor do I mean to imply that we have stopped growing, that we have reached a point where we can and will no longer change as people. I am simply saying that at this point in our lives, we should be confident enough in who we are to know that our morals will not waver come tomorrow, and neither will the support from those closest to us.

The fact is that we are ready to leave. Yes, we are (to varying extents) thoroughly educated in the liberal arts, especially the very liberal ones many of us practiced in San Diego. We know how to think, or as David Foster Wallace once said in a similar position, we know what to think about. But the reality is that we can't stay here any longer. Our time is up. Do you want to keep waiting in omelet lines forever? Do you want to receive another invite to a Mahdavi on the Beach party? Do you want Susan Deitz to email you everyday for the rest of your life? For those of you in the crowd doing what I would do and saying—yes, Yes I want all of those things: I want the Pub lifetime achievement award; I want to receive an email from Susan Deitz as I lie on my deathbed—I counter with this... This is not the place for you to leave an impact. This is not the place for you to change the world. This is Claremont—and there is a lot more outside of it.

So as you say goodbye to your closest friends, remember that it is time to do so. But take heart in that fact: For if there is any reason you should be excited to leave today, it is that you have the opportunity to go and do good and make those friends proud. After all, we are the Pomona College Class of 2012 (wassup), and it is time we made a name for ourselves.

Thus I congratulate you today, fellow seniors, not simply on what you have accomplished, but on witnessing the last complete gathering of an amazing group of people who are about to leave a lasting mark on the world. Let's make it happen. Thank you.