

“Anyone Can Graduate” - Michaela Donnelly

Good afternoon, graduates, family, friends, and faculty.

You may think I am coming up here to talk to you all about the intricacies of our four years here but, in reality, I want to compare them to a key movie from our childhood...Ratatouille. Yes, the artistic masterpiece about the rat from Paris who knows how to cook. Now, maybe you have not seen the movie in a while, so let me give you a quick synopsis.

Remy discovered his passion for cooking while reading Chef Gusteau’s “Anyone Can Cook.”

When cooking a bit too close for comfort, he gets swept away from his family when their colony gets exposed. He ends up in the sewers which lead him to the streets of Paris, ironically in front of Chef Gusteau’s restaurant. After adventuring inside he meets Linguini, a kid who just lost his mom and is in dire need of a job. Linguini makes a fool of himself on his first day at the restaurant and practically destroys the kitchen and the food being made. Remy, wanting to show off his culinary skills, fixes Linguini’s mistakes and saves the day. The two bond and figure out Remy can control Linguini by pulling his hair. The two become a dynamic duo in the kitchen until the chefs find out Linguini has been keeping a rodent under his hat. Obviously, there’s more drama and a happy ending, but for now, I think that about covers it

So what does all of this have to do with our four or so years at Marietta? After thinking about it for some time, rather than giving you all life lessons from this movie I have decided to walk through our Marietta timeline and compare it to Remy and Linguini’s. To begin, when you came

here you were leaving what you had always known, what you became accustomed to, your home. Maybe you were like me, someone who was used to and enjoyed being away from home. Or maybe you were like Remy and were split from your family for the first time. Either way, you had to get used to a new way of life, luckily it wasn't in the Paris sewer system. When Remy finally made it out of the murky waters and onto the streets of Paris he was greeted by Chef Gusteau's restaurant, a moment he had always dreamed of. Though it only had a three-star ranking, it was a full five-star experience for Remy. This may have been the same for us. Marietta College is a tiny liberal arts institution in the middle of nowhere. Few know about it but those who do think the world of it. Unlike Remy, when we arrived here on our first day freshman year we probably did not know what to expect. Some of us were ready for that five-star experience, while others were just here to check out what college was like. No matter what, those who stayed chose to push on.

Now it's time for Linguini to enter the story. When he first arrived at Gusteau's he made a complete and utter mess of the place. He dirtied the floors, split ingredients, and most importantly screwed up the soup. This is comparable to that first bad grade, the one that made you question whether or not you were cut out for college. Or it was that first big loss of your college career that made you question why you came here to play your sport. In both of these situations, you felt like you did not know how to make them better. However, it wasn't until that one person came along that you truly felt you had the hang of things. This could have been a teammate, a fraternity brother, or a new friend. This person got you through all of the rough moments of freshman fall semester. They were by your side through your first college heartbreak, when you needed help with homework, and when you went out for lunch on Sunday

to recap your weekend activities. For Linguini, this person was Remy. They became a dynamic duo, just like you and that person from above. Once Linguini was able to remake his special soup, with the assistance of Remy of course, he felt that everything was falling into place. He had a job, a girlfriend, and a best friend that was a rat. For us, this scene marks the end of freshman year. Sure, there were many ups and downs, maybe a few more downs than expected, but we did make it out of that term alive. If we hadn't we wouldn't be sitting right here today.

To get back to the Ratatouille timeline, Remy eventually reunites with his family. He is joyful to be surrounded by comfort again but also fearful of their judgment of his new life. This is probably similar to how we all felt returning home for the first time. Being home felt different and we could not exactly explain why. It was hard to admit that college had changed us. Marietta made us realize that we like being independent, we like making choices for ourselves. Sure it was nice to have good home cooked meals and a comfy bed to sleep in but we all know there was something that we were aching for. The answer: another year at Marietta. I think we can all admit that in retrospect, sophomore and junior years flew by. Before we knew it it was time to face one of our biggest challenges, the senior capstone. For Linguini and Remy this was when Chef Skinner, who used to run Gusteau's, came back into the picture to ruin Linguini's chance at success in front of the famous food critic, Anton Ego. Skinner traps Remy so he is unable to help Linguini and the other chefs walk out on him when he admits a rodent has been helping him cook. While putting together your capstone there were points when you felt like you had no idea what to do. Maybe you even cried, I know I did. It may have felt like everyone else doing theirs knew what to do and you were just left in the dark. Eventually though, following some long

nights, days with multiple caffeinated beverages, and some help from your professors, you were able to push through. You were able to put something on the table that you were proud of.

In the end, Chef Gusteau's was shut down due to a rodent infestation. But that did not stop Remy and Linguini from achieving their dreams. They opened a restaurant where both of them could do what they loved. This shows us that life after college may not be what we expect it to be. Maybe we won't go to our dream graduate school or get an amazing paying job right after we leave here today. Personally, I am more uncertain about my future now than I was when I came here four years ago. But what we all can expect is that our lives will end up just the way they were meant to be. Everything will fall into place. To conclude, I want to leave you with words of wisdom from Remy, "the only thing predictable about life is its unpredictability."

Thank you and congratulations to the class of 2024!