

Graduation Gifts 2009

I had the bone-chilling responsibility of picking out a book for each of you as a graduation gift. If my experience with you in English classes is a reliable guide, half of you will hate your books and the other half will love them. But at least I will never give you a test on them. As you know, in English class this year, thank to Emma's pernicious suggestion, we all wrote silly verses for the seniors. Mrs. Sequeira asked me to read the ones I wrote for each of you.

Carrie — the Sultana of Non Sequiturs, the Satrap of Sensitivity

You had the challenge of entering Caritas with your two older, brilliant and eccentric sisters. Yet you haven't been overshadowed by them. Your thoughtfulness and tenacity have impressed me immensely. We won't even talk about those early history tests, back when you were an eighth grader, but when you earned an A in English for the autumn term this year, that was a triumph that showed your persistence and growth, and that thrilled and delighted me. Here's your verse:

You never know what Carrie might say
in the midst of a class discussion.
For five years she's beguiled me
with a heart too large for even a Russian.
Who could deplore her non-sequiturs,
who could resist her generous grace;
Who could say no to her frequent bathroom
trips when she gives you that piteous face?

Thank you for all the coffees you brought me, Carrie. I think you know that success at Caritas is not measured by grades but by effort, perseverance, and the growth of wisdom. And you are a success. Your book is a French version of an old classic. Félicitations. May you always have friends as good to you as you are to them.

John — the Mikado, the Kaiser of the Kilt

You left us for a while at the beginning of this year, but thank God you came to your senses and came back. I'm glad we got to finish out your high school career together. Your efforts to catch up in Japanese class were inspirational. Here's your verse:

John's the one with the herb-flavored oil,
the guy who carted his grill here to school.
When playing soccer, he's sure to spoil
your shot; his defense is practically cruel.

Who else can make the young women swoon
with just a change of facial hair?
Who rides a scooter and knows how to croon,
or Irish step dances on a chair?

He'll play a butler or penniless beau,
then take you to Cumbies if you're in luck.
He'll kill a hay bale with arrows and bow,
but he's most dangerous when backing up a truck.

Your book is one that inspired me. I hope you enjoy it. As a bohemian, big-hearted guy, I think you'll find it speaks to you. May your empathy and sense of justice lead you to serve God in exciting ways.

Rachel — the Duchess of Diffidence, the Confidante of Canines

You've been so quiet in my classes that I felt a wicked temptation to get you a book on tape that had nothing on it—just 18 hours of silence. But I didn't. Instead, I got you a funny book about animals, because you love animals and because you have a wonderful, hearty laugh. Here's your verse:

Rachel, you weren't in class
so I didn't write a poem for you.
But if I had the time
I'd tell of how your heart is true
—of how you're kind to dogs
and how you help the little Fresh Air girls;
of all your trips abroad
and your gentle forbearance with churls
like me, who tried each day
to accost you and make you smile
your shy but dazzling, happy smile
that turns all who know you into Rachelphiles.

May you find wisdom in your travels, comfort in God and your family, and joy in pets and in people as well.

Andrew — the Pasha of Painting, the Khan of Calm

Your book is one that you'll remember seeing, and it comes with the necessary accoutrements. I hope you'll use it, because you have talent. How much you've grown since you first came to Caritas, part time and hesitant. But while you've grown taller and funnier and better at the whole school thing, your calm equanimity has never left you. Here's your verse:

Andrew's an insouciant child,
With close-cropped hair that's never wild.
Were he in charge and had his way,
He'd wear his Zeppelin T-shirt every day.
He's rarely flustered, never lazy,
But legend says he drove Miss Sneiderman crazy
When he didn't learn his lines in time;
He almost had to do the role in mime.

And yet, he is an actor of such skill
that nubile maidens, watching, get a thrill.
But most of all he's justly famed
for cartoons, paintings—anything that's framed.

May you have a rewarding gap year, always appreciate your dear family, and always pursue art to the glory of God.

Jason — the Sempai of Sensitivity, the Kahuna of Kanji

One of the funniest moments in my 8 years at Caritas came one casual Thursday last year when you and Robert were fighting over his hat in the back seat of my car. As we pulled into a parking place back at school, you (wearing exceedingly long, bell-bottomed jeans) leaped out with the hat, just in time for the back tire to roll over your jeans, leaving you trapped there. I was laughing too hard to move the car. Here's your verse:

The Hirsute Boy from Shrewsbury

Is your acting talent natural?
Were you born to play Tartuffe?
When first you came to Caritas,
Did you pretend to be aloof?
You scandalized the sweet young girls;
The boys with envy saw your beard.
You made a name for sarcasm,
But that's how you were reared.
You throw yourself at football
(sometimes at Molly too);
you've always got some ghetto cap,
as though that's how your head just grew.
You sometimes got the "lazy" rap,
but your nihongo is joozu.
Despite your insecurity,
I'll miss you for all futurity.

Your book is a kooky Japanese novel, because you're a little kooky, and you were a superb Japanese student. May you realize that God and the rest of us really do hold you in high regard and expect wonderful things of you.

Megan — the Duchess of Drawing, the Marchioness of Masterpieces

You're as tough as Stonewall Jackson and as sensitive as a magnolia blossom. We're all in awe of your artwork (though I appreciate even more the affection you have for your brother), and considering how many times you brought in art books to share, you might think I'd have chosen one for you now. But instead I picked a book that you asked your mother for, about faith in terrible hardships. It delighted me that you would want this book. Here's your verse:

She's blunt, she's outspoken, she laughs a lot;
she's fond of the South and thinks art is hot.
Indeed, her art is celebrated,
admired, and never overrated.
And yet, she's also impressed with her skills
on the stage, and her solos gave us chills.
Megan loves her dogs, as everyone knows;
she draws Bunnie Foo Foo wherever she goes.

May you be inspired by your book to trust Christ in all things, and may you find ways to brighten Gordon College as you have brightened Caritas.

Molly — the Wing-footed Runner; the Zamindar of Organization

You have exemplified school spirit. When you made Caritas's only dance ever happen last year, that was a triumph of enthusiasm and willpower, qualities you have in abundance. Your book is about women in Afghanistan—not an easy topic, but you're tough enough to handle it. I had a haiku for you, but I couldn't leave it at that. First, the haiku:

Will of tempered steel
Don't mollicoddle her
She likes dancing, too.

And now the verse:

The young ship's captain, the tractor driver,
the girl with the mile-long, wavy hair;
you're the super student, earning those A's,
but always affecting not to care
about your ranking or GPA.
Tenacity at sports, a voice so pure,
generosity that never fails,
and yes, even thespian talent
in *A Child's Christmas in Wales*.
You've poured so much into these two years
that your talent account must be in arrears.

May you always burn with such a hard, gem-like flame for God and for holy causes.

Emma — the Princess of Persistence, the Caliph of Courage.

The title of your book, *Tremendous Trifles*, is an oxymoron—almost like you, except that you’re a paradox: the brilliant mind in chaos, the thoughtful, patient girl who loves to argue. Here’s your verse:

Others may write of her in disarray
—the assignments lost, the books forgotten,
the residue she leaves behind each day—
but I come instead to praise our Emma,
this girl of steel who carries more metal
within her than did the Terminator;
who (though diminutive) shows more mettle
than Aragorn, Roland, or Han Solo.
Though brave, she also understands the art
and thought and drama of the ancient Greeks
(well, not the whole unsav’ry boy-love part).
She cannot sing or paint with Renaissance skill,
but no one is such a classical girl;
she struggles with “doomo” and “hic haec hoc,”
yet who would mention those things but a churl?
And who, having found her—her iron will
and radiant smile—would ever give up such a pearl?

May your disorganization always be charming, and may you never lose your righteous indignation and your eccentric, classical tastes.