

It was sometime after 5. From what I could make of the big hand of the clock in the dining room, no more than a few minutes could have passed, really, before I'd know. I'd been sat in the kitchen for an hour's time, staring down the same blank screen and making good use of the Command+R keystroke. My nails, what was left of them, tapped frantically on the kitchen table; my hands seldom spending more than a minute in stillness.

To put things in perspective, when my little brother was born I would have been hard-pressed to do more than give a smug smirk and strut about knowing I'd beaten my sister in predicting his gender. Or when my aunt came to me and said she'd be naming her firstborn son in my honour, I smiled for a day and moved on.

So naturally, one would think, as I waited for that letter to come, as I so nervously refreshed my inbox with every passing second, I somehow maintained my composure. Now I would like to tell you that I didn't jump up and down incessantly like a toddler at the sound of the television turning on, that my voice didn't crack as I broke the news to my sister, that I didn't immediately, and melodramatically, write the phrase "tears of joy" on my facebook status—or that any of this wasn't caught on tape... I'd like to say I coolly brushed it off, that I somehow expected it, or that like my football coach was wont to say I "acted like I'd been there before". But well, I can't. I won't; and frankly I don't want to.

If there's something I find truly curious about people, something peculiar about the way we work, it's that we hope, that we think on what's to come, that we imagine what this life should bring us next. Each and every morning, we awake at the foot of the mountain, in full faith that come nightfall, we might find ourselves on the other side. We stare down events and exams, practices and problem sets, readings and rehearsals, and in perhaps the most amazing piece of human nature we set goals. We say I'm going to get that A on this paper, I'm going to be two seconds faster than I was last week, or for some of us, I'm going to hope no one falls asleep during my speech... Sometimes, we succeed. Sometimes, we don't. Now I guess I could fill the rest of my time with well-worn clichés. I could tell you "Don't Stop Believing", hold onto that feeling, or if I were feeling less lyrical, I could sombrely say keep on keeping on, or my personal favourite: "stiff upper lip". But, in a room full of Harvard students, notably those so lucky as to be dragged here tonight, I'll try to make this as little like your high school graduation as possible.

I've titled this speech "What We Ought to Do"—deep and *ominous*, I know—but truthfully, it should be called what we ought to do when we win, when we do conquer the mountain, when we do reach our goals. Surprisingly, no one thought the longer title would be "catchy"... The awareness of the ambiguity of one's highest achievements (as well as one's deepest failures), Tillich tells us, is a definite symptom of maturity. I'll repeat it to let it really sink in; the awareness of the ambiguity of achievement is a definite symptom of maturity. Some of you, I suspect, might wonder what ambiguity it is he means.

Two years ago, when I got that acceptance letter from this institution, I think I might have figured it out. About half an hour after it came, after I'd begun my way back

down to Earth, my younger brother, all 10 years of age and apparently better versed in Tillich than I, came to me and said “Well, I’m going to go to Oxford now.” Then, and only then, did I begin to make sense of what it is Mr. Tillich meant. Achievement is ambiguous in that it is never fully realised, that the peak of yesterday’s heights forms tomorrow’s valley. In fact, it is never the mountain that we conquer, but ourselves on that day. Realising this means to know the work has only begun when you might have thought it over, to set new goals at the close of those old, to perpetually push the bounds of possibility. Lord Tennyson says:

Some work of noble note, may yet be done,  
Not unbecoming men that strove with gods.  
Though much is taken, much abides; and though  
We are not now that strength which in old days  
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are---  
One equal temper of heroic hearts,  
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will  
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.