Redman, Method Man, and You
Molly Fitzpatrick – Winthrop House

You might be surprised, as I was, to learn that within Harvard University's 70 libraries—and among the more than 16 million items they house—we don't own a single copy of the film *How High*. "Why is she talking about *How High*?" you ask. "What is *How High*?" your dad asks. "Where am I?" your great-grandmother asks.

For those of you who weren't in middle school in 2001, *How High* starred rappers Method Man and Redman, who—playing bravely off-type as stoners—smoke magical pot, ace their college entrance exams, and get into Harvard. As one does.

But I'll get back to that.

We all remember that moment, four years ago, when we each opened our Harvard acceptance letter and, in celebration, danced to "Superfreak" with the entire family—hi, Mom and Dad. "Veritas! Veritas!" proclaimed everything from the insignia on the letterhead to the face tattoos our proud parents lined up to receive at the Coop on Prefrosh Weekend—hi, Mom and Dad.

"Veritas?" thought insecure prefrosh me, "I don't know if I'm tas enough. I'm only a little tas." But here I am, here we all are, about to become... Harvard graduates.

"Harvard graduate." That's the second-finest set of five syllables I have ever heard, coming in only slightly behind "mozzarella sticks." Frankly, it's a lot to live up to. Tomorrow morning, we will instantly discover that we are all distant Kennedy relatives, sprout a thin layer of tweed, and be named part owners of Facebook. And I expect a good part; I don't want Farmville.

But who am I kidding? I'm from New Jersey, where all "tweed" is is the way a person with a speech impediment refers to marijuana. I suspect I'm not alone in feeling suspiciously less erudite, sophisticated and lustrous-haired than what I imagine a "Harvard graduate" to be. For those of you who don't know me, I've prepared a short list of very good reasons why I couldn't conceivably have gone to Harvard: 1) I have scars from accidentally burning myself with three types of irons—clothes, curling, and waffle. 2) In the fourth grade, I applied an inch-thick layer of green Play-Doh over my glasses and refused to remove it for hours. 3) I once vacuumed my foot. True story.

In fact, by virtue of the very prestigious diploma we're about to receive, so much of what we do from this point on will be automatically considered a disappointment. If all Harvard alumni can be ranked on a gradient of awesomeness from JFK to the Unabomber, we'd all like to be at least a 4.5. In our culture, Harvard is a metonym, which—along with "salient," "reify," and "quotidian"—is a word I've used in at least six response papers without actually understanding what it means. But Harvard stands for something.

I spend most of my time watching movies and television shows, because I'm very attractive and popular and well adjusted in every way. Lazy screenwriters love Harvard. For one thing, it's a great setting, up there with the White House, or WWII, or the space White House. But more importantly, a Harvard education is one of the most overused, conveniently definitive character traits in Hollywood. "The audience needs to intuitively understand this guy is smart, and likely rich, and probably also a d-bag! But how to convey that? ...hold on!"

In real life, Harvard may have a miniscule 6.2% acceptance rate, but in movies, TV, and literature—it's more like 6.2% of all people in the entire world attended Harvard. Consider that not one, but *two* characters on the TV show *Army Wives* are Harvard grads. I would pass judgment here, but it occurs to me that I just admitted to an audience of 10,000 that I am a fan of *Army Wives*.

Allow me to introduce you to some more of your fictional peers. Forget Zuckerwho and the Winklewhats, there's Ally MacBeal. The rich guy on *Gilligan's Island*. Patrick Bateman in *American Psycho*. (That one's all you, Ec concentrators.) On *Family Matters*, Laura Winslow was accepted to Harvard, but curiously, not Steve Urkel. (I know, right?) Rory Gilmore also got into Harvard, but she went to Yale. Suck it, Rory. One of the prisoners on HBO's *Oz* was a graduate of HLS, so... lots to look forward to there. Elle Woods. Frasier Crane. Twofer from *30 Rock*. No Harvard characters on *Parks and Recreation*, though. [Deadpan turn to stare accusingly at Amy Poehler.]

So, *How High*. I'm not going to stand here and close read the film for you—but do consider Method *Man* and Red*man*: a wry nomenclatural wink at the inherently patriarchal nature of the American educational system—sorry. It's...become a reflex now. But the great thing about *How High*, about all of these portrayals of Harvard and its students, is that they help us to remember just how special our experience has been, and how special we are. Audiences are gleefully led to believe it can take *magic* to get in here (as well as some presumably legally prescribed herbal supplements), but we managed it on our own. And, legacies, you're great too.

It's entirely plausible that one of the accomplished young adults sitting among us today may become president. Statistically, at least 300 people just thought to themselves, "Yeah, she's talking about me." But if I may reify the most salient aspect of this quotidian speech, I'm speaking to all of you when I say: never forget how impressive you are. As Harvard students, you're already famous. We deserve a collective IMDb page.

Now, if you'll humor me for just a moment, I'd like to do exactly what I'd do if I met any glamorous celebrity. [Over-the shoulder iPhone photo of audience and me.] Wow, you guys look great. Autograph this for me afterwards?

Thank you, and congratulations, Harvard graduates!