

Taking the plunge: life in a British boarding school

It is 6 o'clock in the morning. I've just woken up, although I haven't slept well. Neatly packed, my luggage awaits me by the door. The bus to Heathrow airport is leaving in an hour and I have enough time to contain my feelings. I'm used to it as I've always done it since my arrival at Christ College. It has been always the same, anxious feelings of anticipation - at the end of the day I will be back home; I will be with my family; I will be with my friends. It is as if I can almost see and smell the familiar surroundings. At this thought, a smile usually creeps onto my face.

I think that everything is ready, but I need to check once more. My clothes and my laptop, my book and my phone, my little sister's present and the charger – all are at place. My ID, my wallet and my board card are in hand. Still there is something I can't figure out. I'm missing something. What is it? It's the fourth time I've travelled home, and it should be the same. But there's something different. I'm not taking something with me this time and I'm going to miss it. I feel that I need to find it.

I decide to go out and distract myself. Perhaps I'll get it. I stand in front of my boarding house, breathing the cool fresh air. The enormous hills ahead of me catch my eye and memories rush in. I am on Pen y Fan, the tallest summit in Brecon Beacons National Park in Wales. I am hiking with my last exeat guardian. I feel the wind, trying to steal my backpack and the rain pelting on my face. I also feel the pleasant exhaustion when we reach the peak and we sit to eat our sandwiches looking at the abyss below. I will miss my conversations with him.

I still have time, so I stroll down the alley until I reach the classrooms' windows. At this time of the day there is no one there but I can almost hear the voices of my friendly tutors and my classmates discussing a problem or conducting an experiment. I can smell all the blood, sweat and tears my classmates and I have gone through these 2 terms I've been here. A little further I see the heads' offices. In one of them is busy one of the most inspiring men I've met, the principal, who is always ready to boost your confidence while charging you with immense ambition and making a whale of a difference. In the other office is the deputy principal, the stern looking authority with his impeccable sense of behaviour code and school moral. He has taught me a lot, mainly to keep myself firmly on the ground and not get drawn in the clouds; how to leave my comfort zone and realise there's always room for improvement.

I proceed and reach the chapel. I stop and look at it. The place we go to every other day and listen to our tutors or fellow students who have decided to share some wise words with us. I got quite interested from the beginning and I had been pondering for some time what it would be if it were me standing in front of the school and sharing my thoughts with them until one day, about a week ago, I did it. I was given the chance to deliver a speech on Respect. I'd been feeling a little nervous but now I know that I shouldn't have been. I just hadn't expected that it would fill me up with so much life and satisfaction. I also realised that had I not been here in this college I wouldn't have ventured such a strenuous challenge and I wouldn't have known that feeling.

It is time to go back to my house and pick up my luggage. As I'm approaching, my houseparent, appears at the entrance and asks me if I am ready. This is the person to whom I owe a lot. He is not of the people who is always meddling with the boy's house life. Rather he gives enough freedom for us to become independent as long as we stick to the rules. Whenever, however, we need advice or support, he is invariably there. I do believe that the best advice and consideration I have received is from him.

Luggage in hand, I got on the coach, together with forty of my schoolmates. The bus is slowly departing and along with the feeling of anticipation a new emotion sneaks. And now I know what I'm going to be missing. It is my new friends, my daily routines and hard toil. My new life here - unexpectedly hard, but fully satisfying.

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