Who are you, and what was your connection to VK?
My name is Aura Long, and I'm from San Francisco, California. I moved to Vedersø in the Ringkøbing-Skjern area in 2020 to attend the international boarding school there—quite spontaneously. After finishing boarding school, I decided to stay in Denmark and pursue IB at Viborg Katedralskole. I attended VK from 2021 to 2024.
What do you remember most from your time at VK — a moment, a place, or a feeling?
Because Viborg is so different from home (San Francisco), *everything* felt new. I lived at the boarding school and remember the delicious food in the dining hall— it was so fresh and locally grown, not something you can get everywhere. And the kitchen staff were so kind. I also vividly remember craving the chicken sandwiches and cakes at Søster Lagkage—it was heaven.
Was there someone or something at VK that made you think differently or helped you grow as a person?
I met my best friend at VK. She's from Italy, and we became very close during my time there. We would laugh so hard we would cry, but also have such deep and meaningful conversations that I'd get chills. She helped me grow in so many ways—especially by inspiring me with her openness to become more open myself: to people, languages, and ways of living different from my own. I learned that "different" doesn't have to mean "bad."
How would you describe the school's spirit or atmosphere at that time?
VK felt like a powerful institution. With about a thousand students, there was *always* something happening—assemblies, festivals, events. It was a constant source of energy—not always good or bad, just powerful. Living and studying surrounded by that grand building and its meticulously kept grounds sometimes felt like going to school at Hogwarts.
How has VK influenced you later in life — personally, academically, or in terms of your values?
Viborg and San Francisco are worlds apart. In Viborg, even though the IB program and the animation school brought in international students, most people looked similar, and it could be hard to find a community if you didn't speak Danish. That's very different from my neighborhood in San Francisco, where it's hard to find *two* people who look the same. My city is incredibly diverse and open—but it also carries chaos, crime, and dysfunction that doesn't exist in Viborg. My mom and I often called Viborg "paradise": charming, safe, and full of quality of life.
But Viborg is also diverse in its own, less obvious way. There were many people in Viborg with whom I connected, even when it felt impossible. One of them was a janitor, Claus, who sometimes worked in the music room where I would be practicing with the Jingle Band. He didn't speak any English, and I didn't speak any Danish, yet somehow we managed to laugh together and enjoy each other's company—something I still value deeply today. Even the most unlikely friendships can exist.
Having lived in such different environments with such different people has made my life and my connections richer. I'm able to understand and connect with many kinds of people because of my time at VK, and I still call Viborg my other "home" because of the unlikely but surprisingly beautiful connections I made there.

What do you wish you had known when you were 17?
I'm sure many people will say this—but don't worry so much! Complain less and express gratitude more. You are the captain of your own ship, so don't let anything else define you—not your grades, your clothes, your friends, or others who seem to be living their best life (they usually aren't). Remember that most of us are struggling with similar things beneath the surface.