

Lowell Speech: Elizabeth Hubbard

Three stops to go. Two. One. I hesitantly step off the train onto an unmarked station. Fumbling for my paper directions, I attempt to gather my bearings. Blindly trusting Google Maps, I departed from the major road down a narrow dirt hill. As an exceptionally clumsy individual, my eyes were glued to my feet, but when I finally looked up, I found the clearest lake, a perfect mirror of the fluffy clouds and blue sky above, surrounded by the greenest trees I've ever seen. Once I overcame my amazement, I searched for my phone to take a picture like any good millennial. Wandering around beautiful lake after beautiful lake, admiring the swans and the picturesque route, I realized I was utterly lost.

Ironically, feeling lost was the reason I ended up in Denmark in the first place. As a Human Developmental & Regenerative Biology concentrator with a secondary in Global Health, few people (including myself) would have expected me to spend my sophomore summer in Denmark studying mythology and archaeology. My parents certainly had questions. But after two years of not exactly enjoying my science courses and continuously questioning if I should even study biology, I decided to take a break from the science world and pursue a completely random but thrilling experience.

My time in Denmark, filled with castles, Viking Age historical sites, and so many pastries, wasn't the unrelated detour I expected however, because it just led me back to my love for biology. As I read the Poetic Edda and perfected my ability to distinguish between worked and natural flint, I increasingly missed Nature papers and pipetting, which anyone who does wet lab research will acknowledge as extreme. For me, the mysteries of what I could find in postholes couldn't hold a candle to the wonders inside a cell. Even on a Danish island, I

approached every story, lecture, and problem with the factual mindset of a scientist. By the end of the summer, my passion for biology was completely renewed.

Like the joys of cancelled class or the frenzy of 30 page papers, feeling aimless, disoriented and lost are part of the college experience (or at least I hope so). These emotions are so important that a UC Davis architect designed a building, fondly known as the Death Star, with the official purpose to confuse students and force them to become lost. Unexpected detours can still be remarkably fulfilling. I wouldn't have predicted such a random path would have led me to my chosen destination, but even the most unrelated adventures can be valuable opportunities to learn about oneself.

And if you're curious how my Danish adventure ended, after I decided to put away my paper directions and rely on my navigation abilities, I rounded a corner and caught my first glimpse of my destination, the Fredericksborg castle, over an immaculate baroque garden. The previous lakes and trees didn't compare to the statues, fountains, and decadent Renaissance architecture. The journey was remarkable, although suspicious and seemingly haphazard, but the ultimate destination where I had expected to arrive all along was even better. Thank you.