

**30**

Experience of a Dissection class in Biology

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What started off as just another ordinary Biology class was quickly turned upside down as news of the dissection spread. The excitement that filled the class was palpable. An actual dissection! My current career obsession at the time had been to become a surgeon and this seemed as good a time as any to take my first whack at it. The thought of holding the heart of a dead goat in my hands- though mildly repulsive also seemed unbelievably cool. As if the circulatory system wasn't interesting enough already.

The days ticked on as we patiently awaited the dissection. Procuring 15 goat hearts proved to be quite the challenge for our teacher but her local butcher finally came through and the day of the dissection arrived.

Walking into the lab that day, I was filled with such excitement there was an obvious bounce to my step. After boasting about how I would be dissecting a heart to all my friends it was finally here. The first thing that hit me was the smell. It was the clear, distinct smell of blood. It almost made me want to run out the door and forget all about the dissection. I stood my ground, though and walked up to the heart. It was a dark red maroonish colour and smaller

than I would have imagined it to be. With tiny white tubes poking out of it, it was quite the sight. Three people were to work on a single heart and I quickly joined forces with a few friends. We were all handed surgical gloves, scalpels and surgical scissors and were told to get to work. Decked in the gloves and holding the heart I could just about picture all the glorious surgeries I would perform in the future. The smell receded and I got right down to the cutting. The heart was slimy to say the least. Slimy and very, very slippery. We were instructed to find the Aorta (one of the many white tubes leading out of the heart) and cut right through the heart along it. Finding the Aorta wasn't a very easy feat, after much poking and prodding with what looked like a drink-stirrer though probably had a scientific name, the Aorta was found and the very first incision made. It was quite a rush. I was about to see the inside of a heart.

I don't know what exactly I expected to see. Cutting into the heart was not as easy as I hoped it would be. Holding it in place was tricky business to begin with but getting that scalpel right through proved to be a herculean task. Once I was finally able to lay the scalpel down the heart was all but massacred. I was still unbelievably proud though. The inside of the heart looked surreal. Filled with blood clots, blood vessels tough ligament and thick walls. It was hard to believe that something so simple looking could fulfil such an incredibly complex purpose.

For a girl who, a few weeks before couldn't imagine herself in the same vicinity of an exposed heart to go to opening one up and looking through it was a HUGE accomplishment, it also seems to have been the first milestone in my cardio-thoracic fantasy.



As amazing as my biology teacher is and as interesting as the circulatory system seems to be, opening up the heart and taking a good look at it was an almost otherworldly experience which I don't think could have been replaced by anything. Only a truly amazing teacher would go above the call of duty and work as hard as mine did to receive those hearts. She

could easily have finished the chapter the traditional way- through the textbook but instead she went one step further and provided me and all my friends with a once in a lifetime experience. I don't think I have ever seen my class as thoroughly interested in a concept as we were that day in the lab. Just goes to show that a little initiative can go a very long way.



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