Describe a place or environment where you are perfectly content. What do you do or experience there, and why is it meaningful to you?

As I stand before my peers like a pillar leading the way, they sit before me like coercive judges with a grudge. While my thirty-something year old teacher’s stares drill bullets through my skin, I nervously gaze across the room to see my friends in the back row smirking. It was a fairly small classroom, but for fourty-nine minutes while I was standing there the walls seemed to converge around me, coming to a point of no return – a proverbial event horizon. This was the point of no return. My teacher for AP Calculus had been known to be a bit of a, excuse my language, coconut. By the time second semester rolls around, they say, her rough and tough exterior will crack open, revealing a sweet milky inside – a tactic commonly used to “weed out” students who “don’t have the drive” to pursue through “challenging material” (as she explains). It’s obvious she’s just an angry forty-something, ticked off at the fact her boyfriends keep leaving her, taking her annoyance out on her students – or so we thought. It wasn’t until the end of that year, that I would realize I was truly content in her classroom, and my presentation for our class that year had proved it.

I didn’t like this teacher at all. I really didn’t. It was the only time I had truly disliked a teacher. Her annual routine of picking on the smartest, youngest kid in her classroom had finally settled on me. Being a sophomore in a senior level course, I had already gotten my fair share of mocking from the seniors, but that was all in good fun. Within weeks we had all befriended each other, and the age barrier slowly disappeared. Then, of course, in typical teenager style, I had to go and ruin it.

I asked her after class one day “can we please move a bit faster in class, Mrs. Fowl?”

“Well why don’t you teach the class tomorrow! Also, don’t ever call me Mrs. – apparently I can’t pull that off.”

“okay…”

What choice did I have now? The Sperrys on my feet began to melt, my plaid shirt started fading, a thread on my jeans popped loose, my hair stood on end, the sun through the window shattered across my face, the room’s blue walls started to darken, and my vision sharpened intensely. God I had hated presenting, why did I have to be so darned good at it? After lecturing my peers for a full 49 minute class on implicit logarithmic differentiation, the next step in our curriculum, a topic I had taught myself last summer, I exhaled like a bull and walked out of the room as the dismissal bell rang – without saying a word.

It was that day that I realized I really loved school, and, in particular, math classes. Standing before my peers, I realized that they were me, and I was them. The slowly expanding teenage ego within me had convinced me that I was better than my peers, but this isn’t so. “We are all equal,” and someday I’ll understand the implications of that statement.

My lack of amazing experiences funneled me to write an essay about this, to be quite honest with you, Miss Admissions Counselor. Halfway through typing, I soon realized that my experiences in 17 years were probably more interesting than those of Miss Fowl in fifty-something years. I decided that I was really freaking good at mathematics and communication. I learned that you aren’t born with certain passions; you can only create passions through your experiences. Someday I’d create a passion, from that day’s experience, with my class before me, for computer engineering. I never understood the purpose of math, but Miss Fowl’s presentation taught me, on accident, that you don’t “math” for the sake of yourself, you “math” for others, and to improve the world through applications of mathematics. The only blue room in the school, it must have been the paint that transferred so much accidental knowledge to me. My experiences of learning created my passion for learning, and has accidentally allowed me to call sixty-something year old Miss. Fowl’s room my place of maximum contentment.