Phew. Where do I start?

Coming into this honours year, I arrived with a decent amount of confidence in what I knew and how far it would carry me. It did not take long to realise that honours in this field is not about how much you know, but how well you think, a far more humbling discovery than anyone warns you about beforehand.

That realisation has crept into almost every part of this year. I had imagined walking into the lab and feeling instantly at home, like some sort of scientific main character. The reality has been slower and far less cinematic. Some days the space still feels unfamiliar, like I am a guest who has slightly overstayed her welcome, and I am learning to be patient with that rather than treating it as a problem I should already have solved, especially since I have a longstanding, slightly unreasonable habit of expecting to be immediately good at things the moment I try them.

What has made things easier to carry is that I have not been doing any of this alone. I have met some of the kindest people this year, course-mates who have made the journey a bit more bearable just by being around. My lab-mates have been just as generous, somehow making even an off day in the lab feel a little lighter simply by being in it with you. I have also been fortunate to work alongside a co-supervisor who is kind and endlessly patient, and who celebrates even my smallest accomplishments as though they were significant, which has meant more to me this year than they probably realise. There is a particular kind of relief in being around people who are that brilliant and still having them cheer you on rather than size you up.

The coursework deserves its own mention too, because the broader medical science space this year opened up has been a great deal to take in, and immunology in particular has been tough in the most entertaining way a module can be tough. It has a habit of seeming perfectly logical right up until the moment you are asked to explain it, at which point it turns out you understood about sixty percent of it and the rest was vibes. Need I say, I have spent a fair amount of the year being cheerfully humbled by immunology.

That same uncertainty stretches beyond the coursework and into the bigger question of where any of this is going. I still have not found "my thing", and I say that slightly sheepishly because I seem to find almost everything interesting, wonderful at a dinner party, less convenient when you are supposed to be narrowing down a career path. Ask me what excites me and the answer changes depending on whichever paper I read last or seminar I last sat through. There is real pressure at this stage to have a clean, confident answer about what comes next, and I do not have one. I am trying to make peace with the idea that not having settled on a single narrow lane by now does not mean I am behind, it might just mean I am genuinely curious about more things than is strictly convenient.

What I am certain about is that this year has pushed me well beyond where I thought my limits were, in ways I did not always enjoy in the moment but am genuinely grateful for now.

If there is one thing this year has taught me above everything else, it is that resilience looks nothing like the confident, invincible version I had pictured before it all started. It has looked like showing up on the harder days, letting myself feel unsure without letting that decide whether I keep going, and leaning on the people around me rather than pretending I do not need to. It has also meant learning to separate my worth from my results, a lesson considerably harder than any of the actual science.

I do not have a tidy conclusion to offer, and I think that is honest rather than a failure of reflection. The footing and the direction have not resolved themselves neatly, and I am still not entirely sure if I am cut out for this, though I suspect that particular doubt is just part of the process rather than a verdict. What I can say is that I am still willing to keep going, and if science has taught me anything this year, it is that the experiment rarely goes as planned the first time, and neither, it turns out, does the scientist.