When Spring Break is No Break

by Sara Ivry

Aah, spring break... I remember now the anticipation and glazed looks that fell over faces looking eagerly forward to spring break. An entire week of nothing — no classes, no meetings, and no obligations. But now that carefree time is over and done, and we must once again return to the grim, cold reality of books, papers and less sleep than we ever thought we could live on.

On that fateful day, that Wednesday before vacation that seems so very long ago, I had the occasion to get stuck in an elevator. No, this was not the same one that trapped a Barnard professor weeks ago in Alschul, rather mine was across Broadway, in Kent. As I stepped into the elevator I sighed with relief because I knew that my marathon day of classes was an hour from ending and then — yes, then I could look forward to spring break.

I stepped onto the lift and held the door for my fellow passengers. Before we started our ascent the elevator jumped, just a little bit, yet this stair was enough to warn one man, who had been stuck the day before, that we were in for a very long ride.

The elevator went up, past four, past five, until it slowly reached six. That was fine with me, I had intended to get off on the sixth floor, but the door remained closed, firm, unmoving. The man who had been stuck previously did not seem to mind, he was being paid by the hour. I, however, would receive no compensation. I sank into a metal corner and shook my head in disbelief. The five of us in that small, steel box could not telephone for help because, you see, the centrepiece snugly sitting in its convenient closet was dead. And so, we let out our anger on the emergency bell hoping to wake up some dozing student, or professor, and to alert them that five people, some of whom were beginning to feel a little nauseated were preparing to spend their spring breaks in a hot, stuffy, small metal compartment.

But then — a ray of hope! A voice filtered down through the elevator shaft and told us that help was on its way. Fifteen minutes passed with no change, 20 minutes brought nothing still, 30 minutes saw us wiping our foreheads. Finally after 35 minutes the door opened, unprovoked, on its own.

It was as if some heavenly body looked down and pitied us — for upon leaving the elevator and the school, for that much anticipated break, we would not all be heading south.

Free at last, I weakly walked to my classroom but peace was still not mine. I sat in a room on the sixth floor in Kent and stared out of the open window at the bright blue sky speckled with clouds and thought, longingly, once more about the upcoming vacation.

Talk around campus had been, during that week long-passed, about the hot vacation spots — California, Bermuda, the Bahamas and then, thought I, Newton, Massachusetts. Yahoo! Sincerely, though, I was looking forward to going home: my own room, albeit cooler temperatures (but who would have suspected snow during spring break?), good food, and rest.

Mine would not be a typical break. Why? Because the bulk of my midterm assignments, papers and exams, would be due during that depressing post-vacation week. My free time was spent studying. I have no tan to innocently boast against the cool white of a short-sleeved shirt, and I simply cannot complain of how very much my back hurts from that awful burn. I can only console myself with this: that while my peers were basking in the sun they were also depriving themselves of those wonderful philosophical revelations I was lucky enough to discover. While they splashed in the salty water they denied themselves the opportunity, (that lucky me had), of trying to finally understand body systems.

This week I continue to work. There is no break and no ocean, and even here in New York it is still too cold to stand outside for long. But my day too will arrive! I will have my chance to lie out on the sea-side and forget my student woes. It is truly this thought alone which now, as I bundle up, headed to the library, consoles me and maintains me until the semester’s end when that grand vacation, which we all enjoy, arrives with the wonderful warm months of summer.

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