

## The Escape

An icy gust of wind hits the right side of my face. I quickly turn my head to the left, sheltering my face from the full force of the wind. *Great, watch as I get frostbite from this twenty-some degree wind. Just what I need...* I put my hands to my face and breathe into the gloves. The dissipating heat reaches my cheeks, providing them with some warmth. I waddle for a bit down the running path with my hands to my face. After a few steps, though, I put my hands back down, realizing I can't keep them to my face for the next three miles. *Why in the world did I think it was a good idea to go out running tonight?*

9:13. *Dammit, I only have 10 minutes to eat breakfast.* It's Tuesday, my most hated day of the week. From 9:30am to 5pm, I have class nonstop. To make matters worse, it's the same class: 7.02 (Introduction to Experimental Biology & Communication). I quickly throw on a pair of pants and a sweater, stuff my notebooks into my bag, grab my phone and jacket, and head out the door, slamming it behind me. *My clamshell box and keys!* I push down on my door handle. No luck; it's locked. *Whatever, I'll get a spare later.* I gallop down the stairs and rush into the dining hall. The register worker is nowhere in sight. Irritated, I wait half a minute and decide to just leave my ID at the register. *Hopefully, she'll come and swipe my ID.* I hurry to the self-serve station and throw two scoops of scrambled egg and a scoop of hash browns onto my plate. Finding a table near the dish-return belt, I inhale my food. For the second time this week, I have not had the time to enjoy my breakfast.

With my stomach only half filled, I power walk to my 7.02 Science Communication recitation (SciComm). Today, my group is leading a discussion on writing the conclusion section of a scientific paper. *Why is this class at 9:30am? No one talks.* I get to the classroom only to

find that one of my group members, David, is stuck in traffic. *Can this day get any worse?* We begin without him. After SciComm, I rush to 7.02 lecture where I pretend to listen and take notes. In reality, I am scrambling to finish my lab assignment that is due in two hours. *Does the work ever end in this class?* Noon finally hits and I make my way to 5.12 (Organic Chemistry) recitation. There, I mindlessly copy down the chemical reactions on the board as our recitation leader complains about our professor. The test is in two weeks, and I am overwhelmed with information. *Is it really necessary to have four tests AND a final in this class?*

One o'clock arrives, and I unwillingly make my way to the 7.02 lab. I have been dreading this moment all day—being stuck in the basement of Building 68. It might as well be called legal torture. Imprisoned by my experiment, I am forced to repeatedly pipet, vortex, and incubate cells for up to four hours. Normally, we are able to get out early, but not today. Five o'clock hits, and the whole class is still in lab. The stress level is high—everyone wants to leave. Thirty minutes later, we finally finish. There are no smiles; no one is talking. I slowly make my way back to my dorm, ask for a spare key for the third time this week, and return to my room. I drop my bags on the floor, fling off my shoes and collapse on my couch. Closing my eyes, I try to fall asleep, but I can't. *I hope my supervisor isn't mad that I didn't go into UROP today. I'm so behind in 5.12. Shoot, I forgot to reply to John's email!* I sit up. *There is no way I can sleep; I can't even think straight.* I stare down at the ground and spot my running shoes. *Should I really? It's twenty-eight degrees outside.* I hesitate for a moment, but then decide to go for it. Without giving myself enough time to reconsider, I quickly throw on my shoes, gloves, running pants and sweatshirt and rush out the door.

Reaching the Boston end of the Mass. Ave bridge, I quickly turn onto the Esplanade trail. I reunite with my running family. As I run down the trail, I can't help but read the wording on each runner's clothes. Northeastern University, Boston Marathon, Red Sox, U.S. Navy. Every runner's sweatshirt tells something about himself or herself. As I run by more people, I am reminded that there is more to life than classes and homework; there are so many things right outside our campus to explore and to experience. I turn to look across the river. The dome is right opposite me, but for some reason, it seems so far. Even though I just crossed the bridge, I feel as if I have been away from MIT for many hours.

I turn to look at the water. Lights from MIT buildings reflect off the river's surface. Waves slowly make their way across the river, causing the reflected light to flicker. My eyes follow the waves to the Boston shore. Slowly, the reflection of MIT disappears. I stare at the water, mesmerized by its beauty. A pair of rowers makes their way gracefully down the Charles, their oars striking the water rhythmically. I close my eyes and listen to the sound of their strokes. Splash. Splash. Splash. My mind slowly empties. Splash. Splash. Splash...

I cross Memorial Drive and jog the final stretch towards Baker. A runner wearing an "I Run for Boston" shirt passes, reminding me of why I love running, especially here at MIT. I run because it lets me escape from the stress of MIT. I run because it takes my mind off of MIT. I run because it keeps me strong so that I can take on the challenges at MIT. Most of all, I run because MIT is home.

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