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A Screw Loose



by Liz Holzemer

Hut 2-3-4!

It's already April and I have yet to begin my 2006 New Year's Resolution to tighten my soft middle and raise my heart rate past barely breathing. I can't make up excuses anymore. Forty is 16 months away. Even sooner, my 20th high school reunion this summer.

I foolishly made a bet with myself to revisit my local rec center for a class this morning. But not just any class—it had to be Navy Seal Boot Camp and at 5:30 a.m. Knowing I can't disappoint myself, I refuse to burrow under the covers when my alarm sounds off.

I make the 10 minute drive in total darkness. I barely make out silhouettes of joggers keeping a steady pace along the perfectly paved sidewalks. Who runs at this hour? Certainly not I. I am stunned to pull into a full parking lot. Maybe I've accidentally driven to the Nordstrom Half-Yearly Sale by mistake. I actually have to park a fair distance. "See, I'm already off to a great start!" I congratulate myself as I make the brisk walk into the rec center. I feel thumping in my chest. I knew I could do this.

It's been six years since I've set foot into a gym and now I remember why. I am stunned by the bright lights illuminating



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cardio rooms full of flushed faces and glistening biceps. My eyes water at the sight. It's standing room only. I'm mesmerized by the sea of fat-free bodies; they look genuinely happy. Is this the promised world—dusk at the gym?

I make my way to Navy Seal Boot Camp and my atrophied muscles are instantly intimidated by the scores of detainees. I wear my inexperience on my sleeve.

"New recruits in the back," I'm ordered by an obvious regular. I manage a weak smile and precariously perch under the exit sign preparing for a quick escape if need be.

At precisely 6 a.m., Rick the drill sergeant, er, instructor marches in. He's 6'5" and every square inch of him screams, **MUSCLE, AND THIS CLASS AIN'T FOR NO SISSIES**. I cringe in fear. Maybe I should plot my escape now.

I'm waiting for a basic warm up, but Rick wastes no time. "Ok, give me 25," he barks. 25 what I wonder, but I've already fallen behind and my timing is out of sync to the perfectly executed jumping jacks. As I reach for my water bottle, I'm behind again as another set of jumping jacks are underway. I look to my right and wince, but am offered no sympathy. I thought the navy was all about reaching out to your fallen brethren? Apparently, I have it all wrong.

"On the ground" is Rick's next command. "Regulars—3 sets of 20. Maggots only 2 sets of 30." A one set reprieve I nearly cry under my breath. What a guy. I do everything in my power to restrain the expletives begging to spew forth. I've been carrying toddlers around for four years, yet that holds no weight in *this* Navy. Rick senses a fellow sailor is overboard and comes to my rescue. Despite his efforts, I know I'm in push up purgatory.

"Your hand placement is all wrong," he points out while reshifting my hands. "Oh yes, that's much better Rick," I eke out as my triceps burn in unforgiveness. I will pay for this tomorrow.

Next we are hurdled into the adjacent gym. Thank God, class is over! But it's only 6:10 a.m. Two lines form without a word and alternate for three sets of pull ups on a bar. I cringe when it's my turn to confront the bar of shame. Surprisingly, I manage one, two, and then three pull ups. A false sense of euphoria washes over me I *can* do this.

We scurry back to the gym and begin laborious sets of sit ups, crunches—basically everything to remind a person that they made a mistake by indulging in an extra helping of anything in their lives. I chant "*two brain surgeries, two childbirths, what's a few sit ups*" in my head. I'll never achieve six-pack status, but maybe a single can isn't too lofty a goal after all.

Next up—lunge sprints. I'm becoming a born again with an entirely new mantra. I feel especially close to God with every thigh burning dip I take.

Rick applauds our efforts and I thank him for finishing just

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*Scrambled Brains

before 7:00 a.m. "Oh, we're not done yet," he gleefully informs me. Ah, he's quite enjoying this I finally catch on.

A veteran pats my back and says we take a light 2-mile run to finish off. I already AM FINISHED. Rick says he'll hold back and run with me. But I don't run, I plead. But it's too late; we're already headed down the trail of torture. Rick runs AND smiles. How does he carry on a conversation as well? He shares his Navy Seal training with me and a few other maggots also managing to keep pace. Rick proffers many life lessons from his own life. Raised as a foster child and finally finding a home in the Navy. He chokes back a tear or two.

He's Dr. Phil on Nike.

So engrossed in Rick's life story, I'm surprised when he says we're done after two miles.

I've survived Navy Seal Boot Camp. As tempted as I am to give it another go around, I think I'll find a class that starts after I'm awake AND after my muscles have recovered. See you in six years!

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