



# Damn It, Gym!

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When it comes to exercising, I'm a minimalist. I proudly exclaim that I'm active just enough to not be considered sedentary. Once a week I manage to sluggishly lace up my Reeboks and embark on a trek that only people like Lance Armstrong would attempt, of one to two miles. It's usually a thirteen-minute mile, a feat of great endurance.

When it's too hot for me to run outside I run at the gym, where I also lift weights once a week in a blissful, air-conditioned environment. Mind you, 100-pound bench presses prove difficult for most women who weigh less than 120 pounds, but my six-foot-tall, 165-pound body performs them with ease.

Not more than thirty seconds into my most recent run on the treadmill, an older man walks up from behind me and goes into a room partitioned by glass directly in front of me. He looks to be in his fifties or sixties, with some grey hair left around his ears, thick, large glasses, and short shorts with a grey shirt tucked in.

Committing his features to memory in case I want to write about him later, I continue my run while reading the captions *Days of our Lives* on the TV ahead of me.

Later, just to see what he's up to, I glance at him for a moment and notice him staring at me while in the midst of a stretch. He can't touch his toes, but he has strong arms, and he's throwing me a big, creepy smile.

I don't give it a second thought; painful grimaces often look like smiles. Maybe he has a pinched nerve that only allows him to turn his head in my direction.

I tune him out with help from my archaic, 128 MB MP3 player from 2001, which is blaring obscure and free music that I found on the Internet. The songs don't motivate much, but they're golden compared to the gym's music.

It's amazing how distracting some people can be at the gym. I've had a whole workout ruined by an exceptionally busty woman who performed unusually long stretches between each set on her workout machine. There's no way to concentrate with all that bending over, bending backward, and self-massage taking place six feet away from my 100-pound-laden bench press machine.

There's no way to concentrate now either. The older man is now on his back while thrusting his heels toward his chin. Because I've already described his short shorts (which are blue by the way), I won't go into the details. Twice during his activities, though, he turns his face toward mine and smiles. It's a giant, grey-toothed smile, complete with gleaming eyes that don't make me to feel wholesome, merry, or comfortable in any way.

My eyes sprint around the room in search for a diversion. What can make this horror disappear? The promotional posters of the gym do nothing. The TV, MP3 player, and sweaty passersby don't offer any relief from my treadmill-shaped prison.

Not another minute passes and the man is on his feet and coming toward me. Exiting the glass room, he performs a beeline toward my position, something I witness only with my peripheral vision because my eyes are almost literally glued to one of the commercial breaks of *Days of our Lives*.

He walks closer to me; closer still. He's right in front of my treadmill now and my adrenaline is starting to flow. His arm extends toward me. Before my trembling hand can hit the off button on my MP3 player, he is hand in hand with his wife, who unbeknownst to me, was running on the treadmill directly behind me.

As they walk to the exit of the gym together I'm relieved, but as my sixteen-minute run concludes (1.3 miles!) I feel a bit disappointed that the suggestive looks from the older man weren't for me. Wasn't I good enough for you, old man?

Maybe he didn't see me on the bench-press machine.