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English 4

23 January 2018

### The Man in the Yellow Shorts

Treadmills whine as tightly laced running shoes stomp on their sliding rubber paths. Unnecessarily loud groans and huffs escape the mouths of bulging weight lifters, while the black matted floor muffles the crashes of dropped dumbbells. Arrogant exercisers pose in the mirrors along the walls with phones in hand like children of Narcissus.

A lean caucasian woman hunches over and adjusts her orange headphones exploding in her ears, her thirty year-old muscles shaking with every movement. A rough towel rests on her smooth shoulder. Perspiration drips from every inch of her pale skin, and her tangled brown ponytail adheres to the back of her sticky neck. Her grey tank top, now stained with sweat, clings to her aching torso. The woman inhales deeply, the pungent mixture of body odor and rubber enters her nostrils, and a gush of humid air fills her desperate lungs.

The woman feels the wandering eyes of wrinkling saggy old men glued to her every move, making her arched eyebrows scrunch together in disgust and discomfort. She straightens her legs, instantly feeling strain in her tight hamstrings, and arches her back, grabbing the coarse towel with her clammy hand. After wiping her shiny forehead, she nonchalantly swings the small towel over her shoulder and grabs her chilled perspiring bottle. Bringing the drink to her thin chapped lips, her parched throat is engulfed with a flow of refreshing ice cold water. Taking a deep breath she adjusts her ponytail.

Searching around the room for her next endeavor, she locks her light blue eyes on an area of vacant stationary bikes. The woman climbs onto one of the uncomfortably hard seats, and slips her worn black running shoes into the strapped pedals. She fits her water bottle and towel in the shallow cup holders. Grasping onto the bike, her sweltering slippery hands are cooled by the machine's cold metal handle. With the click of a beeping button she vigorously starts pedalling, her legs moving rapidly in circles. Her knees and ankles crack and her quadriceps and hamstrings tighten.

In her peripheral vision, a scrawny old man in bright yellow shorts that are much too tight and short for him along with an equally fitting white wife beater mounts a vacant bike next to her. His eyes are stuck to her body like a magnet.

Ignoring her invasive neighbor, the brunette pushes her exhausted legs to go faster and with slippery palms grips the handles of the machine even tighter. Drops of sweat trickling down her forehead are caught in her eyebrows and her neck and chest are drenched. She glances at the blinking green timer on the machine, longing for time to pass by quicker. Her pace slows as her body excretes more and more sweat, but the pain hurts just the same, if not more. Her lungs beg for air as she pushes herself to pedal faster. For what feels like hours, she continues, her legs determined to move as rapidly as possible. Glancing down at the timer, she sighs with relief and dismounts the bike, feeling accomplished.

She opens her water bottle and lightly pours the freezing water on her already dripping forehead. She sets down the bottle and with the towel in her greasy palms, she rests her face in her hands, soaking up her excretions from her flushed face.

The woman looks around the overpopulated room seeking another activity. She approaches an endless rack of colorful weights, to her right a pair of steroid induced arms bulge as they lift weights larger than her torso. Choosing two five pounders, she starts lifting. Her arms start off feeling strong and loose, but after three sets of twenty-five, her muscles tighten and ache. After deciding that three sets is adequate enough, she sets the weights back on the rack, stretches her arms, then turns around.

To her surprise, the elderly man in the tight yellow shorts confidently stands in front of her, with droopy, yet intensely fixated eyes. Avoiding eye contact, she anxiously fast walks to the other side of the room.

Deciding to take a break, she sits on a padded red bench and observes her surroundings, partly for fear of her stalker. People of all ages are in the large, yet crowded room. A teenage girl, petite with short blonde hair sprints on a treadmill alongside a power walking middle-aged woman with curly auburn hair. Everyone looks different, but ultimately they are all doing the same thing.

Just as she starts to relax on the stiff bench, the same old man in the atrociously tight outfit stands in front of her, again focussed on her every move. Without any warning, he strides straight towards her. In sheer panic, she pretends to not see him and hurries away.

A stack of squishy black yoga mats is neglected in the corner of the room. Choosing one, she lays the mat and sits down, relaxed. She pulls out her iPhone from the pocket of her hot pink track shorts and changes her music from loud fast-paced songs, to calming instrumental tunes. Laying flat on the mat, she feels her sore abdomen loosen as she extends her arms and legs as long as she possibly can. After performing several stretching positions, the woman sits upright

and inhales deeply, the air reviving her deprived lungs, then returns the mat to its pile in the corner.

From the corner of her eye she recognizes the bright color of the tight yellow shorts, slowly nearing her. Then the shorts are stagnant. With panic in her eyes she stands still, trapped in the corner next to a pile of mats that would not work as self defense mechanisms. Slowly turning her head, she locks eyes with the ominous man who, with kind eyes and a warm smile, points to her feet. In confusion she tilts her head down to find her left shoe untied. With a sigh of relief she smiles back in gratitude and bends down to retie her laces.