

## A pain in the, well, everywhere

I haven't gone to the police about this yet, but there's a man who's trying to kill me.

Like many killers, he always seems to be enjoying himself. Remember John Wayne Gacy? Sure, he was a murderer, but he was also a part-time clown. And what's funnier than a clown, huh?

And so it is with my torturer, Tom. Whether I'm lying in a crumpled heap or just walking around begging for mercy, he looks just pleased as punch.

He calls himself a "personal trainer." I suppose the workout facility and the certificates on the wall and the roster of clients might back up his claim, but I say the jury is still out.

Nonetheless, with my 40th birthday creeping up and my "baby weight" still attached to my middle on the eve of my kid's 10th year, it was time to do something.

In the past I've joined gyms or embarked on exercise programs on my own, only to peter out after a month or so. It's the same old story: Decide to get in shape; shoot out of the starting gate with enthusiasm; try to change every bad health habit in a few weeks' time; and, after a month or so, get bored or discouraged and quit.

I'd always have good intentions of exercising on the appointed days, but then I'd be too tired, or gee, I had to work late, or I had a blister on my pinkie, or I just had to wash my hair. Anything to avoid it.

But now, there's Tom. If I come up with some lame excuse why I can't exercise, I have to call and tell him. Then I have to face him the next time I go in.

And so, I go. Grudgingly, much of the time, but still I go. Even if my favorite TV show is on. Or I'm cozy in bed and would rather have to watch "The View" than get out of it. Or I just ate Mexican or Indian food and don't think it's a good idea to be gallivanting around.

Apparently the value in going to a trainer isn't just that you will actually take your butt there instead of making excuses. The value also comes from the fact that they work you way harder than you work yourself. Make that way, way harder.

Left on my own, I'd push until I was a little sweaty and my muscles felt a little burn. With Tom, that's just a good warmup. More than merely feeling a "little burn," my muscles seem engulfed in flames like a stuntman on the set of "The Towering Inferno."

I've noticed something about trainers, not just Tom, but others on his staff. They're awfully flippin' excited to see you push yourself. When the going gets tough, the trainers get rowdy. While the clients are huffing "Arggh!" or "Oomph" or "OHMIGOD!" during a rough set, the trainers are inevitably hooting "Woo! Woo!" and cranking the music.

To which I can usually only respond, "Oof-dah!" They might take this to mean simply, "You are killing me," but what I'm really saying is, "You !^%@\$!\*! I hope you \*&\*!@^ and ?"!@#\$ and then %%&!%@\$ yourself!!"

But here's the funny thing: I actually kind of like this training. Tom makes me push myself to do more than I thought I was capable of. There are times when I just can't do one more rep or walk for one more minute, and yet I do. I might not look forward to going, but I always feel great when I leave.

Even after the workouts where he attaches my legs to pulleys on the wall and then makes me walk on the treadmill, every step like trudging through oatmeal. Even when he sashes me to a band and makes me do endless donkey kicks until I feel like I should be pulling a carriage full of Amish people.

And there's one more thing I like about training with Tom: He use to work part time as a fireman, so if my thighs finally catch fire because of too much friction, I'm safe.