

Torture, Tabata Style

By Jodie Cain Smith

“Did you just start working out?” asks a beautiful Australian woman of probably fifty years old as I literally lay on the fitness room floor of my local gym praying that I don’t vomit. She continues, “I’ve been working out for about four years now, and I promise, it gets easier.”

Well, good for you! I think and consider kicking her in the neck, but then I realize that I can’t lift my leg that high. And, no, I didn’t just start working out.

“I hope you’ll join us again on Thursday,” the beautiful woman says and smiles at me so genuinely that I honestly feel guilty for immediately hating her.

After a sad attempt at stretching, I push myself up to a standing position and start to clean my sweat off the equipment that I used to torture myself for the last 45 minutes: one of those half balance ball thingies, a body bar (the leader of the group told me not to use anything under 9lbs), two 7lb dumbbells (“Anything under 6 would be a waste of your time.”), and a blue mat that was now covered in makeup colored droplets of sweat. (I forgot to remove my makeup before going to the gym, which meant for 45 minutes my makeup mixed with my anti-aging creams and pooled in my eyes. Red faced, red eyed, drenched, and stinking like a wet dog, I forced a smile, “Absolutely, I’ll be back. See you Thursday!”

The workout was called Tabata, high intensity interval training that requires the participant to do ridiculously cruel exercises for 20 seconds, rest for 10 seconds, and then repeat until you either pass out or die. For 45 minutes I *attempted* squats with side kicks, cross over jumps and squats using the half ball thingie, three different types of sit-ups, jumping jacks, renegade rows from a plank position, burpees with dumbbells, and, my personal favorite, crab walks. Lil, the beautiful Australian woman, an adorable Asian woman who apparently doesn’t have sweat glands, and the one man in the group lapped me twice while I prayed for the strength to lift my ass off the ground with my arms and crab walk across the floor. Pure, complete, total torture!

But in the spirit of renovating my backside, I will go back on Thursday. I am now determined to be able to crab walk. I don’t know why I need this skill, but I now feel like I must be able to crab walk. So, here is my new challenge: for the next four weeks, I will crab walk with the beautiful Australian woman on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. (Less tortuous cardio workouts will be completed on Monday, Wednesdays, and Fridays.) After four weeks, I will take my measurements and re-evaluate my need to crab walk. Maybe in four weeks, my ass will be smaller, which would make it much easier to lift off the ground.

For now, however, a short prayer is in order. (Please pause for a moment while I try to get out of this chair and kneel. Ouch.)

Dear Lord, please protect me tonight from debilitating leg cramps that will catapult me from bed and onto the floor causing me to scream out Claire Huxtable style, "Cliff! Cliff!" For my Cliff is away. No one is here to hear my cries of agony. I will be forced to lie on the floor until you finally grant me the strength to stand. I could be there for weeks. Amen.