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- 1 - Draper here... Me and The Mob

Today I'm quite sure I'm 22 until I look in the mirror. Then, there's all the proof I need to convince me I'm mistaken. I brush my teeth and my hair -- got some of both left -- and head out the door. The 22-year-old catches up with me by the time I reach my pickup and we drive to the gym together.

How come I never feel entirely alone? I always have a companion to my right or left or a step or two behind or before me -- another self who watches, directs or makes running comments on my behavior. Give me a break. The latter character is the one with whom I have most difficulty.

Freeway traffic is light and the eight-mile cruise gives me time to daydream. Some guy cuts me off, I threaten his life. A lady in her black Mercedes jabbering on her cell phone -- selling real estate, no doubt -- is going 45 in the 65 and I pretend to rear-end her gleaming status symbol. We exchange glares as I accelerate around her. Some kid in a Celica has an eye on the space ahead of me and I floor it, filling it before he can. That's my space, slick. The shadowy escort hovering above the passenger seat snickers. I'm heading to the gym to lift steel.

I back into a favorite parking space near the gym's rear door, ten paces, exactly. Imagine, in New York City I'd have to take two subways and walk three blocks before entering a monumental building and accessing an elevator to carry my sorry backside to the fifth floor where a gym is hidden beyond a maze of hallways, doors and a stuffy locker room. I say this only to brace myself, fortify myself, magnify my good fortune of living in a small town on the coast of California. Heck, I could be in Iran or North Korea... Kaputsistan. Let's blast it, men.

I realize at this moment one of my persistent companions is sitting on my shoulder chattering like a chimp. My last muttering, "Let's blast it, men" was a dead giveaway. I grab my gym bag and charge up the short flight of steps, tempted to look behind me to see if I'm being followed. I resist. The gym is there in all its splendor, and I thank God.

Maybe I need a training partner, I say curiously as my various unseen companions clamor for my attention. No thanks, the jealousy would be unmanageable. There's already a mob in my limited space. Besides, who could tolerate the peculiarities I've so carefully developed over the years? Forget that. How could I tolerate a training partner's carefully developed oddities? Alone is good, just me and my band of madmen.

I haven't done farmer walks for a long time. I grab a pair of 90s and I'm on my way.

Halfway around the gym, I'm reminded of the functional beauty of the exercise and mankind's inherent love of hard work... a thing to be admired. As I hurry past the squat racks, I realize the vital power of the lower back and vow to never let it wane. Breathing like a racehorse, I dodge

the cable crossover system and applaud my love for challenge. I step up and over the lifting platform with buckling knees, and try to recall the last time I deadlifted... killer, man! On the sharp turn after the last of four bench presses, my traps cry out like scalded baboons, and 10 feet from the grizzly starting point, my grip oozes like melting wax. My tongue is sticking out and wagging.

Crashbaboombang. I replace the dumbbells as if they were on fire. Gee, that was fun. I shake my smoldering hands till the flames give way to a thin stream of smoke. The 100s are within reach and I contemplate new meaning to warming up. Three more sets... make that, hot and heavy walks, stumbles and staggerings.

What's this about neglecting my deadlifts? I consider the lapse in my training performance, secretly of course, lest I, the Bomber, am exposed by a lurking big-mouth companion. I quickly rationalize the shortcoming -- I've been doing lottsa widegrip bentover rows, which hit the lower back; been including full-range-of-motion seated lat rows, also providing healthy low-back engagement; squatting regularly places a robust demand on the back; so does heavy curling, dumbbell cleans in prep for pressing... a guy can't do everything. I run out of excuses and border on whining.

This gives my wisecracking self an opportunity to berate me. "You're losing it, Draper. Get a job!" Once he starts there's no stopping him. "Bomber? Ha! You couldn't strike a match. Flick a Bic. Arc a spark in the dark."

There's only one thing to do. Resume deadlifts. Back to the platform, men, and you know what that means: the naked truth, the bare facts... unclothed reality. And once you've faced the ugly truth, bombito, it's the long, painful crawl to the bathroom at three in the morning, not to mention the fresh-off-the-slab Frankenstein walk for the next 10 days. Master, it was the deadlifts.

And we all know an unattended deadlift bar in time absorbs gravity from the earth's center, thus giving the bar the effect of being extraordinarily heavy. Add to that the corresponding weakening (and flabbing) of one's unattended muscles and we have a natural catastrophe. Strain, no gain, pain, jiggle... again. Strain, no gain, pain, jiggle. One more time.

But this is good, don't you see? We can't blast everything all the time. We blast to overload our muscles and cause hypertrophy, and to satisfy our killer instinct. When we near the edge, when the blasting has done its work, we retreat. We continue to nudge the well-worked muscular region, yes, but we move on to other targets worthy of blasting.

Maybe I, to be more mature, should tone down the term "blast" to "hit hard," or some less-explosive and less-childish variation. Maybe not. I could have said "targets worthy of hard work," but it's so dull.

The muscles adapt to the same exercises and the same set-rep schemes. We need to know what to change, when to change and how. Is there a mystic in the house, a detective or clairvoyant? A miracle-worker? No, but I do have a variety of mysterious cohorts close by with whom I regularly confer. Perhaps we can help.

When you're young and fresh, it all works. Just do it, pay attention, learn and grow. As you progress you need more training intensity and order to your workout. A routine for six weeks before tweaking or revamping is a good rule of thumb for the newly committed iron pumper.

One or two exercises per muscle group for three or four sets of six-to-eight reps twice a week is a clean and mean scheme. Rock on.

During the unfolding months the road gets rugged. Where once it was smooth and straightforward, it is now steep and twisting. Gains are not fast enough, doubts pile high, conflicting information pours in, confusion mounts and the workouts spit and sputter like an old washing machine. You press on. Others don't. They lose.

Pressing on is tough and daring, instructive and healthy. You remind yourself that no one said it would be easy. You look some more, you read, you observe and you ask. The answers roll in and you rock on and progress stops. You're sure of this. The harder you train and the more you look, the less you see that's encouraging. What's up: overtraining, undertraining, periodization (huh?), aerobics (sheesh!), more volume, heavier weight, supersets, Pilates (wha?). It's all French to you.

It's been a few years, 10 to 20 or 30, and in spite of your research and intelligence, you made some gains. They may have earned you some respect, a trophy or two or the resistance and might to meet life's challenges -- precious possessions all. You press on, you rock on and you continue to seek answers and grow. Stopping would be like withdrawing one's antennae or shutting down the radar or voluntarily masking one's eyes and ears. Inconceivable! The solutions and advancements are gained, as always, by continuous touch and feel, intuition and nuance. Hard work and hope.

The routines haven't changed -- the exercises, sets and reps -- they've only slipped and slid while you rocked and rolled. And pressed on. Life's a series of questions and answers, causes and effects, seeking and finding... finding something, anything, whether it's what you sought or not.

I don't recall having an answer to anything, once I passed the first few refreshing months of training. I just learned how to rock on.

Now, when it comes to flying my own personal aircraft, all I do is get plenty of air under my wings, keep my head up and soar with all my might. I leave the details to my ever-ready, ever-present crew breathing down my neck like stealthy eagles.

Bombs away... DD

2 - Laree here, taking over with online news

As I write this, we're about 10 days into our discussion of Bill Starr's classic book, *The Strongest Shall Survive*. The array of topics in the book offers a bite for everyone; topics to date include quarter squats, brewer's yeast, injury care, magnesium, layoffs, backoff sets, wheat germ oil, timed squats, deadlifts, lecithin, flexibility, explosive work and the backbone of it all, 5x5 routines. Any of these topics catch your fancy?

<http://www.davedraper.com/go4x.mvc?ID=Strongest>

You know, the truth is, Dave's wrong about cardio. (There, I said it.) At least, I know for certain most women need more cardio work, but I think men need more cardio than Dave suggests, too. Now, I know his basic premise is that people will skip the gym entirely if they have to do cardio, or they'll skip their weight training in favor of wandering along on a treadmill watching tv, and of course in those cases, he's bang on: skip the cardio and get on the gym floor. All others, catch a ride on this link to discover just how much mileage I got over in the forum by describing Dave as "flat wrong" in the topic line.

<http://www.davedraper.com/go4x.mvc?ID=Flat-wrong>

You're sure to remember Chris McClinch, the guy who wrote the 10 Commandments of Getting Cut, easily one of the most-accessed pages on our website. He's back with another diet installment, one he claims is not perfect, simply Good Enough.

<http://www.davedraper.com/go4x.mvc?ID=Good-enough>

Sometimes I like to make you work, and I also like to offer you treasures turned up by my friends in the IronOnline forum. It's always a pleasure to leave you with a grin, so let's hop on over to Staten Island's Mario Strong's musclehead site, where he bios our favorite Hollywood big-back stars from the 1930s to the present. I didn't know Serge Nubret was born in Guadeloupe; never knew the Three Stooges met Hercules.

<http://www.davedraper.com/go4x.mvc?ID=Hollywood-biceps>

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IronOnline Forum:

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IronOnline Health and Fitness Database:

<http://www.healthandfitnesswiki.com>

Dave's Top Squat:

<http://www.davedraper.com/go4x.mvc?ID=TopSquat>

Dave's new EZ curl thick bar:

<http://www.davedraper.com/go4x.mvc?ID=Thick-EZ-Curl>

Dave's thick bar handles:

<http://www.davedraper.com/go4x.mvc?ID=ThickBarHandles>

Dave's Bomber Blend whey protein powder:

<http://www.davedraper.com/go4x.mvc?ID=Bomber>

IronOnline bookstore:

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Super Spectrim, Anabol Naturals, NSP, NOW Foods, Ageless Growth, Udo's, Body Ammo:

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