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The Remy -4207

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For the past two weeks I've been talking myself into not missing one day on the new exercise bike I bought last Christmas. It seems that over the past three or four years my age was not the only statistic that has been increasing. Both my weight and waste-line has more than kept up with my increased years. But what made my new found stockiness even worse was that my wife decided to become involved with aerobic exercise. She lost all the weight that age was suppose to give her. During the past few months our friends began calling me my wife's picture of Doreen Gray. But unlike the picture, I'm not getting older, just wider.

On the grounds, that I did not want to become the new, "Laurel & Hardy", comedy team, I decided that it was time to compete with my wife for the most weight loss in one's lifetime. At first, I joined her in the never ending array of diets. My favorite was entitled, "The Toot Soup Diet". It consisted of eating all water vegetables for a period of 7 days. I never made it past the third day because my work asked me to either tie a bottle of perfume to my pants or get the heck off the diet. Guess where the title to this diet comes from.

Other famous diets included the three day miracle diet which canceled Einstein's theory that time was constant. The starvation diet which always ended up having you gain at least three pounds. And the ever popular, "all you can eat diet", which ended up costing me the price of the book plus five pounds.

After failing on diet after diet and having a net gain in weight, I decided to exercise off that extra bulk. Exercise is obviously an important beginning for the health conscious adult. Many exercise systems have come and gone. For example, the high energy aerobic plan which does succeed in getting rid of that extra weight, but also has the side effect of crippling one for life. Swimming is a successful means of losing weight. But when you only have an outside pool or the ocean to swim in, that possibility loses its attractiveness in winter. Competitive games like racquetball and inside tennis is also a great way to get rid of that unwanted bulk. But the younger generation has a way of embarrassing us older citizens into hiding in our homes.

Just before the holidays, my wife and I went shopping for the ultimate exercise machine. We looked at everything from rowing machines to various types of single wheeled bicycles that guaranteed weight loss or your money back. One bike company even claimed that if you didn't lose weight in the first week, the company would take both you and your wife to the restaurant of your choice.

I then noticed the ultimate in weight loss bicycles. There it stood, behind all the mountains of weights, bars, rowing machines, and various isometric devices. The REMY-4207. It was a beauty. It had a s-shaped black vinyl chair. The front of the machine had a large black disk with bicycle pedals attached. The body of the machine was white which perfectly offset the black giant disc. It was the style of exercise machine that allowed you to exercise and have a

beer at the same time.

What impressed me most about this particular machine was the computer panel which was placed directly in front of the rider. It showed how fast you were going, how long you were riding, how many calories you burnt off, and how many projected calories you would burn off in one hour.

Being a toy lover from way back, I had to have this exercise bike. I tried to convince my wife that if I bought this newest of toys, I could have the body of Rambo within a few short months.

"Think of the future medical bills I could save if I have the foresight to purchase this bike.", I exclaimed in the hopes that my wife would let me have my way. I finally convinced her by agreeing that she could spend a similar amount on anything she wanted. The bike was delivered the next morning.

I decided, against the very loud complaints of my almost hysterical wife, that I would place the bike in the family room. I told her that it was the only logical location because I could watch the news and become beautiful at the same time. My first exercise session was one of total confusion. I set the bike to the lowest work load and set the time to the minimum 20 minute period. At first, I thought the bike was broken because none of the controls would register. After reading the operating manual I discovered the "on" switch. After completing the twenty minute period, I ran into the bathroom to find out how much weight I had lost. A pound. I lost a pound. Sylvester Stylone, here I come.

The next few weeks saw the newness of the exercise bicycle evolve from exciting to tedious. Because I didn't want to hear, "I told you so!", from you know who, I refused to go off schedule. So there I was, exhausted from a full day at work and begrudgingly walking toward my bike. Other than my wife, the only thing that kept me going was that twenty minutes was not that long.

My wife was in the laundry room and my daughter was at her friends house doing what teens are supposed to do. Over the past few weeks I had not lost much weight because my intake of calories had doubled. But my legs did feel stronger and I did feel healthier - almost younger.

I sat down on the REMY 4207, switched on CNN, and off into nowhere I rode. Of course, at that precise second I didn't know how close to reality that statement was. My ride started like all of my rides had started over the past two weeks. At the start my legs began to ache and then loosen up within the first two minutes. I felt pretty good, so I decided to increase the RPM's and thus my potential weight loss. If I kept up this pace, I thought, I wouldn't feel the least bit guilty about that extra cup of ice cream after dinner.

But slowly my peripheral vision began to blur. First it wasn't that noticeable and I thought that some sweat must have dripped into my eyes. But it became more obvious as time went on. It was not subsiding so I decided to slow down and get off the bike. I thought that this loss of vision must be exhaustion or maybe some sort of vitamin deficiency. As I slowed down the blurred vision started to get worse. In fact, I was losing my sight. With this loss, I also lost the capacity to breath. Not knowing what was going on, I sped up the bike which had the effect of reducing the loss of sight and enabled me to catch my breath.

Now I was starting to worry. Like my sight, my hearing was becoming thwarted. I could only hear the whirring of the bike. By this time, my peripheral vision was completely blurred, only allowing me to focus on what was directly in front of me. When I attempted to call my wife, I was terrified to discover that I couldn't make any sounds. It was as if

I was imprisoned within myself. Is this what a heart attack or a stroke feels like? Is this the big one?

With my loss of senses and thus my surroundings, could I have fallen off the bike in the mortal world? Is my wife crying over me in panic because my life was ending?

If this was happening, I didn't witness it because all I could see was a pin-point clarity directly in front of me. Again I tried to slow the bike down with the same result of making my condition worse. Everything started to turn black. But as soon as I sped the bike up some light came back into focus.

Past panic, I had no idea of what to do. Should I just stop? But in doing this I realized that my whole world would come to an end. If I kept on peddling, where was I peddling to? This was when I noticed the pin-point size light which appeared in the little bit of horizon I was allowed to see. Squinting, I noticed that my peripheral blur seemed to be traveling at great speeds. It was as if I was moving through space at a great velocity. But. That was impossible. I'm not moving. But what am I doing? Where am I? Could I have arrived in the between the now and after life? The only thing that I was sure of was that I probably would reach the answer soon.

The blur then became streaks of colors which made my speed feel even more intense. Because the pin-like light in front of me was all I could focus on, I was becoming mesmerized by how clear it appeared. Then a shock spread through my assumed dying body. The light was growing larger. I then realized that I was traveling toward it. This must be it. This must be where I am spending my eternity.

I understood that day that a fear of the unknown is the most intense type of fear one can experience. My eyes fled the approaching light and tared into my suspended arms. Shock filled what was left of my psyche because I began to witness the skin of my arms splintering off like sand blowing off a dune during a summer storm. I could see through my thinning outer layer and into the blood filled inner tissues of my arms. After a few

seconds, my skin was gone leaving the pulsating inner structures of my body. Lacking an outer covering I thought I would witness an explosion of my own self. But instead, like my skin, the inside tissues of my arms were also being blown away.

I looked down at my legs which had atrophied to half of their thickness with white disintegrating bone tissue becoming more and more obvious. The colored blur which surrounded me had now sped into a pulsating white smear of passing light which emanated from the larger light at the end of a now obvious tunnel. This light had grown into an immense hole destined to swallow up what was left of me. The hole was spinning, spitting out white plasma like light which now completely surrounded me.

For the first time since my journey began, I started to comprehend a high moaning sound around me. The closer I came to the light, the louder the sound became. The faint whining sound evolved into screams of others who also must be in the act of falling into the light. Could they be riding their own REMY 4207 to their destiny? I also started getting back some feeling in my body. At first, it felt like a slight electric charge. But with time it was obvious that it was pain. I was now, for the first time since my journey began, questioning whether or not to choose the darkness by slowing down the bike.

The closer I approached the light, the faster I felt I was traveling and the more I disintegrated. This was it. I knew that if I stopped pedaling I would be thrown into a black abyss that would never end. And if I kept pedaling I would fall into a hole that led to probably everywhere. Looking down, I observed the computer panel on the bike. I saw that the bike read at maximum RPM and maximum work load. The miles were rotating at such a fast speed that it was impossible to read. The calories expended appeared blank. The only scale I could read was the timer that was just approaching the twenty minute mark.

Looking up into the light I could see that I was within seconds of being swallowed up. My mortal self would be totally disbursed. Afraid to close my eyes

I glanced at the time once more. It struck twenty minutes.

“Are you finished yet?”

My eyes had finally shut because of what was happening to me. But what I had just heard created a curious thought. Am I finished yet? Was this God talking to me? Why did he sound like my wife?

I opened my eyes and saw myself sitting on the REMY 4207. I was together again and in my family room.

“Dinner is going to be ready in the next few minutes. So if you’re going to take a shower, I suggest you do it now.” The sound of my wife’s voice bellowed out of the kitchen waking me to the reality that I was still very much alive. I care-

fully got off the bike and proceeded to follow my wife’s voice. She was preparing dinner and because I was so ecstatic to be alive and able to see her again, I wrapped my arms around her.

“Are you nuts?” , she screamed as soon as I touched her. “Look at you. You’re all wet. Get away from me and take your shower. You’re disgusting!”

You should have seen me a few minutes ago, I thought to myself remembering what the insides of my body looked like as it was being blown off my bones.

“OK, I’m going.” I exclaimed as I walked into the bathroom. Was I dreaming or was I close to that stroke or

heart attack? Time was confusing my thoughts like it does to a bad dream after you wake up. I looked into the bathroom mirror to see that I was still very much alive. Below my feet was the bathroom scale. So I decided to see how much weight this near death experience made me lose. After weighing myself, I saw my sweating body staring back at me and sighing. “My God, I gained a pound.”

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