

HED: My Own Hall of Justice

DEK: The writer finds that a training notebook reveals more than sets and reps.

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By Carey Rossi

Today I came across my old training notebook. Illustrations of Wonder Woman's adventures play out on its cover and throughout its pages. Flying through the air in her invisible plane and deflecting bullets with her gold bracelets, I wanted to grow up to be Wonder Woman. Now here amongst her tales of fighting the forces of evil, my own adventures are recorded. Except instead of frames in a comic strip, my series is played out in sets and reps.

This training diary tells the story of a woman who wanted to do everything right. The workouts are methodical: two days on, one day off, three days on and one day off. It reveals a woman whose running pace times are getting faster and her bench press is getting stronger. Awake at five, at the gym by six, work from 9 o'clock until whenever. Return home and prepare for the next day. Any change seemed to upset a simple existence. As the notebook pages turn, the workouts change. The pace times disappear and the frequency of the workouts decrease, becoming almost sporadic.

At this point, the rigid structure crumbles around me. No longer do I have the strength to hold up the walls of a marriage that doesn't make sense anymore. No longer can I fight off the inevitable that I am going to have to fight for my job. No longer can I bear the real-life dramas being played out by my co-workers as I see my own private life slip away.

Since I was 16, my Hall of Justice was the weight room. It was there as a teenager I began to deflect life's bullets with dumbbells. It is in the gym that I strategized my plans for solving my problems whether they involved school, work, family, friends and eventually, my marriage. It is in the weight room that I battled my grief when my father died. But now, when I need the power to cope the most, I hadn't the strength to lift the dumbbells that had helped me slay past grievances. Clad in my battle armor of headphones and weight-lifting gloves, I would wander the gym aimlessly wondering what to do next. And the pages of my notebook reflect this uncertainty and lack of purpose. Until my series stops and only the frames of Wonder Woman's victories illustrate the notebook's pages.

It has been a year since my last entry. Tonight as I look upon the reflection in the weight room mirror, I notice it isn't the same person who stood in this spot a year ago. The reflection is of someone who found a more fulfilled existence by living spontaneously—in and outside of the gym. This woman standing before me in headphones and weight-lifting gloves is ready to use her dumbbells for her own good—not just battling evil.