

Spin Class

By ChronoEclipse

Running down the front steps of her very first apartment, 22-year-old Samara Knapp sighed happily at her new life in the city. She had just graduated college in the spring and was starting an internship at a top marketing firm.

It was early in the morning and the sun was shining brightly, illuminating Samara's long luscious strawberry blonde hair. Despite having a late night last night out dancing and partying around the city with her friends, she had woken up bright and early to go for a morning job and join the local gym.

Dressed in spandex bright purple and black running shorts that hugged her toned muscular thighs and her perfect peach-shaped ass and a lavender-toned sports bra that framed her perky cleavage well, she jogged effortlessly down the block. Men's heads turned as she passed them and city workers whistled as the shapely athletic young woman passed by.

A few blocks down - about halfway between her internship and apartment was a trendy gym - 'TIME CRUNCH' the sign read with a logo of a muscular hand and arm squeezing a clock until it began to crumple between it's fingers.

Inside the place looked like any other health club - A handful of attractive women on treadmills and ellipticals, 20-somethings showing off their perfect young bodies and 30-somethings who were working hard to stave off any signs of aging and combat their failing metabolism for at least another month. Young muscle-head bros in the weight lifting area, slapping each others pecks and talking about getting swole while checking the area for girls to hit on; middle-aged men and women who were still committed to their resolution of getting into better shape and improve their health as they sat on circuit machines trying to figure out

how they worked - and of course the young impossibly fit staff milling about and looking like they all had better things to do.

Samara opened her phone and started to make a TikTok. Brushing her hair back with her hand she held the phone above her at her best angle and struck a sexy pose in her work-out attire.

“Hey! Just joined a new gym in my neighborhood... checking it out! It looks pretty fly - lots of new equipment it looks like and kind of a younger crowd, which is great because who wants a bunch of olds staring at you while you’re doing your booty crunches! Anyway I'm going to try it out and then I'll post another update after I'm all sore and super sweaty!” She said with a bright smile into the phone and flashed the peace sign.

As she began to post it to her account she caught the eye of a couple women around her moms age standing nearby with towels around their shoulders scowling at her in disapproval. She smirked at them and shrugged as she walked to the locker room.

Samara did some warm-up stretching over on a mat by the weight training area, silently flirting the whole time with a couple young guys who were doing an ab workout across from her. She made a point to do a lot of stretches that caused her to bend down and stick her tight round booty out in their direction, and then followed up with lifting her long leg behind her back and up above her head to the side to show just how incredibly flexible she was.

The 22-year-old bit her lip and grinned as she gathered her stuff and saw that her warm-up had pinched tents in both of the men’s gym shorts. She skipped off to go try one of the club’s classes.

“Hey, what's your number?” One of the guys called after her.

She spun around, grinning a pretty smile at them as she walked backwards out of the room.

“Phone number? What are you forty? Catch me on Insta - @HotGirlSamarra - two R’s.” She said with a wink and then stuck out her tongue and flashed a peace sign at the bros as she exited the room.

Samara flipped her long silky hair and grinned proudly knowing that those guys would be slipping into her DMs by the end of the day. She walked over to the spin studios to finish up her morning workout with a nice intense spin class.

She saw a group of 20-somethings getting onto their bikes in studio A with black-light neon club lighting and ground thumping beats blasting from the sound system. It felt like her kind of scene for sure so she grabbed the door handle to go join the class. However as she tried to open the door a staff member’s hand came out and kept her from entering.

“Sorry, only the members who are signed up can join the class.” A tall, athletic-looking woman in her 30s dressed in the Time Crunch polo shirt explained.

“Oh... uh, so how do I sign up?” Samara asked.

The friendly but intimidating staff member lifted her tablet up to use it.

“I can sign you up... unfortunately this class is booked... but there’s another spin class in an hour and a half in this studio or one starting in 10 minutes in studio B that still has some open slots...” The woman informed Samara.

Samara smirked. Her plans after this were to spend the day having fun - maybe text her friends and see who was awake yet to grab brunch and then head out to the beach, no way was she going to waste an hour and a half of her day waiting to take a spin class...

“Well, obvy i’m going to pick the one in 10 minutes.” She replied.

The staff member raised an eyebrow and then shrugged.

“Oookay. You’re signed up for the spin class in studio B. You can head in whenever you’re ready.” The woman told her and gestured toward the spin studio across the hallway.

Samara entered studio two and immediately regretted her choice. Looking around the room all she saw were gaggles of lame, out-of-shape, middle-aged women. She looked to be the only woman in this room under the age of 35. Maybe even under the age of 40!

There was a trio of Karen’s in the corner of the room looking snooty and severe, complaining about how their ‘nice neighborhood’ was changing and that their Twitter accounts had been disabled for just exercising their freedom of speech.

Standing by the window into the club were a pair of thirsty cougars who were eyeing the young men working out lecherously. They were both in good shape but their wrinkled leathery skin clung to their soft toned arms and legs and crinkled in folds on their exposed tummies.

A few roly-poly gray-haired grandmotherly types were waddling around the room examining the bikes, sweating just from their warm-ups. One of these women tapped Samara on the arm with a pudgy hand.

“Just so you know - I baked some brownies for the class. They’re on the table in the corner. Help yourself!” The Mrs. Claus look-alike informed Samara with a friendly wrinkled smile.

“You brought brownie... to a gym?” Samara asked, staring at the old woman in disbelief.

The older woman nodded, not picking up on the 22-year-olds judgmental tone.

“Oh it was no trouble at all! My grandkids aren’t coming to visit again until next week so I needed *somebody* to bake for! Aren’t you cold in that honey? You have practically nothing on! Let me go see if I can find

someone to turn the AC down in here!” The kindly granny insisted and then shuffled off.

Samara stood there by herself for a few minutes looking both bored and uncomfortable, folding her right arm across her chest and holding her bicep as she sighed deeply thinking that she should get out of here before one of these women notices how young she is and asks her to show them all how to use their cell phones. She glanced to her right at the group of soccer moms chatting with each other about ‘mom stuff’.

“I’ve gotta skedaddle as soon as this is done. I have to pick up Keirnan a new Lacrosse uniform... maybe three at the rate my kids go through them!” A middle-aged woman with a double chin and short cropped, graying brown hair told the other ladies.

“Oh I know Susan! Isn’t it awful? You know, they say that girls take better care of their clothing than boys do but my daughters are just as bad!” A tall matronly blonde woman replied.

“If it’s stains you’re looking to get out, here’s a trick I learned from one of the moms at our PTA meeting a few weeks ago - you soak the clothing in a tub of vinegar overnight and then use a tide-to-go pen on the spot and throw it in the washing machine on the delicate cycle. I’ve tried twice now and it worked like a charm!” A wide-hipped woman with leathery tanned skin and salt and pepper hair explained to her cohort.

“I thought I was done with all of that now that my kids are in college but nope! They come home every weekend with a hamper full of laundry for mom to take care of!” A short plump woman with dark, permed hair informed the group.

“Emily, your oldest just graduated didn’t she? Any light at the end of the tunnel or-” The tall blonde mom asked the woman with fading red hair and glasses standing next to her.

Emily held up a puffy finger to her friend and looked over at Samara who at that moment was wondering whether she should just ditch the class

and come back another time when she could spin with people her own age.

“Hold that thought Judith.” Emily said to the blonde woman as she broke away from their gaggle and walked over to Samara.

Samara spied the ginger Gen-Xer approaching her and froze like a deer in headlights. She found herself shaking Emily’s veiny hand.

“Hi! You look new here. I’m Emily.” The red-haired older woman said with a warm smile.

“Uh... Samara.” The young strawberry blonde mumbled.

“Don’t worry! We don’t bite!” Emily said, chuckling.

“Oh... okay...” Samara replied, still wondering why this woman who was old enough to be her mother was talking to her.

“I know these classes can feel a little “awkward” as you kids might say, a little intimidating if you don’t know anyone.... You know, I’ve actually been coming to this gym since I was around your age!” Emily said, putting a hand supportively on Samara’s arm and squeezing it.

Samara frowned, wondering what it would be like to attend the same gym for like 30 years and going from being one of the ‘hot young thangs’ to being an old has-been with a muffin top and kids as old as most of the staff here. She didn’t even know that Time Crunch had been around that long.

The two guys from the weight room strutted by the window causing the pair of cougars to hollar and make some comments about how tight their butts were. Samara looked out at them wondering if she could signal them to come save her from having to spend any more time with these old ladies.

Emily turned around to see what Samara was staring at and saw the two muscular bros high fiving one another.

“Ah, I remember when I used to be able to get the attention of guys like that...” The older redhead sighed wistfully.

Samara immediately thought about how the guys had gotten her contact info. She wasn't going to rub it in to Emily, and besides she doubted that the older woman even knew what instagram was, or if she had it was probably from a news report that said that it was dangerous!

“Uh yeah...” Was all the 22-year-old said in response.

“Aw well, can't be young forever... let me introduce you to the other ladies.” Emily said, putting her hand on Samara's exposed back and leading her over to the group of soccer moms.

Samara stood uncomfortably in front of the group of matronly women feeling like she did every year around Christmas when her aunts all gathered around her to ask her a million questions about her life and then scrutinize the clothes she was wearing.

“Ladies, this is Samara. She's new to the class. Samara, this is Susan.” Emily said, pointing to the woman with short graying brown hair. “Judith...” She added, pointing to the spindly blonde. “Brenda,” Emily gestured toward the tanned woman with salt and pepper hair. “...and Pam.” Emily finished pointing to the short woman with the perm.

The women all greeted the 22-year-old warmly, remarking jealousy on her smooth skin, and firm body and vibrant hair.

“We were just talking about how hard it is now to monitor what kids these days see online with the tiktap and snappies and meetmeets and what-have-you. Do you have any tips on keeping the bad stuff from those websites off-limits?” Brenda asked unironically.

Samara paused looking around to see if anyone laughed at how stupid and out-of-touch Brenda's statement was. Like, she didn't even seem to understand the difference between an app and a website. When no one did, the young woman just shook her head.

"I uh, don't have any kids..." Samara responded diplomatically.

"Oh well, it's never too early to start thinking of these things!" Pam chimed in.

"I honestly don't know if I even want kids. I mean, I'm like just out of college and I'm just kind of living life and having fun before I'm too old!" Samara replied and then blushed hoping that the 'too old' line didn't offend the women.

The older ladies looked like they were going to continue pressuring Samara to find a guy, settle down and start having children - the way her mom and aunts always do. But Emily quickly shushed them all.

"Here comes Rafael!" Emily said, pointing to the man who just walked in.

Rafael was a short, slender man dressed in spandex cycling gear and a rainbow colored rimmed cap. He had a goatee and an earring and a big toothy smile.

"Ladies! How are my gals doing today!?" He shouted with some big Oprah energy.

"Hiiii Rafael!" The older women cooed back at him.

"I'm seeing a lot of cottage cheese thighs and love handles out there! Nothing that a few months on the bikes with me can't fix though!... and what's this? We have a new girl! What's your name, new girl?" Rafael asked, pointing at Samara.

“Um, I'm Samara.” She said softly. Normally she would be happy to introduce herself but in this crowd she still felt very self-conscious of the fact that every other woman was at least twice as old as she was.

“Well helloooooo Samara! That's a pretty name! And that's not the only thing that's pretty about you, girlfriend! Why don't you take this bike right up front, by me. I'd love a little eye candy to watch during the class.” He said, giving a big wink to the older women in the room who all laughed heartily.

Samara assumed that they were laughing because Samara was definitely *not* the kind of eye-candy that Rafael was interested in. But she didn't mind being up front. It at least saved her from getting stuck behind one of these chubby walrus butts some of the other women in the spin class were rocking.

She heard the women around her groaning and panting as they struggled to get up onto their bikes. Samara on the other hand hopped up onto her seat effortlessly. The screen on Samara's asked her to enter her current age. She enthusiastically entered in '22' and stats about her blood pressure and heart rate appeared on the screen in front of her with a big digital '22' in the center.

“Okay gal pals! Get ready for the bike ride of a lifetime! Let me just turn on our mood music and away we go!” Rafael announced to the class.

He hit a small remote and some 80s New Wave music began to play. Samara had no clue if it was A Flock of Seagulls or Duran Duran but it was one of those lame oldies bands.

“Oh this song brings me back!” Judith sighed fondly.

Samara rolled her eyes and shook her head. These women were so old and corny!

“Okay ladies, focus up! Get with it! We're heading out!” Rafael hollered into his microphone as he clapped to get everyone to focus on him.

Samara grabbed the handlebars of her stationary bike. It didn't matter that this was a class for bake-sale biddies. She was going to give this 110% and get a good workout out of it!

“Okay we're starting out at the bottom of the totem pole. You're young, you just got your first internship out of college - you live in some grungy rundown apartment, probably with five roommates! Now start climbing that hill ladies! Climb that professional hill toward success!” Rafael narrated to the group.

The incline on their bikes all increased as they began to simulate biking up a hill. Samara smiled wondering if Rafael threw those lines in for her sake since she was the new comer to the class. She was impressed about how spot-on he was.

“And we're climbing! And we're climbing! A congratulations! You just got your first big promotion!” Rafael announced.

The ladies in the class all cheered and celebrated as the bikes lowered down from their incline. Samara could hear that some of the other women were already huffing and puffing, winded from the first activity. She didn't notice that the big number on her screen ticked up from 22 to 23 and now read '24'.

“Oh who is this handsome stud you chat it up with at happy hour one afternoon? Could he be the man of your dreams? Better hit the bikes ladies! We want to look good for our first date tonight!” Rafael instructed them.

Samara and the rest of the class all began to pedal faster as the number on her screen changed to 25. The young woman laughed off the idea of meeting 'the man of her dreams' at happy hour one afternoon.

“I mean... it'd be *nice* but...” She thought to herself as she began to walk through wedding plans in her head.

“Yes! Yes! Keep it up! You want to look good in that wedding dress!” Rafael encouraged, almost like he read her mind.

Samara shook off that notion and just pictured herself looking fit and sexy in her wedding dress at her wedding to Brad... weird, that was an oddly specific name to give a hypothetical dream guy...

“Okay ladies, you know the saying – first comes love... then comes marriage then comes...” Rafael prompted the class.

“THEN COMES THE BABY IN THE BABY CARRIAGE!” The women all shouted back, laughing.

“That’s right! You just had a baby! Isn’t she adorable? The pregnancy was *rough* though and it didn’t do any favors to the figure of yours! Gotta get back in the pre-mommy shape! What’s the best way to battle that baby weight? That’s right, it’s cycling time! Come on! Pedal like you mean it! Get rid of those chipmunk cheeks and that blubber under your chin! The baby’s been born! You don’t need it!” Rafael shouted at the class, clapping them on as he biked in front of them.

The number on Samara’s bike changed to 26 and for the first time in her young life she began to feel a bit winded. Her body felt sort of ‘off’ as she pushed herself to bike as furiously as she could. She reached up to wipe some sweat from her face and neck and recoiled at the feeling of chubbier cheeks and a slight double chin.

She looked down to see her breasts were massive now as well and straining to pop out of her sports bra. She took several deep breaths trying to understand what was going on and then calmed herself down. It was just excess weight from the pregnancy. It happens to a lot of women. She could work it off – she was still pretty young after all.

“Okay let’s slow it down ladies. It’s time to move to the suburbs. You can’t be raising a baby in that sketchy neighborhood you lived in right out of college right? So let’s take a nice relaxing bike ride around your new home... It’s a little hilly but that’s okay. This is going to be a great

area for your family to grow in..." Rafael narrated in a calm soothing voice.

The incline rose on the bikes a bit but the pace was much more casual than the speed they had been pedaling a moment ago. Samara was actually a little relieved to slow down. She reached up and felt her face and cheeks to find that they had slimmed back down again. She took a deep breath and smiled imagining the beautiful home in the peaceful neighborhood they had just moved into as the number on her screen increased to 27.

"It looks like you enjoyed your first night in your new house quite a bit because here it is 9 months later and you're holding a new baby boy! This baby weight's going to be harder to shed than the last time so let's hussle ladies! Move it to lose it! Get those thighs nice and firm again! Your husband seems less interested in having sex since the second baby was born! Let's get those asses in gear! Tighten them up and show him what he's missing!" Rafael declared into the mic.

The women all picked up the pace on their bikes and Samara looked down at her mostly exposed thighs showing hints of cellulite as they pressed against one another in a way they hadn't before. Her age on the screen moved up to 28, 29, 30...

Samara sighed, feeling exhausted. It was impossible to keep up with two little kids running around the house. She was just glad to be able to sneak out for a little bit and get this class in before she had to go back to the chaos and insanity of her life.

She paused for a second, shaking her head... What was she thinking? She didn't have kids. She was only 22! Despite the fact that her age on her bike now said she was 31 ... The little rugrats in her head were so precious though, a sweet, sharp-as-a-tack, 5-year-old girl that resembled herself at that age and an adorable, giggly 3-year-old boy who was definitely going to be a heart-breaker when he grows up. What was she stressing out about before? She should be worrying about-

“Schools! It’s time to search for the perfect school for your kids ladies! Preschools and kindergartens are not all created equal! And you can’t just do a google search and pick the one with the best yelp reviews! No you’ve got to go down and visit every one in person and see for yourself! Now we’ve got a lot of ground to cover if we’re going to bike to each one today so let’s gooooo!” Rafael hollered and played an air-horn sound effect.

Samara wiped some more sweat from her forehead as she leaned forward and intensely biked. Feint lines were beginning to appear along her brow and bags were forming under her eyes. The age on her screen increased to 32... 33... 34.

“Okay! The kids are in school! Things are going well. Hubby’s got the car for the day and OH NO! You forgot to give your children their packed lunches! Better get your asses in gear because you’re supposed to be on a work call by 10!” Rafael informed the class as he demonstrated biking with one hand and holding imaginary lunch bags in the other.

The ladies all followed his example and began to act out biking their kids lunches over to them at school as quickly as possible. Samara felt a little silly as she did this but became distracted as she looked up at her raised arm and saw that her normally toned muscular bicep was jiggling with some flab that didn’t used to be there. The number on her screen changed to 35.

“OH MY GOD!” Rafael yelled into the mic.

Samara looked up to see if he was as surprised at the changes to her body as she was but he wasn’t looking at her, he was looking around the class in general.

“IT’S A SURPRISE THIRD BABY! Your bodies are NEVER going to recover! But that doesn’t mean we aren’t going to try, right ladies!?” Rafael prompted them.

“That’s right!” The women shouted back. Samara found herself shouting it back too as her age changed to 36.

“Just channel all of your frustration into the bike girlfriends! You thought diaper duty was over! He told you he had a vasectomy! He’s hardly at home anymore to help you out! It’s all going to be okay! You have a brand new bundle of joy and you have this spin class for a little ‘you’ time! Come on! Work it! You deserve this! You’re a great mom!” Rafael clapped encouragingly.

Samara nodded with an intense look on her more mature face. She was a great mom! To hell with Brad! If he wants to criticize her parenting skills he could damn well make an effort to be home more often! Let him be the one for once that has to cancel plans with old college friends for the umpteenth time because they can’t find a sitter, and he can be the one who drops everything to pick up their daughter from school because she had pink eye; and he can spend his day off cleaning and waxing their hardwood floors because their 3rd grader let the neighbors muddy dog into the house!

She almost snapped the handlebars off of her bike in frustration remembering Brad’s comment about her not having that ‘smoking hot figure’ anymore, the body she had when they first met. She wanted to scream: ‘Yeah Brad! It’s stress-weight from being a mom with three kids on top of working a full-time job! Asshole!’ But then Samara paused and took a breath, reminding herself that Brad was just hypothetical. She wasn’t a mom with a failing marriage, career and three kids, she was a 22-year-old kid with an internship... right?

“Uh oh! The office just hired a recent college grad and she’s energetic and gorgeous! Everything you used to be! Her perky attitude is enough to drive you mad and you HATE that people keep saying that she reminds them of a YOUNG version of you! She’s getting all of those looks that you used to get before you had kids. Time to really challenge yourself and show that flirty ‘little miss thang’ and the jerks at your office that you’re not over the hill yet! You’ve still got it!” Rafael shouted prompting the women to shift into a more challenging gear on their bikes.

The resistance is enough to make Samara start panting as she mentally panics at the prospect of being pushed aside by a new girl at her work. She remembered all of the angry jealous glares she got from older women at the marketing firm when she showed up on her first day in a mini skirt and midriff-baring top. Now she was the one feeling like a frumpy old cow compared to this giggly scantily clad intern - Keeley! What kind of name was 'Keeley' anyway? A little girl's name is what it is!...

Wait, who the hell was Keeley? There was no one at her job named that. Did she just make that up? She was the only intern at her work, the young sexy recent college grad that drove the older women jealous... or was that a decade and a half ago?

Samara looked down at her screen and saw that her blood pressure was a bit high and her age was listed as 37. That all seemed right... God, Keeley would probably make some giggly snide-ass remark about Samara having a 'senior moment' for spacing out right now. She wasn't *that* much older than the girl. If she committed to coming here to the gym for an hour every day and got back in the shape she had when she was in her 20s then she'd get people's attention at work again...

"I know you're all feeling the burn ladies! But now is not the time to rest! You just looked at your husband's text messages and he's having an affair! And the worst part is? She's nearly half your age! Well we're not going to take this lying down are we ladies?" Rafael asked the room.

"Hell no!!" The women including Samara all shouted back.

"That's right! We're going to take this to our bikes and we're going to ride! We're in the prime of our lives and there's nothing that that little homewrecker or that lying sack-of-shit husband can do to take that away from us! We're going to work our buns off, sweat it out and then take him for all he's worth!" Rafael shouted to applause from the room.

Samara actually burst into a laughing fit for a moment. Remembering that she was only 22-years-old and Brad was around her age, she found the idea of him having an affair with a younger woman so absurd - what was he hooking up with a high school freshman behind her back?

But as Samara closed her eyes and pedaled her bike the mental image of Brad that she had in her head wasn't that of a hot guy in his early 20s but of a rugged older man with a salt-and-pepper beard pushing 40. He had a spare tire gut and a receding hairline. He looked like one of the older married men that Samara and her friends liked to flirt with in bars to get free drinks. But now he was her husband and sneaking out to the bar to buy college girls drinks while she was a 39-year-old woman staying home to make sure her kids did their homework.

She didn't find it funny anymore - she found the thought of it infuriating. Samara leaned forward on the bike to pedal her anger out and some of her long hair fell in front of her face. She blew it out of her eyes and reached up to toss the locks back over her shoulder, ignoring the first gray strand of hair that had sprouted in her mane.

A muffin top was forming over the waist of her gym shorts and when she stopped furrowing her brow the creases of her frown lines didn't completely go away.

"Okay ladies! The divorce. Is. Final! You've signed the papers and that jerk is out of here! Time to start a new chapter! We're going to grab our bikes and turn a new corner, get back in shape and hit the dating scene again because you know what they say-" Rafael prompted, pointing to the group to complete his sentence.

"LIFE BEGINS AT FORTY!!!" The women, including Samara yelled and proceeded to woop and clap in celebration.

"That's right! The big 4-0. It's a little scary but that doesn't mean that it can't be the best time of our lives. We just gotta trim those booties, kick that cellulite to the curb and let go of those love handles!" Rafael coached them.

Samara was panting as she biked. Her hands were gaining visible veins as the number 40 flashed in front of her on the screen. Her face had deep lines running down either side of her nose and mouth and her neck was becoming creased.

“I have three words that are the scourge of us all. School. Bake. Sale. You just ran one and you maaaaay have made it one of your cheat days. But those brownies one of the other moms baked were just TOO good! You’re going to press her for the recipe but right now what you’ve got to worry about is the damage those treats did to your figure! Those hourglasses are looking a bit more like soggy pears, am I right ladies! Deserts don’t end up in your stomach anymore they go straight to your thighs and ass. Better hit pavement and find the tallest hill you can find and burn baby! Burn that body of yours back into shape!” Rafael said with a clap sounding more like a preacher on Sunday morning than a spin instructor.

Samara instinctively reached back and grabbed her own ass which was stretching out her spandex. It felt soft and chunky and growing bigger rather than smaller and trimmer. She glanced down to see her belly pooching as well. She didn’t have a fat gut like some of these other ladies but her midriff that she had been so proud of at 22 for being washboard flat was now flabby and puckering into rolls.

For a half a second she panicked, thinking that she shouldn’t look this old, out-of-shape and frumpy but then began to pedal faster. She could get back in the shape of her youth! She just had to work hard for it! It’s like she always tells her daughter in 8th grade... 9th grade, anything that’s worth having in life is something you have to work hard for! That’s what she always tells her 16-year-old daughter anyway.

The age on the screen listed Samara at 42. She paused for a moment to catch her breath as sweat ran down her jowly face and onto her looser neck. She brushed back her hair that was sprinkled with a few more grays and began to furiously pedal her bike once more.

“Up that hill ladies! Keep going! Keep going! You’re almost there!” Rafael chanted, clapping the women on.

Her softer saggier chest began to flop up and down in her sports bra which offered no support for the large droopy breasts of a middle-aged woman.

The age on her screen increased to 43 as crows feet took up permanent residence in the corners of her eyes.

“Just a little further! Keep climbing! Don’t let up yet!” Rafael yelled into the mic.

Samara’s lower back was starting to ache a bit. A sensation that was completely new to her. So were her feet in her sneakers. Her ankles might actually be a little swollen. She was huffing and puffing along with many of the other women in the class as they pushed through this last little bit.

“Keep going! Keep going! Up! Up! Up! Aaaaand you made it! You’re over the hill!” Rafael announced and clapped.

Samara grunted and eased up in relief as she wheezed and caught her breath. She dabbed the sweat dripping from her double chin and down her deeper cleavage. The counter on her screen read ‘44’.

“Okay time for a quick cooldown ladies. Your oldest is going to be heading off to college in a few months. Let’s wrap up by picturing a nice mother-daughter bike ride bonding exercise... You can tell her all about how you use to bike down in this area back when you were her age and putting the fear of god into her about safe sex while she’s away at school! You don’t want to be a grandmother too soon, right ladies?” Rafael joked.

The group laughed, many shaking their heads ‘no’, as they cooled down into a more leisurely paced bike ride.

Samara closed her eyes and imagined biking with her teenage daughter around the lake in her old home town. She felt a little sad that her baby was all grown up and about to leave the house. It felt like she had just been a baby a minute ago. Where does the time go?

“Good job gals! Great effort today! I hope you had a blast! If you’re not already a part of it - feel free to join the spin class facebook group and it’ll keep you updated about any schedule changes or special event we’re doing. You all have a great rest of your week! Ciao!” Rafael said as he hopped off his bike and packed up his stuff, blowing kisses to the women as he headed out the door.

Samara slowly dismounted off of her own bike with some grunting and wincing. Her body felt like this was it’s first workout in years. She felt very winded and dizzy. She gripped the handlebar of the bike as she stood next to it, leaning over to get her bearings. A veiny hand reached back to rub her aching back and flabby bottom.

The former 22-year-old glanced over at the screen and saw that it listed her age as 45! She gasped and let go of the handlebar which caused the screen to shut off. She began to panic as she took stock of her middle-aged body which was more than twice as old as when she had come in here.

A mirror on the wall showed the reflection of a woman with long graying dirty blonde hair and a lined, tired face. Her cheeks and chin were much flabbier and her neck was beginning to bunch.

Her body, though not *fat*, was still a far cry to her athletic frame she had started the day with. Everything was soft, saggy and out of shape. Her limbs and stomach looked doughy and her pillow breasts flopped several inches lower on her chest, no longer perky and hovering upright. Her legs were dimples with cottage cheese thighs and veins were visible along her calves and knees.

“Samara, you know you look great for your age but what were you thinking borrowing your daughter’s workout clothes this morning?” Judith joked as she slapped Samara on her rounded shoulder.

The rapidly aged girl turned to look at the older woman, who was now her peer. She wanted to scream and tell her that the class had somehow aged her 23 year in the course of 40 minutes! She wanted to tell Judith that she knew full well that when Samara had come in here she rocked her spandex gym clothes flawlessly. She wanted to call for help but instead all she replied with was.

“Oh! Haha, silly me. They must have gotten mixed up in the wash! My daughter’s always coming home from college with a mountain of dirty laundry for me! It’s so hard to keep track of everything.” Samara said with an embarrassed chuckle.

“Isn’t that always the way?” Pam chimed in.

“I know! Hey Samara, we’re talking about packing the kids nutritious lunches. Got any tips?” Brenda asked, gesturing for the graying blonde in the spandex to come over to the group.

Samara hesitantly walked over to the huddle of soccer moms, now looking like she entirely fit it.

“Every time I send my kids in to school with something healthy they always end up trading it with one of their friends for junk!” Susan lamented.

Samara stared at the ladies wide-eyed for a moment. In her mind she kept thinking ‘I don’t belong here, I don’t belong here, I don’t belong here...’ She glanced out the window at the attractive fit 20-somethings who were maintaining their youthful physique without a care in the world. She remembered being young and hot like that... How long ago was it?

“Oh I know what you mean. My son was like that. Now I don’t even worry about him! He’s a three-sport athlete and captain of his high school lacrosse team so he eats smart on his own now. But with my little girl in 3rd grade, what I do is take her to the grocery store with me, let her pick out the healthy food herself so she’s looking forward to getting it in her lunches!” Samara explained like she was giving a TED talk. The other middle-aged moms nodded in approval.

“Ah! Smart! That’s good parenting right there!” They told her.

Samara was about to continue when her phone buzzed. She pulled it out to see that she had an instagram notification, though her brain was having a hard time remembering how to check it - or even what it was.

“Oh I hate how they always change how to use these phones. Once you’ve got it all figured out then come out with a new one and you have to learn it all over again.” Samara grumbled out loud.

Her inner 22-year old self was screaming at the fact that she just said that. ‘Swipe to the left. Just swipe to the left. Swipe to the left you stupid old cow!’ She was mentally screaming.

Finally she brought her finger across the screen and unlocked the phone. She looked down to see the notification on her phone and caught sight of her Instagram handle.

“HotFlashSamarra!? My IG name is HotGirlSamarra!” She thought to herself in horror.

She scrolled through her photo history to see that her account was now devoted to depicting ‘Over 40 living’ with a lot of too-close, poorly lit selfies of her middle-aged self doing things like gardening and reading a book on the couch. She clicked on the button to view her recent activity.

“Please don’t be the gym hunk. Please don’t be the gym hunk...” She chanted in her head out of fear that the guy she flirted with earlier would cringe at the sight of this mortifying account.

She had nothing to worry about though. The comment wasn't from any guy, it was from her adult daughter.

'Looking good mom!' Her daughter posted under a photo from this morning of Samara's middle-aged self showing off her flabby physique by the treadmills. The 45-year-old sighed and shook her head.

"My daughter talked me into doing 'the Instagram'. I don't really get it but it is kind of addicting! The photo I posted today already has 2 likes!" Samara bragged to her matronly friends. The other ladies chuckled and sounded impressed.

"Hey Samara, are you on your way out? I'll walk with you." Emily suggested.

"Yes, I should really get going. I'm heading out to the beach with some friends... no, that can't be right... ha! I think I'm delirious from the workout. I have to head home and clean the house. My youngest is having a sleepover tonight." Samara explained to the redheaded woman.

Emily nodded and patted Samara on the back as they headed out of the studio. They passed the 'gym hunks' she had flirted with an hour ago on their way out. The two young men didn't recognize the formerly gorgeous girl and instead just passed the pair of middle-aged women like they were invisible.

The 30-something trainer who had checked her out when she first got here now only offered a bored 'Have a nice day ma'am.' to her as they walked out of the gym.

As soon as they were outside Emily pulled Samara aside conspiratorially.

"Okay, I know what you're going through. I know that deep down inside there you're freaking out. I just wanted to tell you that it's okay!" Emily said in a hushed voice, putting her hand on Samara's shoulder in support.

Samara blinked at the red-headed woman, how did she know this?

“B-but I’m only 22.” Samara replied, her inner thoughts successfully coming out of her mouth.

Emily shook her head.

“No, now you’re a 45-year-old, divorced mother of three. I know it’s a lot to take in but trust me, go home, draw yourself a bath, pour yourself a glass of wine and by the time the kids come home this will all feel normal.” Emily assured her.

“B-But what about my friends... my life?” Samara asked fearfully.

Emily gave her a sympathetic smile.

“Your new life is going to be a lot better, trust me. Bigger house, good job, beautiful children, a yard.... And hey, if there’s a guy you liked from your old life, shoot him a text! Invite him over to your place in the suburbs.” The redhead suggested.

Samara thought of this kid Ryan who lived in the apartment above hers and how they had hooked just about every night since she had moved to the city.

“I’m old enough to be his mother now!” Samara wailed.

“So? Doesn’t mean he can’t be your little boy-toy.” Emily said with a wink.

Samara blinked at the woman who had seemed so old and out of touch to her when they first met - now Emily looked like someone she could be close friends with. Her clarity of the situation was fading again but before it was gone she needed to know -

“How do you know all this?” Samara blurted out.

Emily smirked and looked a little sad.

“Well, remember how I told you that I started coming here when I was your age? That was 6 weeks ago...” The 40-something woman admitted.

Samara was about to ask her more questions but instead what came out was:

“Oh. Fun! Hey we should exchange numbers, I’d love to have you over for drinks sometime. I host a book club every third Saturday of the month, if you’re interested. It’s potluck. Just don’t bring anything too rich or I might have to camp out here at Time Crunch for the next week!” Samara said, belting out a ‘mom laugh’.

Emily gave her a warm smile and the two women exchanged numbers. Samara reached into her purse and pulled out the keyfob to a Lexus parked a few blocks away. Emily reached over and grabbed the blonde’s leathery arm sympathetically before they parted.

“Honestly Samara, by tonight this will all feel like normal and you’ll realize - you’re really better off.” Emily said solemnly with a smile that emphasized the wrinkles on the middle-aged redhead's older face.

Samara smiled back, bunching her own newly gained double chin.

“Oh don’t you worry about me hun! I feel better! 45-years-old and I’m the healthiest I’ve been in years! I love this gym! I’m thinking of coming by tomorrow after I drop my daughter off at school and trying out one of their yoga classes! Want to join me?” Samara asked excitedly.

“Sure. As long as it’s not one of the ones for seniors!” Emily replied with a smirk.

THE END.