

Gym Observations: A Loner's Point of View

I'm a loner at the gym—not antisocial, just selectively social. I believe everyone needs at least one gym confidante. The kind of real one who'll whisper that your period's betrayed you or that your size 12 tag is flapping like a victory flag on your leggings. That's sisterhood in spandex.

My gym friends usually emerge from post-workout showers and locker room chatter, not from sweaty floor encounters. Because once I hit the gym floor, I disappear into my zone—no small talk, no eye contact, just sweat and low-key surveillance.

It just hit me: I've been an active gym member for over 30 years. It started in the mid to late '90s, shortly after KorKor was born in 1997. I joined a group aerobics class, full of high-energy regulars. I couldn't keep up to save my life, but I wanted to. I even tried chatting them up mid-workout, blurting out things like, "This time I'm really gonna stick with it," or "This class is *perfect* for my schedule." Lies. I never stuck with it.

Eventually, I gave up the chatter and took up solo walking. That led to trying one of those one-week "free" gym memberships. NY Sports Club was my first. Sixty bucks a month—in the '90s! I felt robbed. Meanwhile, the folks who'd been with Gold's Gym paid just \$10 a month because they'd been grandfathered in after Gold's went bankrupt and NYSC took over. Total scam. Still, I loved the gym. Working out alone pushed me to go harder, faster, better.

By the early 2000s, I switched to LA Fitness—just as sleek as NYSC but only \$34/month, with access to any location. I picked gyms near my job instead of my home and felt like I'd cracked the system. Even now, I keep that LA Fitness membership going at \$239/year. Middle-aged me didn't plan to still be here, but here I am—still showing up, still sweating, still observing.

I say all this to explain where these characters came from. This list has been percolating for decades. It was partly inspired by a nostalgic email that circulated in the late '90s, categorizing Jamaican girls into types like "Ragga Gyal," "Dancehall Queen," and "Mother Earth." That list stuck with me like gym glitter.

I wanted my own version—my own gym archetypes. I tried Googling them, but nothing felt right. Most lists revolved around the free weights zone, and I don't live there. I live in Cardio Land, Stretching City, and Locker Room Gossipville. And from those quiet corners, I've been collecting characters ever since.

BBL Barbie



Long lashes, baby hair laid tighter than her moral compass, acrylic nails sharp enough to cut your self-esteem, and a gravity-defying booty that enters the room before she does. Always in matching neon sets, hair in a sleek high pony, and nails so long she couldn't open a protein bar if her life depended on it. She's got that Dr. Miami masterpiece, but you'd swear God himself sculpted that badunkadunk by how she walks around. She's a personal trainer now, advertising her "build your booty" classes as if we don't all know what's up. Girl, please. We saw the before.

Morbidly Motivated



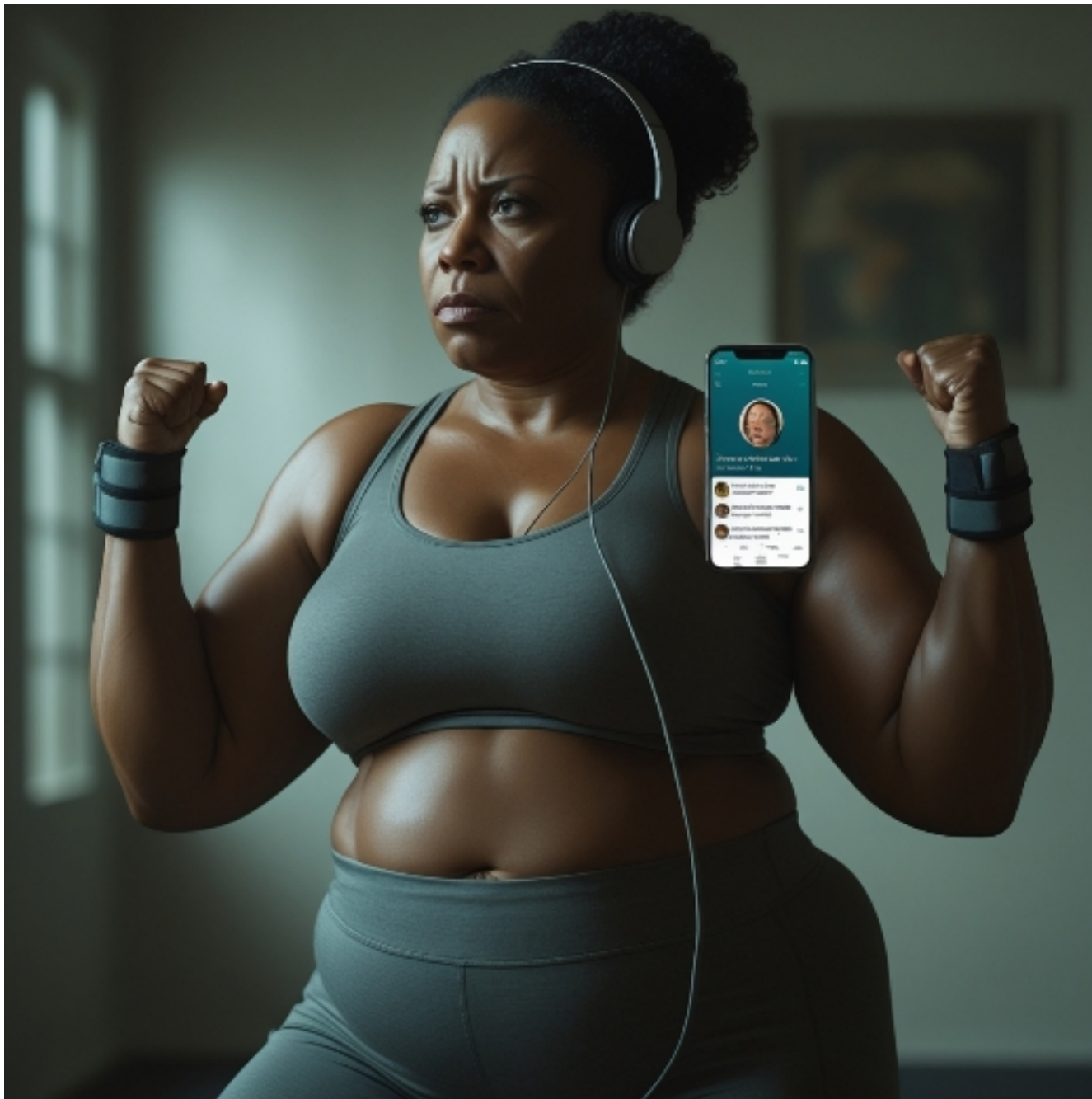
Sweatband cinched tight, oversized T-shirt soaked through, and sneakers that look like they've walked a lifetime. Every step looks painful, but there's fire in their eyes—and a Fitbit screaming for help. You can tell this person is either responding to a life-altering health scare or working toward qualifying for weight loss surgery. They come in with purpose—and pain. Every step is heavy, every breath labored. But they're here, and that says more than most.

Flawless Youth



Eyebrows arched like Nike swooshes, lip gloss popping under LED gym lights. Always mid-pose, with airpods in and zero awareness of anyone over the age of 30. Looks like she got lost on the way to a TikTok shoot. She's barely old enough to vote, body snatched by genetics not grit. Full face of makeup, contour so sharp it could slice a protein bar. She sticks to the free weight section where the boys are. Cardio? Never met her. But hey, that eyeliner's waterproof, and her sports bra costs more than my car payment.

Middle-Aged Me



Hooded sweatshirt with motivational quotes, fresh kicks, and a gallon water jug clutched like a lifeline. Hair in a messy bun, expression says "I'm fine" but the aura screams "Revenge Body loading." Menopause meets heartbreak. Divorce papers signed, metabolism vanished. She joins the gym hoping to reverse time, stun her ex, and maybe find a man whose wallet is as rich as her ex's karma. She walks in with brand-new sneakers, tags still poking out, carrying unnecessary accessories like a waist trainer and a gallon water jug she'll abandon by week two. Her dreams are big, but her commitment usually lasts until January 5th.

Midlife Ken



Too much cologne, not enough self-awareness. Tank top a size too small, silver chain peeking out, and slicked-back hair refusing to accept its own retreat. Alternates between admiring himself and pretending not to stare at everyone else. Recently dumped or dumped his mistress—either way, he’s single, confused, and suddenly motivated. He got a taste of youth and now he’s out to recreate it. He gets chatty with other middle-aged men, using his “gym voice” that somehow echoes across the squat rack. He ogles the tight shorts and high ponytails while the woman his age could spontaneously combust beside him, and he wouldn’t notice.

The Mayor of the Gym



Crocs in sport mode, clipboard of gossip (in her head), and an energy drink always in hand. Knows everyone by name, birth chart, and gym schedule. Her Fitbit says “10,000 steps,” but 9,500 came from pacing while chatting. She knows everyone. She's warm, chatty, and has a magnetic pull that can derail your workout if you're not careful. Her conversations are always golden, sprinkled with fresh gossip, fitness tips, and the occasional gym mystery. She was the first to spill the tea about the new sign taped inside the handicapped shower stall: "PLEASE DO NOT POOP IN THE SHOWER. YOU WILL BE BANNED FROM LA FITNESS." It's a sign that begs for explanation—and she's got it. She knows exactly who did it and why. She's

so committed to the gym that when the wall clock stayed frozen at 8:20 for months, she personally brought in a battery to fix it. The gym isn't just her second home—it's her kingdom.

The Gym Skunk



Wears the same black shirt every day—at least, it looks like the same one. Dedicated. Focused. Smells like regret and boiled onions. The kind of guy who'd offer to spot you while completely unaware he's the reason you're holding your breath. This person—usually male—is polite, focused, and totally committed to his workout. Unfortunately, his scent is just as intense. It clears out machines faster than a fire drill. Some people are bold enough to pinch their nose or

relocate mid-set. I try not to be mean. I breathe through my mouth, power through, and pray his next set ends quickly. You want to root for him, but your nostrils have declared war.

The thing with *Pepe Le Pew* is that I'm constantly conflicted. Some days I'm annoyed—plotting elaborate solutions. Should I send an anonymous note to management and let them handle it? Recruit one of the nose-pinchers to deliver the hard truth? Or maybe I just become a scent sleuth and figure out his schedule so I can avoid him entirely. And when all else fails, maybe I switch locations.



But that's the cruel reality—there's always a gym skunk. They're a universal constant, like gravity or awkward eye contact in the mirror. So I stay. I breathe through my mouth. And I remind myself that everyone's fighting a battle—even if that battle is with deodorant.

The Selfie Soldier



Head-to-toe Gymshark, lashes longer than her workout, and a phone tripod that gets more reps than she does. Always angled, always glowing, always confused when you dare to walk in front of her frame. She doesn't sweat—she sparkles. You'll find her in the best-lit corner of the gym, doing more posing than pressing. Every rep is recorded, every mirror angle tested. She brings a full ring light in her gym bag and whispers "content is queen" like a mantra. Don't be fooled by her three-set workout—it's really one set and two takes. Her water bottle is filled with pink

liquid that looks more like juice than pre-workout, and her gym playlist is actually just audio reminders to smile.

And it's not like she works out hard, nor is her body particularly fit. She's completely unaware of how inconvenient it is to navigate around her camera setup. It's as if the gym is her personal studio, and everyone else is just an accidental background extra in her highlight reel.

Disrupting her shot feels like interrupting a sacred ritual.



The Shower Dodger



Leaves puddles in her wake, changes clothes faster than a magician, and somehow looks ready for a board meeting 30 seconds after a sweat-fest. Her towel? Paper. Her shame? Nonexistent. Her soap? Still at home. She's allergic to showers. That's the only logical explanation. She hits the gym floor hard, sweating like a buffalo in July. But somehow, by the time I'm heading into the shower stall, she's already dressed in crisp work clothes, reapplying lipstick like she just got

back from brunch. For a while, I was stumped. How does she get clean, styled, and dressed so fast?

Then I caught her at just the right time. She peels off her damp workout clothes, gives herself a quick wipe down with paper towels, and throws on her office outfit like it's no big deal. If the locker room's crowded, she takes her routine to the bathroom stall like it's a private spa. I try not to stare. I try not to judge. But I fail. That's nasty.



The Gym Skank



Ponytail too high, shorts too short, and a wink that can bench press more than most. Leaves a trail of broken hearts and gym selfies. Has hooked up with more gym members than the total number of workouts she's completed. "I just love making new friends!" —No, Becky, you love making bad decisions. The Mayor keeps a list of her victims—it's longer than the gym's membership roster.

We're all just characters in this sweaty sitcom—some clueless, some committed, and some, like me, silently narrating the madness while pretending to stretch our hamstrings. I may not be lifting heavy or chasing PRs, but I've mastered the art of the side-eye squat and the stealthy smirk.

After all these years, I still keep showing up. Not just for the health benefits. Not just for the hot gossip echoing through the locker room. I come back for the chaos. The comedy. The *characters*. And maybe—just maybe—for the day I finally evolve into The Mayor: the effortlessly confident, universally acknowledged queen of the gym floor.

Until then, you'll find me in the corner—earbuds in, face unreadable—watching, listening, mentally handing out imaginary awards for “Most Extra Mirror Pose,” “Boldest Outfit Choice,” and “Loudest Mid-Rep Grunt.”

Because at the end of the day, this gym life? It's cheaper than therapy, better than reality TV, and the show never, ever gets canceled.