

The Abandoned Dream

On a blustery October morning, while waling down Washington avenue, something shiny caught my eye in the trash can across the street. The morning wind swirled the falling leaves in whirlpools around my feet, the unwelcome harbingers of the bleak winter ahead. It seems incongruous to see a trophy among the trash, yet there it was, poking its once proud head out of a nearly full trash container. A young fellow, perhaps 20 years old, carefully cradling a VCR he had fished from the pile of rubbish mounded around the 30 gallon can, regarded me carefully, as though I might snatch it from his hands at any moment.

As I approached the gathered remnants of a personal past unceremoniously tossed in unordered piles, I noticed even more evidence of past successes. Liberally sprinkled in with discarded item of clothing, a three legged table, an untapped container of vitamin powder, and broken shelf brackets, other, smaller trophies all silently clamored for attention. The grandest trophy was over 3 feet tall and proclaimed body building prowess. Atop it was a finely sculpted representation of a young woman in a perfectly proportioned, muscle popping pose, her unfinished eyes looking forlornly at the gathering gray skies, her arms forever frozen in gleaming metal. Columns of marble and brass proudly supported her on a platform at the pinnacle of the trophy, dragging my gaze upward. I wondered how the winner felt on the day she fist held this prize. Now, has her
emotions, like the vestiges of success that lay before me, been relegated to the scavengers and the landfill; sad reminders of glory day gone by?

Perhaps the once avid iron-pumper had fallen ill. Perhaps a personal dilemma or tragedy led her to abandon the sport to which she had quite evidently devoted many weeks and months. What had happened? From the body-building enthusiasts I had been acquainted with over the years, I knew that this sport was like a religion. It demanded life altering diet and workout regimens, interminable hours and hours of strenuous, repetitive weight lifting, and a psyche to support it all. To imagine that someone could willingly walk away after achieving these awards was almost unthinkable. But, as much as I wanted an answer, I had no right to intrude, despite the fact that the abandonment was there in the trash can and on the sidewalk, laid bare for all to see.

For a brief moment I contemplated rescuing the trophy, restoring its luster and purpose. It might be an appropriate award for the YWCA just down the street. Perhaps[s it could uplift a struggling competitor or be adapted for use as something else. As my fingers lightly touched the cold marble of the platform, I knew it was best to let this trophy rest. I thrust my hand back into my warm jacket pocket, leaving the trophy where it was in the stark chill of the early morning.

As I neared the crosswalk, I cast one final glance over my shoulder. The metal
figurine caught my eye again. Through unfeeling lips, it spoke to me about abandoned dreams, squandered opportunities and discarded hopes – the things that haunt our days as the winter of life approaches. An hour later, the trophy was gone, leaving my questions forever unanswered; but its image and message remain with me.

by Richard McIlravy-Ackert