

Muscling Out

Whereas it makes no sense to sit inside a house on fire in the middle of the night it is perfectly wise to rescue what you can of the furniture and there to sit upon the wet, smoke-ruined chairs laid out across the lawn in a circular fashion observing decorum and the play of the light amidst the embers. It is all that remains in such a circumstance.

Bodybuilders are a marvelous breed. By force of will and scientific repetition they achieve a fullness the rest of us can only vaguely describe. Bikini clad men and women, oiled like precision mechanical parts, bursting with the word made flesh. Nearly, nearly perfect. Herein lies the tragedy— there is a point in every artist's life, a provisional mountain crest with room for only one pair of feet, where no matter how tirelessly one has worked in pursuit of an ideal one can do no better. This is called muscling out. And here I sit, the extent of my great genius reflected in a marble sea of words, each perfectly chosen and assigned a proper job. No wonder if I cannot laugh at your jokes today, no matter how well-timed. I shared a room with a bodybuilder briefly. Though he still shaved his body every morning, leaving a lichenous stubble in our bath, it was no good. He had fallen off the horse. His skin was striped with stretchmarks— his beautiful body, ruined.

That building is a metal shell. It looks like it should nest another, slightly smaller building within it. Something more delicate, perhaps made of natural materials. A log cabin? An archipelago of feathers? The city is full of unfinished projects.

At the dog park a woman approaches me. It's true, she says to me, most pets do resemble their owners. I look at her dog, a weimaraner. It is lean and dignified whereas she is wide and has a puffy face and the warm and intrusive nature of most dog owners. Then I look at my dog where she is rolling on her back in a patch of warm grass and I note that despite my training she continues to resemble the union of a wild hog and an alligator. Well, the woman at the dog park says, On the inside.