

EDGE INTEGRITY

edge . integrity fall/winter 2011



THE WHISPERERS

by HORATIO E. GEIST

Cracked and bulging. Pocked and cratered. The streets looked like moon terrain minus the holy glow. She walked. Panted. Walked. Sniffed. Creeped. Paused.

Dust and gravel stuck deep within her inner cavum nasi; her primary sense damaged but not dulled. A primal scent of dread mainlined into her body. A vermin stench cursed the air. She smelled the rat guarding a dumpster with a half skinned man decomposing. She smelled its gaze tracking her. Fearless.

Her spine straightened. Her greying white coat prickled through caked on grime and myriad secretions. Leftovers from battles and perverts.

She summoned a snarl. A flash of teeth and a posture and stink of mirrored grit. She knew a coded shrill would invite a virulent mob. A rat swarm would pierce her sensitive ears. She would disorientate, stumble and become their feast. She was not ready to become forgotten.

Stop. The rat spoke through a hissy squeak.

The rat red-eyed her. It sniffed into the air. It knew her history. The rats could skin her. She knew that. But her viscousness was scented. The blood of rats. Coons. And man on her tongue kept her standing.

Dog-bitch.

A universal vernacular had emerged. Language had regressed and simplified and morphed into a convention of communication amongst urban species. A vernacular bred from necessity and stagnation. It became a code for survival. All spoke it. Rats. Raccoons. Women. Dogs. And men. Names became extinct. Labels denoted species. Tone and odour provided identity. She reeked of a brutal, unspoken history.

Rat.

Vacate. Now. Food. Mine. The squeaky whisper echoed in her mind.

The rat shifted forward in threat. But did not move in time or space. She sensed it's fear beneath the cocksure pose. She could shred it before it's first squeak reached the ether but she had no taste for rigored human flesh or the diseased spit of a genus rattus.

Eat.

She vacated. Her nose followed a green mirage.

She travelled alone. No packs. She was not willing to subvert her body to pupping or heated rape or bare-toothed alpha posturing. She would not be owned by her own. She was free.

Her mind wandered to a day when she was Lady and not Dog-Bitch. When she slept and ate by her owners hands. Man and Woman. Little-Woman and Little-Man. Her mind could not find a name for each. But she could smell them huddled shadowily in the cracked erections that once dominated the monolith skyline.

But she'd never see them again.

Woman and Man rarely walked under the grey sun. They vanished with the days of bright blue skies and shady foliage. They lurked in corners. In half glassed towers. In shuttered and crushed stores. Their days of control relinquished to nature.

The streets were quiet. The viciousness and randomness of nature had oddly created a beautiful tranquility. The horns, the yells, the ever present hums and rings ended with the last blast. Bomb-Day. The last day of sun and green.

But she sensed nature was sleeping. Relinquishing. Bomb-Day was being spoken about. Whispered into ears from the shadows above. It was being remembered not forgotten.

The whispers frightened her. She could smell green again. Taste it in the air. But she couldn't see green. She sensed that the whispers would kill her chance of ever spying it again. The whispers were remembering Bomb-Day as a moment of creation not destruction.

It was not her memory.

She looked up and saw the Whisperers. Lined on rooftops and wires. They knew all. Saw all.

The Crows.

And they were laughing.

They told tales in shallow ears to eyes that primordially looked above.

For answers.

For reason within the random.

They whispered gruesome, grotesque tales of how The Bomb killed the dirty OldWoman and OldMan and recreated NewWoman and NewMan from their ashes and bones. She remembered seeing cloaked figures huddled near windows surrounding a floor of bones. She heard humming but no words. The whispers told her they were Bomb-Day bones. The first bones of NewWoman and NewMan.

The scavengers heard other tales.

They told rats and raccoons that Bomb-Day had re-created the streets to be theirs. She remembered seeing an unholy union of



"Nature is dead",
she sensed.

rats and raccoons circling the skeletal remains of a raccoon with a rat skeleton in it's stomach. The impossibility stunned her. She thought they were beyond emotion. The whispers told her they were Bomb-Day remains of a new union. A new dominance.

Nature is dead, she sensed.

They were laughing and blinding nature's eyes with their dark wings. Nature was under their control. And they wanted to see blood.

She didn't want to talk to them or listen to them. She wanted to find green again and hope nature would wake up and spill ash and acid on their wings.

A Crow fell from a wire and landed in her path. The beak pointing ominously in her direction. Dark red blood pooled beneath its breast. The eyes never moved. She saw three puncture holes.

Murder.

A warning.

A piercing and deafening squawk filled everything. A symphonic caw sliced the

wind. Her ears. Her veins. Her bladder. Quivered. They were celebrating.

A crow flew down and aimed directly for her. She didn't move. Rats and raccoons she could kill and eat. They'd do the same to her. But a crow plays. Tortures. And let's you live.

It stopped on her back.

Dog-Bitch. Answer, not. Listen. We see. You smell. We see. You taste. Green. Want. Answer, not.

The Crow knew the answer. Two more crows swooped down and landed in her path. They glanced minutely at the murdered crow and then stared at her. She saw blood on their beaks. She smelled their intent. In an instant she was blind. Her eyes lying beside the fallen crow.

The Crow on her back whispered in her ear.

You, no tale. You, no see. You smell. You taste. You, no new tale to tell. Go. Walk.

She couldn't see but she smelled the directions on the Crow's beak. It would move north. South. East and west. And she'd know where to go.

They walked. She knew they were far away. The echo off bricks and still objects was gone. The smell of green became intense. Close.

Stop, Dog-Bitch.

The Crow flew away. She waited and took in the smells. She tasted the air. It was clean. She was surrounded by green. She opened her mouth and ate. A leaf. She remembered the ancient texture. It filled her. She was anxious for a new appetite. She sniffed the air for more. The scent was gone. The green was finished.

A frozen wind stung her bloody sockets; a frozen wind carrying the faint distant whisper of a symphonic squawk. She collapsed under the grey sun.

Nature is dead. Again.

She knew.

