

# **Craig Woods**

## ***Blade on the Feather***

### **MEMO 211:**

**Pages from a handwritten journal recovered at a suspected site of Muskrat activity in a derelict warehouse district in Glasgow. The site had evidently been vacated in a hurry prior to our agents' arrival at the scene. The identity of the author of these pages is not currently known.**

deformed edges of a flattened coin brought me to still spring morning ... clearing in dense forest all emerald shimmer ... I am standing hand in hand with a teenage girl by the side of a stream ... I address the girl with my gaze ... a dark curtain of raven hair swaying back and forth alternately revealing and concealing her bronze features ... she points to an embankment where a single electricity pylon stands oozing copper corrosion into a stone sky ... her spectral voice on the breezeless air: "my name on the horizon..." the girl indicates a shining object by the foot of the pylon its reflective surface mocking the steel tower ... she leads me to the base of the monolith and retrieves the reflective object from sodden ground ... a flattened coin edges compressed on a runaway time track ... I lose myself in the coin's funhouse distortions but the girl is not reflected there ... somewhere behind the pylon an opening in the embankment is visible a dark circular maw from which a low rumble emanates causing my bones to shudder ... the girl's reassuring hand leading me through fugitive waters towards the black hole ... crouching we peer inside the circular concrete pipe its floor a flood rushing some fifty yards towards a glowing exit ... the girl tells me this pipe carries the stream from one side of the motorway above to the other ... there is nothing to fear ... she leads me into the pipe and we begin a slow crawl to the other side ... roar of traffic ... my desperate arms clamped around the girl's waist as she leads us to the opposite bank ... musk smell emanating through her cotton dress, the fierce scent of a wild dog ... we emerge in a familiar room my feeble eyes struggling to readjust to the tungsten glow ... dusty walls of my apartment the sofa sideboards and television cabinet ...all present and

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correct only their dimensions and geometries have been reversed ... the girl leads me to the sofa and crouches at its base ... with one slender arm she retrieves a heavy dark object from behind a dusty cushion ... rising to her feet she turns to me smiling, revealing a mouth filled with sharp dog-like teeth and hands me a book bound in a red cover ... I am almost overcome with the weight of the volume as she relinquishes her grip... I stare in awe at this strange artefact in my hands as the girl retrieves the distorted coin from my shirt pocket with one willowy hand holding it flat its grimy face reflecting a phantom sky ... a flex of her hand compels me to pull the book open ... on the inside cover is a message scrawled in bright red crayon ... 'I COULD EAT THE SKY LIKE AN APPLE' ... the girl smiles warmly at me and bows her head to stare into the coin's warped surface ... her face not reflected there the image seemingly frozen in that of the inert sky above ... giggling coquettishly the girl extends a lascivious canine tongue which caresses the scarred metal then sinks past the boundary of its dimensions and into the image of the sky ... the image bends and buckles clouds and ozone seeping out of the reflection and into the girl's laughing jaws ... I squeal gleefully as I watch her eat the sky ... running across grey fingers on to the surface of insomnia we make the burning barrier of other season. The mutilated corpse of a Jensen automobile smouldering blackly fumes of adolescent mutation in the wounded air a smell of rust and radioactive heat. The girl named Pylon leads me from the bones of civilization into a labyrinth of faded arcades sour breeze whispering insurgent mantras through shuttered windows black fairground skeletons corroding against an infernal sunset. Seems I catch a gaze directly for something like a vague black hand to her chest. I address the girl's good looks excited, bringing her announcements in the first motion. She begins to click her daylight before me holding my stare in a human interval between two tiger eyes, my broodings over her concern twisting flesh into opaque air.

"The body is dumb, the body is meat," one bronze finger aims for the heart of the ailing sun, "only the summer was sweet."

Fairground shadows part like oil curtains and two children emerge; boy and girl, unnatural assurance in their gait, feral fire brewing in the pale eyes, thunder from young hearts drumming beneath defaced blue school blazers. These waifs act as our escorts: Ennui, a gangly ashen-faced boy with an effete composure and a voice fragile as wet paper.

"It's late summer always here. Sad dyin' sun never done weepin' at the clock."

The girl, Pink Pussy, popping gum bubbles between chapped lips, one slender hand clad in a fingerless leather glove caressing a battered softball bat crimson stains of war around its chipped sides her estuary drawl gushing out like livid floodwater from behind windblown violet-tinted tress-

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es.

“Look sharp, guv. Gotta walk the time off ya. Keep close and breathe the sun into yrself, yeah?”

Phantom arcade miles pass ethereally under our feet, remote urban shadows blossoming like ink stains across the horizon’s amber parchment leaking out adolescent silhouettes, lithe young limbs bolstering our progress with stoic purpose, imperturbable intent in the sharp faces. Each boy and girl introduces themselves with the theatrical enthusiasm of auditioning actors claiming their roles in a cosmic epic at some theatre of apocalypse. Each bears a distinctive moniker as evocative as the landscape, names like Bad Apple, Cuntweasel, Iron Hoof, Slay Dog, Skullfuck, Lady Shitblade, Knee-cap Nellie ...

“Out here our names are our own, guv. Our toys all our own too and we take ‘em home with us when we please. No family names here. No shitty bell gonna ring around here neither. No dead hollow regime to keep us in-doors durin’ rainy playtimes. Blood of that old mummy-daddy shit-fest done drained away in the rainy playground gutter. Whole damn playground is ours now and it stretches farther than yr eyes can see. Any old time we like it and any *new* time too for that matter.”

The kids call themselves Muskrats and cut the endless twilight with the coarse blades of their tongues the agile sweeps of firm young limbs. The first Muskrats had scurried out from an English boarding school dormitory, feral mutant hands turning to clawed fists raised against the God country and opulence that birthed and betrayed them, that sold out their futures to callous clocks and heartless hierarchies.

Somewhere that vast stone school building lies in ruins; white walls blackened, stink of death and urine, phantom smoke billowing from shattered windows to stain the English countryside, torn Union flag draped wet and limp upon the inverted holy cross smeared in blood and excrement. Those original Muskrats clad still in the defaced uniform that was once their shame erupt now in chorus, a joyous and crude distortion of their old school anthem:

*“Jolly fighting weather,  
And a heady hybrid breeze,  
Blades for mums and fathers,  
And bullets for the priest,  
Shoot and slash together,  
Bring the nation to its knees,  
Shoot and slash together,  
With black holes between yr knees.”*

This song resounds in the throbbing temples of sleepless adolescents scattered throughout the dispossessed bedrooms, shanties, hovels, prison cells, dungeons and dormitories of a doomed planet. Febrile foreign faces have flocked to its melody, girls and boys of every colour every culture every tongue casting the shackles of indoctrination into the flames of their transcendence. Hybrid mutations brought them here ... unbound data of the feral universe rewriting their psyches, encrypting their biology with the access codes for an existence beyond the enforced boundaries of an authoritarian world ... other futures beckoning through the wounds in their flesh, solar flares from skies of psychic rust. The Muskrats chatter garrulously in a language all their own; a compound creole culled from comic books, pulp novels, B movies, arbitrary shreds of popular culture. Traces of hipster jive and prison jargon and Yiddish affectations and cockney rhyming slang all sparkle electrically upon their young tongues, augmented by the vestigial traces of the various cultures each has abandoned.

A tall slender-limbed girl with long oil-black hair and dark Amerindian features leans into my shoulder a voice thick as tar on her hot breath:

“Somewhere back there,” she jerks a pointed thumb back in the direction of the breached barrier blazing behind us, “there are a people with a story about old Muskrat. Old Muskrat watched the birth of the universe from a burrow which was a black hole of course. And while every other holier-than-thou deity and prissy goddess was too busy lookin’ lovingly at their own reflection in the stars, practicin’ their pussy-lickin’ pouts and polishin’ their fuckin’ nails, old Muskrat decides to dive straight into the shit-storm that our galaxy was back then and try mould somethin’ beautiful, right? So Muskrat plunges into the open bowels of the universe, little snout scourin’ a way through all the shit and bile while all the goodly gods and goddesses they throw up their hands in disgust and turn away to stare back into their reflections since their own shit-eatin’ mugs is the only sight them self-obsessed fuckpigs can bear to stare at for too long without lapsin’ into withdrawal.

“So anyways, Muskrat’s diggin’ and diggin’, paws red raw, eye-holes and earholes clogged with the worst kinda filth that not even the most imaginative of aspirin’ writer fellas can hope to imagine at the wobbly kitchen chair in front of the daily headache of his computer screen, yeah? Finally those determined little claws scrape against somethin’ warm and kinda sweet-feelin’, somethin’ good, y’know? So Muskrat burrows that little snout all the way in there, tryin’ not to gag at the muck floodin’ into those eyeholes, earholes and down that scorched little gullet to burn those strainin’ little lungs. Muskrat clenches the good thing between those big buck teeth and pulls and pulls and pulls and finally drags from the swill a great big shiny green planet. The most heart-breakingly beautiful damn thing you ever

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saw!



“Well, soon as their ugly gold-brickin’ eyes fall on this cosmic gem, every worthless god and half-assed goddess decides they want a piece for themselves. They crash on in there, stompin’ with careless feet across mountains and meadows, trailin’ shit across the green rugs like they owned the fuckin’ place and they start carvin’ the green planet up between themselves, all squabblin’ in their no-good idiot child voices, cuttin’ up land and sea and animals and people into rigid immovable categories, each every bit as ugly and useless as them-fuckin’-selves. Yep, the Heavenly Horde got the segregation con down pat; big crosses of fire markin’ the territories, the psyches, the species into neat little sachets. Just add water, instant deadlock! Pretty soon the whole green planet is sliced up into one big shitty bakin’ tray of mismatched flapjacks, each now cussin’ at its neighbours in the backwards