



**Jump Start**  
Kadrey, Richard

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**Type(s):** Short Fiction, Science Fiction

**Source:** <http://www.infinitematrix.net/stories/shortshorts/kadrey38.html>

## About Kadrey:

Richard Kadrey is a novelist, freelance writer, and photographer based in San Francisco.

Kadrey's first novel, *Metrophage*, was published in hardcover in 1988 by Victor Gollancz Ltd., and went on to various other American and foreign printings in paperback. Mac Tonnies' *Cyberpunk/Postmodern Book Reviews* calls *Metrophage* "one of the quintessential 1980s cyberpunk novels," going on to describe "a gritty acid-trip through an ultraviolent L.A. where nothing is what it seems... . Alongside novels such as [William Gibson's] *Neuromancer* and Lewis Shiner's debut novel *Frontera*, *Metrophage* helped establish the cyberpunk aesthetic: relentless, paranoid and playfully cynical."

Kadrey's second novel, *Kamikaze L'Amour*, is described by the same source as "mesmerizing... a surreal (and distinctly Ballardian) account of synesthesia and mutant desire set in the jungle-choked ruins of L.A."

Kadrey's short story *Carbon Copy: Meet the First Human Clone* was filmed as *After Amy*.

The publisher website, Amazon booksellers, and other sources list a July 15, 2007 publication date for Kadrey's next book, *Butcher Bird: A Novel Of The Dominion* (Night Shade Books). Other works include collaborative graphic novels and over 50 published short stories.

His non-fiction books as a writer and/or editor include *The Catalog of Tomorrow* (Que/TechTV Publishing, 2002), *From Myst to Riven* (Hyperion, 1997), *The Covert Culture Sourcebook* and its sequel (St. Martin's Press, New York, 1993 and 1994); Kadrey also hosted a live interview show on Hotwired in the 1990s called *Covert Culture*. He was an editor at print magazines *Shift* and *Future Sex*, and at online magazines *Signum* and *Stim*. He has published articles about art, culture and technology in publications including *Wired*, *Omni*, *Mondo 2000*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *SF Weekly*, *Ear*, *Artforum*, *ArtByte*, *Bookforum*, *World Art*, *Whole Earth Review*, *Reflex*, *Science Fiction Eye*, and *Interzone*.

Source: Wikipedia

## Also available on Feedbooks for Kadrey:

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- *Butcher Bird* (2005)
- *Zombie* (2002)

- *SETI* (2002)
- *A Cautionary Tale* (2002)
- *Ubiquitous Computing* (2002)
- *Second-Floor Girls* (2002)
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Dried gray fungus hangs like lianas from the air vents in the dead space station. A bobble-headed Elvis and plastic Hello Kitty sit atop the silent command console. In the dark main cabin, styrofoam cups of now-crystallized coffee sit patiently in their beverage holders. Beside them, illuminated through the portholes as the station comes up over Earth's horizon, are the freeze-dried corpses of the crew who committed suicide in their seats. They're a mixed bunch. American. Russian. Japanese. A lone figure in a patched and duct-taped pressure suit is going through the corpses' pockets. She's looking for forgotten food, and smiles when she finds an unopened package of chocolate Pocky.

Back on the engineering decks, Asami pops off her helmet and gobbles half the box of Pocky in one go. But she's disciplined enough to save the other half for later. After she's finished the work that's kept her alive all these weeks. Crowded on the deck are the things important enough to salvage from the ship: tanks of mice, tanks of spiders, tanks of fish, tanks of algae and krill.

Asami sits at the main engineering console and checks readings from the planet below, the readings that still work. Radiation is down. Oxygen and nitrogen are thin, but closer to normal than she's seen in weeks.

She doesn't even try the radio anymore. It's been over a month since she's heard anything from Earth on any channel. She's had to work on the assumption that everyone is dead. Possibly everything. All life. Gone.

Something had happened in southern Russia, along the border with Azerbaijan. A bomb. A big one. Biological. It released an organism that raced around the Mediterranean and Middle East in a few days, then began eating its way into Europe, Africa, and Asia. Other bombs went off in North America. Soon the missiles flew. Some were atomic. Some carried new biological agents designed to wipe out the plague. Other biologicals were released in a new wave of bombs. The world disappeared under a storm of fire and gray roiling clouds of microbes. That's when Asami's crew had died, when there was no one left to go home to.

The woman finishes her calculations for the fourth time, making sure they're right. When the chronometer hits the right second, she hits the back-up command console and activates the stabilizing rockets, giving the station a nudge. The station creaks as metal stresses and joints threaten to pull apart, but it holds together. On the engineering deck nothing appears to have happened, but the woman already feels as if she's falling. The station is sliding out of orbit, back toward Earth.

She eats the rest of the Pocky, stick by delicious stick, checking her speed and altitude. She needs a water landing. Somewhere warm. The Pacific or Indian Ocean, maybe. Life began in the water, it can begin again. This isn't a lot of biological material, Asami thinks, glancing at her tanks of mice and spiders. She regrets all the weight she's lost since the world torched itself. She wonders if she should bring the bodies of her dead comrades down into engineering with her. This part of the station has the best chance of coming apart on impact, all the better for dispersing her biological specimens. In the end, she decides to leave the crew where they are. More for her sake than theirs. She doesn't want to spend these last few minutes with the dead: she'll have all eternity for that.

She takes one of the mice from its cage and lets it chew the breaded end of a Pocky stick. They're falling faster now. She can feel the slight change in gravity. It's like riding in a fast elevator.

Asami wishes she had some cold sake or even a beer. Setting the mouse on the command console, she laughs. She remembers Zeno's paradox. According to Zeno, Asami will never hit the Earth, never die. She'll fall halfway, then halfway again, then another half, without ever crashing into the ocean. She releases the rest of the animals. Asami wonders if she should have studied philosophy instead of engineering. That thought cracks her up. Asami laughs all the way down.

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