



## **Kabbalah Cowboys**

Kadrey, Richard

**Published:** 2002

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

**Source:** <http://www.infinitematrix.net/stories/shortshorts/kadrey37.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

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It was a roughneck expedition a week out of LA and deep into Nevada's "Big Empty." In keeping with true western cowboy tradition, the roughnecks traveled on horseback. Specially bred and modified for the harsh climate, their steeds weren't much more than bone and gristle, fitted out with just enough wires and electrodes to keep their jerky-dry muscles moving. The horses' brains were housed in oval-shaped, high-impact-plastic bubbles in their bare skulls. Turns out, a brain doesn't take up much room when all it has to do is understand Giddyup, Whoa, and turn Left or Right.

The crew's patron saint was Teresa of Avila. A hunchbacked angel traveled with them. Saint Teresa loved the disfigured. The cowboys all wore bright masks to hide scarred and radiation-burned faces that were more Dadaist than C.M. Russell.

Ten days beyond the dusty canals of the Venetian resort on the Vegas strip, the cowboys spotted a cyborg crew bringing in a herd of cattle and slaves from up north. The cyborgs were all drip tubes and leaking joints where the desert had worked its way inside and fouled their prosthetics. The longhorns were all skinless, like walking butchers signs, the better to dissipate the heat. The slaves were pitiful and stinking, as slaves often were. Feynmann made a big show of thanking the Lord that all their tongues had been cut out, so they couldn't start begging for food or rescue. Cassiel, the roughnecks' crippled angel, got down from his mount and went to the slaves. He pressed his hand to each forehead and blessed them. In fits of gran mal religious ecstasy, ten or more of the slaves threw themselves onto the horns of the bulls, dying in heavenly agony. The cowboys nodded to the cyborgs, acknowledging this breach of decorum. They knew they were protected as long as they traveled with their angel. Still, the cyborgs looked none too pleased, so the cowboys moved out.

When the next Friday rolled around, the roughneck crew all fasted. They force fed Cassiel a fist-size chunk of peyote, then took turns skin-popping N-dimethyl-5-methoxytryptamine until the crew was on a vision quest that was an E ticket neural hotrod through the Milky Way, with pit stops in Heaven and Hell. They hadn't had anything to drink for days. LA was as dry, as Teller liked to say, as "the moon's puckered gray asshole." The cowboys had been subsisting on their own recycled urine and angel sweat. The hallucinations slammed them hard. They stumbled across the sand and onto the cracked glass plains of Alamogordo.

Feynmann was the one who pointed out the vision to his caballeros. Saint Teresa, luminous and smelling like rose petals, had appeared and was having a hard bump and grind with Cassiel in the black glass emptiness. Muddling back to camp, the cowboys dragged a laser borer out (careful not to disturb the rutting lovers) and sank a test well. A gusher of faintly glowing, cyan-colored heavy water erupted over their heads. The cowboys whooped and danced in the radioactive rain, celebrating with shots of Jack Daniels and Three Mile Island Ice Teas.

Hungover and exhausted from capping the well, the cowboys slept through most of the next day. At sunset, they nailed Cassiel to a cross made from wood they'd dragged all the way from a beached gondola at the Venetian. They burned Cassiel on the cross as an offering to Teresa, then ate his flesh for strength. The angel's bones they laid out in a Sefirot to mark their claim on the land and the precious water below.

"A hot ride, but a good one," said Alvarez as they headed back LA-way to conscript a crew to tap the well. They laughed about all those poor saps cooped up in bunkers back in the city. The cowboys agreed that it was a good day to be alive and riding the open range.

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