



**Pembroke's Saga**  
Kadrey, Richard

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### **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:**

- *Butcher Bird* (2005)
- *Metrophage* (1988)
- *Zombie* (2002)
- *A Cautionary Tale* (2002)
- *SETI* (2002)
- *Mudrosti* (2002)
- *Second-Floor Girls* (2002)
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- *Chronalgia* (2002)

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The old man spent his days shambling from his rented room to the corner store and back again. A newspaper. Cans of soup and boxes of low sodium Saltines. An ice cream sandwich when his Social Security check came. He had a radio in his room. The landlord and other tenants heard it crackling as they passed his door. He kept it tuned to some foreign station. They jibbered in a strange language and played shrill music, like cruel boys pulling the tails of cats.

The old man's fingernails were clean and well-groomed, his cuticles trimmed, but his fingertips were perpetually smudged with black. When he was younger, he had prided himself that he only wrote with pencil on plain paper. Even a pen was too much for him. Ink was pure arrogance. A pencil mark, on the other hand, could be smudged out with a thumb if no eraser was available. He bought erasers by the box. Besides food and batteries for his radio, erasers were his biggest expense.

His masterpiece, the novel, was over 2000 pages. It was a simple story, a family saga. It began with Adam and Eve as they were expelled from Eden, and went on to trace a single family line from the beginning of time to the present. The old man had worked on the novel for all of his adult life. His children had grown and moved away. His wife and friends had aged and died. Many of them had given up on their dreams long before they went. Not the old man. Through it all, he wrote. In the end, he had a book. And when he finished it, the book terrified him. When he wrote the final word, something cracked deep at the center of the world.

He went to the library to look up similar books, or situations like his. He found none. The old man didn't consider himself an artist or even an author, just a man with a story he had to tell. When he finished the book, however, the old man realized he'd made a terrible mistake. His was the finest novel ever written. This wasn't a boast, but a simple fact. The book was perfect in every sense. Not a word was out of place. Not a character, not a metaphor nor line of dialog was forced or ill-suited placed. It was the greatest novel ever written, and looking at it that first day, the old man had felt the life go out of him, like a sudden involuntary exhalation. After that, he could never quite get his breath again.

The old man looked out of his window and smoked one of the two cigarettes he permitted himself each day (the price of tobacco these days was a crime). Then he got to work. He removed the new box of erasers from under his bed, sat at the door propped on two sawhorses that served at his desk, and he began to erase. The old man worked meticulously, not just running his erasers blindly over the penciled sentences,

but carefully obliterating his novel word-by-word. He knew that for his task to have any meaning, there must be no trace of the book when he was done.

He'd spent thirty years carefully writing his novel, word after word. It took him another thirty years to destroy all trace of it. But not every trace. The empty pages remained. It was his one consolation. If he'd written the book in pen, he would have had to burn the thing. This way, he still had the blank manuscript, the ghost of the book, to hold and remember.

As each page was annihilated, the ground grew firmer and the world begin to heal itself. On the day when he erased the final word on the final page, the sky opened clear and cloudless, like porcelain. The old man decided to celebrate. He bought a large fries and a chocolate shake from the Burger King around the corner, and lemon sorbet from the corner store. He turned his radio up loud and moved his creaking hips to the old music from the crackling speaker. He was the captain of the bomb squad who'd after disarmed a big one. Riffing the empty manuscript, the old man made a sound low in his throat, like an explosion. Then he tossed the pages out the window. They caught an updraft the blank pages fluttered like a flock of birds, wheeling into the sky.

His finished his sorbet and lit a cigarette, taking a long drag as the evening light poured pale and cool through the windows.

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