



Lotus Alley
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

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Sirikit dreamed of spirit houses for six nights running. She passed spirit houses everyday — on her way to work, when buying groceries, and on her increasingly infrequent dates with her boyfriend. Almost every building in Bangkok had a spirit house, a place for the spirits whose land had been covered by a human house, so they would have somewhere to live and wouldn't haunt the human dwelling.

After the sixth night of dreams, Sirikit stopped at a convenience store near her apartment and bought a small cake to leave at the spirit house by her front door. Sirikit made this small offering every day for a week. She felt foolish the whole time. Spirits were things her grandmother believed in. Country bumpkin stuff. Still, she left her donut or candy bar or orange at the spirit house every morning. When she returned in the evening, the offering was gone.

By the end of the first week of this new ritual, her headaches had returned. They were the same nauseating migraines she'd suffered earlier in the sweltering summer, when the drunks used to fight below her window after the bars closed. Sirikit tried prescriptions, remedies from America, opium and stinking teas from the office herbalist, but nothing eased the icepick pain lodged between her eyes. What was worse was that, when the headaches peaked, her senses collapsed in on themselves. Colors shifted. She tasted shapes. Her hearing dulled, then became explosively loud, and she couldn't understand a word anyone was saying.

On the night of the Festival of Hungry Ghosts, plagued with migraines and unable to sleep, Sirikit heard the drunks below her window. They'd returned to her little street and were fighting like dogs. Normally, she would have covered her head with a pillow and hoped that they'd go away. Tonight, however, the drunken intrusion on her pain made Sirikit furious. She grabbed up her robe, stormed downstairs and into the alley.

The drunks were on the ground. Two filthy men brawled like vicious children. The offerings from the spirit house were scattered on the alley floor, crushed under their rolling bodies. There was someone else in the alley. A filthy woman. She was eating one of the offering oranges, the juice flowing down her cheeks, leaving sticky trails in the dirt on her face. "Hello Sirikit," said the filthy woman.

Sirikit was startled. Not only could she understand the woman, but the woman knew her name. Before Sirikit could question her, the filthy woman came closer. "Are you ready to go?" she asked.

"Go where?" asked Sirikit. As the filthy woman came closer, she looked familiar. Even through the grime, she was surprisingly beautiful.

She looked like the picture in the lobby of Sirikit's office building. Green Tara, goddess of compassion.

"Go away. Ready to leave the world of time and fear. Ready to become a god."

Sirikit blinked. "I don't want to be a god," she said as the headache fogged her vision.

"You made the offerings," said the filthy Tara.

"That was nothing. I've been sick. They were whims."

"Gods are the embodiment of whims."

"I don't want to be a god."

"Of course not. None of us do. We watch the universe wiggle beneath our feet like insects in the grass. When we try to act — help the innocent or punish the corrupt — our every gesture ripples terribly through space and time. We pluck a child from a fire in the Amazon and a tidal wave kills a hundred others in Tokyo." Tara laughed.

"If you can do these things, what do you want with me?"

The filthy woman finished her orange, spat seeds on the ground and wiped her hands on the grimy green raincoat tied around her thin frame. "The godhead is eternal, but the gods aren't. As you can see... " She inclined her head toward the two drunks who still wrestled on the ground. They giggled as they clawed each other's face. "Even the gods go mad. Nothing that's conscious can live in eternity. I need to live in flesh again, to grow old and die. You are Tara now."

Before Sirikit could protest, she felt something pass through her, like a warm, pleasant shiver. Her headache was gone and when she could see again, she was no longer Sirikit, but an immense *presence* hovering above the rim of the galaxy. She swooped downward, looking for a familiar blue planet. When she found Bangkok and then her house, she saw that things had transformed subtly. She realized that she'd been gone a long time. Years, at least. Shops had changed their names. The building where she used to live had been painted a dazzling yellow. An old woman was living in her apartment. When she paused by the alley where she'd left the flesh world, she saw the nearby spirit house. It was empty. No one had left cake, rice or even an orange. She rose up and left the city forever. That night in Bangkok, a city known for its sunsets, the residents saw the most radiant sunset that any could remember.

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