



Opener of the Ways
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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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On a bright, crisp Saturday, Margaret walked through the dog park with Anubis. The jackal-headed guide of the dead, the prince of Magic, used his royal Ankh to scratch the parts of his back he couldn't reach with his hands.

Margaret bought them ice cream from a vendor with a cart. Other dog owners crowded around with their animals. A Russian wolfhound sniffed Anubis' ass. The god patted the wolfhound on the head and let it lick from his vanilla cone. The wolfhound's owner nervously pulled the dog away.

"Why is it always seven?" Margaret asked. "Seven deadly sins. Seven virtues. Seven pillars of wisdom. Seven lines on a grave to erase the sins of the dead."

"Seven segments of a rainbow," said Anubis, in a clear very un-doglike voice. "Seven souls."

"Is that why? Because we have seven souls?"

"Perhaps. Four parts of mortals are connected to Earth, three to Heaven. If you add up the numbers one through seven, you get twenty-eight, the same number as the cycle of the moon. Of course, it could be simpler. It could be that everyone in the universe hates six, so the gods just rounded up one."

An old woman in a bulky plaid coat stood before them. "What kind of a dog is that?"

"Actually, it's a god," said Margaret.

"Is that like a Pekingese?"

"Your khu, your intelligence, is unusually small," Anubis said. "This will not help you pass through the Judgement Hall of Osiris and into the Western Lands where worthy souls live forever."

"You have a very rude doggy," the old woman said, and stalked off, pulling her cocker spaniel behind.

Margaret called, "He's not a dog. He's a god. And, I suppose, a dog, too."

"I'm a jackal. *Canis aureus*. Related to dogs, but a different sub-species."

"Yeah. The kind that can talk."

"All dogs talk. They just don't talk to humans."

"What do dogs talk about?"

"That's a secret."

Margaret pointed to a brown and white mutt touching noses with a dachshund. "What's that one talking about right now?"

"It's hungry and its human watches too much porn." Anubis scratched his back again. "While I'm not a dog, I sure would like to chase the nice red ball that pitbull has."

"I have a ball in my bag. Should I throw it for you?"

"No, but thanks. It's undignified for a god."

"I understand," Margaret said. She took a last bite of her ice cream and breathed in the afternoon air. "This is nice. Being back in the park."

"I thought you might enjoy it."

"When you first knocked on my door, I thought it was a joke. I'm not used to meeting gods, much less ones who want to go to the dog park with me."

"I'd seen you here before. After your terrier died, I knew you must miss the place."

"I did," she said, then hesitated. "I'm not dead, too, am I?"

"I don't know. Did you feel dead when you bought the ice cream?"

"No. I guess not. I guess ice cream is confirmation of life."

Anubis pointed his Ankh at a meticulously-coifed poodle who was being vigorously humped by a handsome German shepherd.

"See that poodle? In a previous life, she was the greatest magician in human history. Almost a god, she was, though she was a man back then. She became a little too ambitious and challenged Amman Ra to a duel."

"What happened?"

"When she was killed, she was reincarnated as mold on the side of a tree in a mangrove swamp in southern India. It's taken her ten thousand years to get back this far up the food chain."

"Does she remember any of that?"

Anubis glanced at the busy dogs. "Not at the moment, I'd guess." They walked on down the path. The god was very adept at pointing out dog shit before Margaret stepped in it. He said, "That man you don't like. You should forget about him."

"There are so many of them not to like. Which specific man are you talking about?"

"The one who hurt you. The one you bought the poison for. You shouldn't use it. I'm the Opener of Ways. The one who leads souls to judgement. I know about these things."

"It's hard always being reasonable. Some people deserve to suffer."

"I understand. I once flooded all of Upper Egypt to get back at my brother, Set. Everyone was very angry with me. My family wouldn't speak to me for a thousand years."

"I once stuck my sister's Barbie in the garbage disposal. Not the same thing, I suppose."

"Of course it is. Attacks on those we love are relative. And they leave us lonely and barren."

Margaret let air out slowly between her teeth. "I wasn't really going to kill him, I suppose. It just felt good to know I could."

"And now you don't have to," said Anubis. He put his arm around her shoulder. It was warm and oddly comforting. "Remember that all debts are paid, in the end."

"Does everyone really hate six?" Margaret asked.

"Gods and humans both. If we didn't need something between five and seven, no one would put up with six."

"Excuse me, ma'am," said a Regional Park cop. "Are you aware of the new leash law that's gone into effect?"

Margaret's eyes narrowed. "Did that old woman send you over here?"

"Your dog is too big to run around on his own."

"He's not a dog. And he's not running around."

"He doesn't seem to have a license. Has he had his shots?"

"He's a god. He doesn't need shots!"

"You're going to have to leave the park, and I'm going to have to give you a fine."

Anubis moved his enormous arm from Margaret's shoulder and laid his hand on the park cop's head. "You know, you bureaucrats were invented by Thoth, the scribe. But you were supposed to help mankind keep its affairs in order, not fill it with annoyance and fear."

"Good doggy," said the cop, and vanished.

"What happened to him?"

Anubis took Margaret's arm and they walked on. "Since he didn't want to act like a human, he won't be human again for quite a while. It takes a long time to work your way up from tooth plaque."

"Can you stay for dinner?"

"I'm afraid not, but—" Anubis stopped.

"What?"

"Maybe I will let you throw that ball for me. Just for a few minutes."

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