



Ice House
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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The city of glass was inspired by the dazzling ice sculptures that dot the streets of Tokyo each winter and turn the city into a living storybook. For all their beauty, the sculptures' impermanence had always depressed Master Ghedidi. How many days would it be before each icy pagoda, dragon, teddy bear and Santa would be water again? This kind of beauty had to be preserved more permanently. And not just for a few days or weeks. It had to be real. Solid. Livable. It had to be home. A crystal city.

Master Ghedidi selected Kaho'olawe, an uninhabited Hawaiian island with an unusually stable climate and an abundance of sand. Circling the island in a custom-made glass helicopter that cost more than the gross national product of some smaller countries, Master Ghedidi personally air-dropped the billions of silicone-eating nanobots it would take to transform the empty beaches into the city of his dreams.

The architecture and materials permitted only the most subtle and elegant pursuits. Everything was made of glass: furniture, cutlery, cooking pots, the great ovens that served Ghedidi palace and the palaces he donated to selected blood relations and close friends. Even the carpets, drapes and tapestries were woven from hair-thin strands of colored glass fibers.

Master Ghedidi insisted that his house alone, and all his possessions, be made of clear, colorless glass, so that his surroundings, as much as possible, mimicked the ice sculptures that had originally inspired him. He wrote poetry, a handful of one-act plays and all his correspondence on transparent mil-thin sheets of compacted glass. The letters were packed in crates with excelsior and shipped by a special courier service, like works of art.

The city was nearly silent. The inhabitants wore padded boots and robes of silk and cotton. No buttons, zippers or any other hard fasteners were permitted. Over time, the local fashions morphed into an updated combination of ancient Persian and Japanese styles.

The servants and maintenance staff were mostly mute and communicated via sign language through the transparent walls. For the rest of the population, whispering became a fine art. Dancing and lovemaking were necessarily restrained, but all the more intense for the discipline they required. Life became a kind of endless kabuki theater — slow and ritualized, full of careful and studied movements. A traditional tea ceremony in Japan might take three hours, but a similar ceremony in the city could last a day and a half. Dinner could require a week.

Over the fifty years in which the city flourished and evolved, its customs became less and less recognizable to outsiders. The islanders

developed their own language and religion, based around silence and fragility, though they seldom talked about these ideas to outsiders.

Then, one day, the city was empty. It happened as quickly and quietly as when, almost two thousands years earlier, the Maya had deserted their mighty cities. The Maya, however, returned to the rainforests of their native Central America. The inhabitants of Master Ghedidi's glass city simply vanished.

The investigation into what happened continues to this day. A motley group of state, federal and even international law enforcement fight turf wars in the fragile rooms and corridors, doing more damage than research. The investigators have found no signs of violence or social breakdown. The little that they have discovered was completely by accident.

While taking laser measurements of some of the objects in Master Ghedidi's study, a quick-eyed technician noticed that the walls were covered in layers of microscopic scratches, a result of the wear from the automatic cleaning bots that kept the glass walls spotless. The technician scanned the scratches with her laser and discovered something extraordinary.

Each cleaning bot, like the stylus in an old Edison cylinder recorder, had cut grooves into the surface of the glass, capturing sounds from inside the rooms. The investigators cataloged meals that went on for weeks, whispered poetry, hushed lovers' quarrels, delicate string and woodwind music, political intrigues and mysterious religious doggerel. It's like eavesdropping on ghosts. Someday, the police might hear something that solves the mystery of the city's missing population. Until then, they listen to years of chatter from a world they can't possibly understand, hoping that whatever slow-building revelation led Ghedidi's devotees into the aether doesn't seduce them as well.

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