



Zombie

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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When he was nervous Dexter fingered the scar at the base of his skull. His friends, even his family, told him it was from the motorcycle accident. But Dexter knew that was a lie. He'd received the scar when he'd lost his soul in a rigged poker game with some hellspawn disguised as Rudy Clouson's cousin Billy. He was now just a husk of a human. The living dead. It really sucked.

Over the years since he'd lost his soul, Dexter would occasionally see it attached, like a Siamese twin, to some son-of-a-bitch who'd no doubt purchased or stolen it from hellspawn Billy. If he could get to the person, Dexter would offer to buy it back. Though he always tried to be reasonable, the people would usually play dumb and threaten to call the police if he didn't leave them alone. Dexter reconciled himself to life as a zombie.

The whole brain-eating thing didn't work for him. Neither did hanging out in cemeteries and haunting the woods. Brains made him puke and cemeteries fell into two categories: either they were dead boring (no pun intended) or full of horny goth kids who threw rocks at him when he'd go into the slow, lurching zombie walk he'd seen in movies and practiced at home in front of the mirror. Haunting the woods was even worse. He was almost shot by some drunken deer hunters. Dexter might be the living dead, but he wasn't stupid. The one good thing he'd noticed was that becoming zombified had improved his night vision. Probably it had something to do with the brain hunting he was supposed to be engaged in, he figured. Dexter got a job as the head night shift security guard at the mall.

The job was pretty easy. At night, the entire mall was closed except for the little combination bar and video-game arcade on the south side of the complex. Dexter made his hourly rounds, practicing his living-dead walk in the big plate glass windows in front of J.C. Penney's before ending up back the arcade. One night, Dexter saw a guy in a red Pendleton shirt going into the arcade wearing his soul. He followed the guy inside.

Almost everyone in the place was wearing a stolen soul. The hijacked spirits held onto their new bodies like blind children, or perched on shoulders like parrots in some cartoon drawing of a pirate. Following Mr. Red Pendleton into the back, Dexter saw his soul slip off the man's back and into a glass case. The case was an old arcade game, one of those claw machines where you try to grab a camera or a gold watch, but usually end up with a pair of foam dice. This game, however, was full of souls. He saw his at the back of the case, staring at him mournfully.

Dexter fished around in his pocket, withdrew fifty cents, and dropped it into the machine.

He got nothing on this first try. Or on the second. On his third try, he hooked a plastic tiara from the pile of toys at the bottom of the machine. He ran out of quarters soon after, and had to get more change from the bartender. When he'd run through the rest of his cash, Dexter got out his ATM card. After an hour, he'd blown through most of his life savings, which at just over three hundred dollars would be kind of pathetic under normal circumstances. Considering that Dexter was one step removed from worm bait, it wasn't that bad.

When he was down to his last three dollars, Dexter snagged his soul. He smiled as it crawled from the tray on the side of the claw machine and into his empty interior. But something was wrong. It didn't fit or something. It felt awkward, like a T-shirt that had shrunk in the wash. Dexter used the last of his cash to grab the soul of Wayne Shelby McCarthy, the captain of his high school swim team and class treasurer in their senior year. Filled with a sense of well-being and purpose from his new soul, Dexter quit his guard job the next day and re-enrolled in community college.

Dexter's abandoned soul wandered the mall for weeks, until it applied for his old security guard job. The soul never became popular, either with the local merchants or his work mates, who thought of him as "distant" and "spooky," but he never took a sick day and there were almost no break-ins when he was on the job.

Over the years, Dexter's soul discovered that the other night staff at the arcade, the ex-cheerleaders on late shift at the Dairy Queen across the highway and the Happy Donuts crew down the road, were also abandoned souls. They began meeting on a regular basis to play mini-golf and ride the go-carts at the Playland Fun Park out by the airport. Dexter's soul took up with the soul of Roxy Boudreaux, one of the DQ cheerleaders. They moved in together and Dexter's soul took over running the arcade when Sonny Simmons, the soul who'd been in charge of the place for twenty-odd years, lost big on a Houston Rockets' game and ended up back in the claw machine.

Dexter's soul runs the arcade to this day. He keeps waiting for the night when Dexter walks back in. Hanging out behind the bar and mixing himself a cherry Coke, copping a bag of barbecue-flavored Doritos from the snack stand behind the counter, he looks around his little kingdom of lost souls and hopes that things have worked out as well for Dexter as they have for him.

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