

THE DEAD STARS

EXT. MACULAR CITY - DAY

Detective NILES DEACON, early fifties, chronically sleep deprived and in desperate need of a haircut, is chasing a fleeing suspect.

The frenetic pursuit takes place through a labyrinthine network of zigzagging alleyways lined by grey, featureless buildings. The sound of HACKING breathing and CRUNCHING of feet on gravel is overpowering.

Deacon's body repeatedly collides against the walls of the alleyways as he desperately attempts to keep up with the fitter and younger suspect. His attempts are futile and he loses sight of the suspect. Deacon stops, frowns, then sprints down an alley in the opposite direction. This time, the alleys are filled with people going about their business.

Deacon weaves frantically between annoyed people until he emerges into a deserted small courtyard. There are three other alleys that open into it. Deacon withdraws his Malig 5000 weapon and points it at the middle opening. Within seconds the suspect emerges and Deacon shoots him. The suspect loses all motor function below his neck and he collapses in a tangle of his flaccid limbs like a severed marionette puppet.

Deacon lowers his exhausted body to the ground and leans against a wall. His breathing is still labored. He glances at the suspect who is motionless except for his head which is thrashing from side to side SPEWING expletives at breakneck speed. Deacon closes his eyes.

A police car pulls up to a gate bordering the courtyard. Detective FILOMENUS CURTIS emerges and walks towards Deacon. Curtis is mid-thirties, tough looking and with a precision crew-cut. His upper lip is curled up in a permanent sneer.

CURTIS

That's your worst yet.

DEACON

(standing up)

What?

CURTIS

The worst fucking TAP call you've done. You may as well use smoke signals.

DEACON

Ha, ha. You know I'm still getting my head around these Thought Activated Phones --

CURTIS

-- No fucking way.

(MORE)

CURTIS (CONT'D)

The TAP 200 Series was standard issue to all Macula City cops seven years ago.

DEACON

Give me something with buttons any day.

Deacon motions to the suspect, lying motionless except for his protesting violent head movements. A TIRADE of swear words spews out.

DEACON (CONT'D)

He almost got away. I'm getting too old for this.

CURTIS

(turning to suspect)

Shut the fuck up!

(back to Deacon)

You're never too old my friend. Now gimp the bastard.

DEACON

Is that necessary...

CURTIS

You know how filthy talk upsets me.

Deacon walks over to the suspect and removes a red ping-pong sized ball from his pocket. Curtis holds the suspect's skull with one hand whilst Deacon reluctantly pushes it into the suspect's mouth.

The ball expands in size until it extrudes like an apple in a roast pig's mouth. The suspect's eyes bulge with fear and anger.

Deacon looks away. The sound of Curtis's uproarious LAUGHTER fills the courtyard.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Deacon enters to rapturous applause. A crowd of back-slapping police officers surround him.

Deacon looks up at a banner suspended from the ceiling that reads "Congratulations on 1000 Chase and Apprehends".

DEACON

(whispering to Curtis)

Oh no, I forgot... let's get out--

EAGER POLICEMAN

-- Great chase, Deacon.

(MORE)

EAGER POLICEMAN (CONT'D)

Curtis sent a live video of the
guy to our TAPs...

(laughing)

... the one just after you gimped
him. It's going ballistic. Five
hundred uploads already--

Captain GROSSET approaches.

GROSSET

Well done, Niles. 1000 C and A's
is quite an achievement.

DEACON

Thank you, sir... but this is not
really necessary.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Of course it is, Niles.

Deacon turns to RACHAEL BISSAU, African American, smartly
dressed and oozing authority and confidence .

DEACON

(mood lifting)

Rachael... you're here?

BISSAU

I wouldn't miss this for the world.

CURTIS

Not everyone gets a special visit
from the President of Macula City.

BISSAU

(to Curtis)

Feeling better, Curtis? I heard
you were off for a week.

CURTIS

Worse fucking diarrhea I ever had...
like Satan was butt-fucking me and
using my anus as a pencil sharpener.

BISSAU

Charming as always.

(turning to Deacon)

I know how much you hate this sort
of attention, Niles, but this is
good for moral. With the elections
just around the corner, we need to
keep our crime figures tight.

DEACON

Are the latest poll results out?

BISSAU

It's incredible. We are up fifty points. Fifty points, Niles. The last election was such a landslide victory for the RID movement, it was a joke. This time, it's going to be different... I can feel it.

DEACON

I can too.

Bissau gently ushers Deacon away from the crowd.

BISSAU

(whispering)

You're looking tired. Are you still having trouble sleeping?

DEACON

I'm working on it. Don't worry.

BISSAU

What about those sleeping pills that my doctor friend recommended?

DEACON

Didn't work... nothing does.

BISSAU

I know someone--

DEACON

-- Rachael, I'm fine.

BISSAU

Niles, I've known you since first year university...political science class, remember... when we were going to rule the world together. I know when you're lying.

DEACON

Maybe I'm getting too old to be chasing people half my age.

BISSAU

Talking about ruling the world together... the offer still stands. Work for me in office as my advisor, Niles.

DEACON

Think about it.

BISSAU

Like you've been doing for the last fifteen years.

DEACON

(smiling)

Yeah... like that. Look, I probably look tired because I'm weeks overdue for a haircut. Maybe tomorrow--

BISSAU

-- Your haircut will have to wait. Something has come up and I need you and Curtis on it.

DEACON

What is it?

BISSAU

(nervous whisper)

I can't discuss it out here... but this may be the turning point for the pro-globalization movement--

Cries of SPEECH, SPEECH, distract Bissau.

BISSAU (CONT'D)

Your fans are calling. I'll see you and Curtis after the cadet's lecture... and Niles, try not to start your speech with the same four words you start every speech.

Deacon walks reluctantly to the cake.

DEACON

I'll keep this short...

INT. POLICE STATION LECTURE ROOM - DAY

Deacon stands at a lectern in front of a crowd of seated fresh-faced cadets.

DEACON

Good afternoon and welcome. My name is detective Niles Deacon. I know that your lectures are usually streamed directly to your TAPS but bear with me please...

(smiling)

...I'm a little old fashioned. Just relax and don't worry about taking notes.

Puzzled looks on the cadet's faces.

DEACON (CONT'D)

Today I want to talk about what it means to be a police officer in Macula City.

Deacon presses a button and an image flashes up on a screen behind him.

It shows a series of forty eight different geometric shapes, all numbered, connected by blue lines.

DEACON (CONT'D)

This you will remember from your primary school days. What is it?

EAGER STUDENT FRONT ROW

It's a RID map.

DEACON

Good. And it stands for?

EAGER STUDENT FRONT ROW

Residential Interim District.

DEACON

Why interim?

EAGER STUDENT FRONT ROW

Because it was meant to last for only five years after Harrods Wednesday.

DEACON

But?

EAGER STUDENT FRONT ROW

But it was so successful that it has continued to the present day, forty nine years later.

DEACON

Correct. To remind you of just how significant the Harrods Wednesday event was, I would like you all to see this short clip.

IMAGE ON SCREEN

A young blonde tourist smiles and pouts on a camcorder screen that is actively recording. It is a sunny day in London. Red double-decker buses drive by. In the background is the Harrods Department store.

The glass Harrods dome suddenly explodes in a red fireball. A series of explosions follow as the building collapses. The blonde tourist runs towards the screen screaming. Behind her is chaos with flying debris, smoke and colliding cars. The camcorder screen shakes violently as it falls to the ground. All goes black.

Next is a series of quick-fire news headlines reporting nuclear explosions at thousands of sites around the world. A world map is peppered with red dots marking the affected sites. The final image is an aerial shot of mushroom clouds as far as the eye can see.

DEACON

Still shocking... after all these years.

The RID map reappears.

DEACON (CONT'D)

So basically, lines were drawn around land deemed safe for human life. People lived within these self-sufficient RIDs and were not allowed to move until the world decided what to do.

CADET FROM BACK ROW

Why the different themes?

DEACON

Each RID, except ours of course, was themed on a past era of world history. You see, the destruction was so extreme and violent that the only way to make people feel safe was to go back in time when the world was safer... more innocent.

Deacon points to cadet in second row.

DEACON (CONT'D)

So tell me, was the RID system successful at stopping terrorism?

CADET FROM SECOND ROW

Um...I think so...

DEACON

Of course it was. The world has never been a safer place. Every election to decide on the fate of the RID system has overwhelmingly favored keeping it.

CADET FROM BACK ROW

So why are we fighting to stop it?

EAGER STUDENT FRONT ROW

The Coop stupid.

DEACON

Correct.

Deacon points to the shape marked "48". It is the largest and the only one not connected by the network of blue lines.

DEACON (CONT'D)

RID 48, commonly referred as The Coop, is the most controversial
(MORE)

DEACON (CONT'D)
 aspect of the RID philosophy. It houses individuals with any social, political or religious similarity to the terrorists responsible for the Harrods Wednesday attacks.

The RID map is replaced by a cityscape distinguished by the domes and minarets of innumerable mosques.

DEACON (CONT'D)
 This is the most recent photo we have of The Coop.
 (shaking his head)
 All the achievements and gains made in human rights over hundreds of years simply vanished overnight. We are talking about millions of people imprisoned against their will... and the world went along. For forty nine years!

Deacon steps down from behind the lectern and walks closer to the cadets.

DEACON (CONT'D)
 Your parents or grandparents made a decision to stay in Macula City because they believed in the importance of personal freedoms and human rights. That's why you are all here... for a reason.

Deacon claps his hands together.

DEACON (CONT'D)
 That's it for today. Oh, and don't forget to look at the quarterly world crime figures on the way out. Ours will be higher than the others but don't be discouraged. Be proud and stick with your principles.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Curtis is staring at a wall monitor displaying the crime figures for all the RIDs. He is fuming.

CURTIS
 (pointing at monitor)
 This is a fucking farce. Look at these... and RID 26...fuck. Tarquin's Coop transfers are higher than everyone else, that's why his crime figures--

DEACON
 -- People are starting to question--

CURTIS

--- The bastard will transfer someone if their favorite food is falafel...

DEACON

I keep asking you to join the pro-globalization movement, Curtis.

CURTIS

Are you fucking kidding. I'm as diplomatic as a Malig pointed at someone's nuts. You're perfect for it, Niles - calm, in control, and possession of a ten year record of never uttering a swear word.

DEACON

It's eleven years actually.

INT. GROSSET'S OFFICE - DAY

Deacon and Curtis enter. Grosset and Bissau are seated.

BISSAU

(serious tone)

Please, sit. Before we start, I want to make it clear that nothing I am about to tell you leaves this room.

DEACON

Understood

BISSAU

Yesterday, we received a request for the assistance of two detectives with expertise in serial killers.

CURTIS

You brought us here to tell--

BISSAU

-- It was from RID 26.

Shocked silence.

DEACON

80's Town?

BISSAU

I never imagined in my wildest dreams that the great Mayor James Tarquin would ask anybody, let alone us, for help.

CURTIS

Well I hope you told him to fuck himself, because if you haven't, I would be more than--

BISSAU

-- I understand your reticence, Curtis, but I urge you to have an open mind. As far as I can see, this is a win win situation for both parties.

CURTIS

I am not--

BISSAU

-- Let me finish. In three months, the planet will face the most important election in it's history. Support for RID dismantlement is at it's highest, but we need something more... and this is it.

CURTIS

With all respect, a shit like Tarquin is just gonna use us then spit us out when he is finished.

BISSAU

Even so, this is a once in a lifetime opportunity for us to prove the benefits of a free and open society to the most powerful figure in the RID movement.

DEACON

Do you know the nature of the crime?

BISSAU

The details are sketchy, but apparently there have been six murders in seventy-two hours.

DEACON

(thinking out loud)

That's unusual by any standards. Are you sure it's one killer?

BISSAU

Yes. There was a note.

CURTIS

(savagely)

The more the better as far as I'm concerned. The world will finally realize that 80's Town isn't as safe as they make out.

BISSAU

So tell me, detective, how many bodies will you be happy with...fifteen...twenty, knowing you could have stopped--

CURTIS

-- Okay, okay, I get the point. I'm still not helping that fucker.

There is silence. Bissau's expression softens.

BISSAU

We really need this. I know I was talking positive about our gains in the polls but the reality is, we can't win... not without this.

(to Deacon)

And I know you have a personal reason why winning the election--

CURTIS

-- Don't lay that on me. I would do anything to get Niles's family back together.

DEACON

(softly)

Then do it. If not for me, for Suzie... please.

After a long pause, Curtis roughly runs his hands over his crewcut and lets out a frustrated yelp.

CURTIS

Okay... fuck...I'll do it.

BISSAU

Thank you, Curtis. Anyway, Tarquin keeps it very authentic so you will be dealing with 1980s police skills. You two should be able to solve this with your eyes closed.

DEACON

I have a good feeling about this.

(to Curtis)

Thanks... I owe you one.

Deacon and Curtis stand.

BISSAU

Before you go, Mayor Tarquin has insisted on a couple of conditions. First, a total gag order on all aspects of this collaboration, and second, you will be unable to contact anyone in Macula City until successful completion of the case.

CURTIS

I need to bring my mobile forensic equipment.

BISSAU

Unfortunately you will have to make do with their technology. Tarquin is too arrogant and proud to admit that Macula City has benefits, even if it is so obvious.

CURTIS

This sound better and better as--

DEACON

-- When do we start?

BISSAU

The conduit leaves at seven a.m tomorrow. Good luck.

INT. DEACON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Curtis enters and hands Deacon a bottle of wine.

CURTIS

I'm desperate for Suzie's home cooking before we leave--

DEACON

(whispering)

-- I haven't told her yet. I'll tell her later tonight...and please, no talking politics.

CURTIS

(dismissively)

You can count on me.

Curtis plonks himself on a chair and scans the room.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

Who the fuck keeps books nowadays...and where's your Curtains wall monitor?

Deacon hands Curtis a beer.

DEACON

You ask me that every time.

CURTIS

How can you ignore unlimited access to absolutely everything. And they're bringing out a thought activated model next year.

DEACON

I didn't know you were moonlighting
as a Curtains salesman.

CURTIS

And what do you do for music?

Deacon motions to a CD player on the bookshelf.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

My God, you still haven't got rid
of that relic.

DEACON

No one listens to a whole album
anymore...

(shaking head)

... no one cares about the
importance of the opening and
closing track, the immersion into
an unpredictable and exhilarating
range of moods and emotions that
reflect the artists innermost
feelings, the cover art that--

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

-- You're giving poor Curtis a
headache.

Suzie, late forties with wavy shoulder-length brown hair,
walks down the stairs. She has a slight spring in her step
and is smiling.

CURTIS

(kissing Suzie)

You are a godsend. Promise to
never leave me alone in this house
with your husband.

INT. DEACON'S HOUSE DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Alcohol-assisted jovial banter and laughter rebound around
the table.

CURTIS

(patting stomach)

The last decent meal in God knows
when.

SUZIE

What do you mean?

CURTIS

I...I--

DEACON

-- I was going to let you know
later tonight, Suzie.

(MORE)

DEACON (CONT'D)

We've been assigned an undercover job... maybe a few days... but...
 (hesitating)
 ... I can't contact you until it's over. You can stay with--

SUZIE

-- Don't worry about me. I'm not gonna try and do myself in again if that's what you're thinking.

DEACON

Suzie... I...

SUZIE

Lighten up, Niles. When do you guys leave?

CURTIS

Fucking seven in the morning.

Suzie waves her empty glass at Deacon. He disappears to the kitchen. Rummaging noises from behind the door ensue.

Suzie closes her eyes and lets out a soft ecstatic moan. Curtis's hand is caressing her thigh under the table.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

(whispering)

I haven't seen you in weeks.

SUZIE

(shooshing gesture)

I miss you--

Suzie bolts upright as the kitchen door opens. Deacon enters with two opened bottles.

DEACON

Pinot or cabernet?

CURTIS

Your husband was the star of the station this morning.

SUZIE

I heard. Well done darling.

CURTIS

It was a great day... until the fucking crime figures came out.

DEACON

Curtis--

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