

HIGH PRAISE FOR TODD TJERSLAND

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Todd Tjersland

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DEATHBREED A Zombie Novel

FEAR WITHOUT FRONTIERS Horror Cinema Across The Globe
(contributor)

SEX, SHOCKS & SADISM! An A-Z Guide to Erotic & Unusual Horror
Films from Around the World

Selected Filmography and Television Appearances of **Todd Tjersland**

BACK FROM HELL (1994, aka *Demon Apocalypse*)

LEGION OF THE NIGHT (1995, aka *Dead City*)

THE NECRO FILES (1997)

ANTI-HERO (1999)

MISLED (1999)

FACES OF GORE (1999)

FACES OF GORE 2 (2000)

FACES OF GORE 3 (2000)

BEST OF FACES OF GORE (2000)

NECRO FILES 2: LUST NEVER DIES (2003)

SIN CITIES: SEASON 3 (2003, TV)

SIN CITIES: SEASON 4 (2007, TV)

MONSTER PARTY (2008)

TODD TJERSLAND

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AUTHOR’S NOTE

Although Olympia, Washington, and the surrounding environs are real, I have taken fictional liberties with them so don’t expect an exact replica.

Unlike a lot of zombie films and fiction, *Deathbreed* begins a few days *before* the “Zombie Apocalypse” hits. I did this intentionally to give you a feel for the characters and their world, so you can see the horror building while the characters remain blissfully ignorant—at least until it’s too late!

Part of the fun of the zombie genre—of any good Apocalyptic or survival horror outing, from *Deliverance* to *Night of the Living Dead*—is that as it unfolds, you put yourself into the story. You can’t help it. Even if you think zombies aren’t real, well... The end of the world could still happen, couldn’t it? Maybe as soon as tomorrow. What would you do? What risks would you take to survive in a world gone mad? It’s easy to say you would act differently than the characters in this book. But sitting in the safety of your living room or tucked under the covers, you can see things the characters cannot. For the sake of argument, let’s suppose you wouldn’t make the same choices. Are you willing to bet that there aren’t other people out there who will—at your expense?

Think about it.

Cry woe, destruction, ruin, and decay:
The worst is death, and death will have his day.

—William Shakespeare,

Richard II

FREE PREVIEW

It was a little after nine p.m. when I left the Lucky Mart. I just had to hold out long enough to get through tonight and tomorrow when Ace showed up. Then we could burn rubber and head for the hills—hopefully with some hot chicks in the backseat before this plague shit caught up with us. If it were just Bryan, I'd consider cleaning out the store first, but I couldn't do that to Kim. I'd just steal a little bit like I always did right before I got fired or quit. Yeah, just enough to give me some closure—with the upper hand. Minimum wage this, you motherfucker!

With all this crazy shit goin' on, I was half-tempted to save the \$10 cab fare home and hoof it to the bus station. I hadn't seen any buses running for hours, but couldn't be sure service had stopped. What if I got there and the station was closed? I'd either have to walk home in the dark or march back up here to the cab company. I didn't want to take any chances. I stopped at Cascade Cab. It was only a couple blocks from work and seemed the smartest thing to do. I walked in through the glass-paneled door and saw what I expected: Harry, the big fat owner and dispatcher, was still seated behind his desk, screaming four-letter words into his radio. I wondered if he'd even moved an inch from when I saw him last night...

Last night! It seemed a world away, a hundred years in the past. It's funny how time can get all bent out of shape when your life falls apart.

Harry looked up long enough from between bites of his roast beef sandwich and cursing at his drivers to point a snub-nosed .38 Special at my chest. The hammer drew back with a deadly click.

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“Whaddya want?” he snarled.

I hadn’t been expecting that warm of a welcome, but I shouldn’t really have been surprised, either. Not with all the weird shit that was going on. “I was in last night, remember? I work up the street at Lucky Mart.”

“Okay,” Harry said, lowering his gun. “Shut the door and sit down.” He dipped his French roll into a tub of *au jus* and regarded me with a wary eye. He slowly lifted the sandwich up to his sweaty lips and took a bite; dark brown juices rolled over his chin and landed on his T-shirt. The shirt had a picture of Elvis on it that said, “HAIL TO THE KING!”

I looked back from where I stood in the doorway. Some drunk was shuffling up the street toward me. I shut the door and walked several steps to a chair opposite it so I could see if anybody opened it. I didn’t want to have my back exposed to any danger that might come through the door.

“Crazy night,” Harry stated, setting down his sandwich and wiping his big fat face with a napkin. He still had the revolver in his hand, but held it only casually in my direction.

“Sure is,” I agreed.

The shadow of whoever was walking by stopped outside the cab company window. He must have peeked through the half-closed blinds, saw Harry’s gun, and decided to keep going.

“Lemme guess,” Harry said, taking the same juice-stained napkin and mopping at his sweaty forehead. “You need a ride?”

“Yeah,” I replied. “I gotta get home before the Apocalypse.”

He shrugged. “Well, I’m kinda short-handed, kid. Couple of my drivers didn’t show up—one’s in the hospital. Some nut attacked him; tried to bite him! Can you believe that shit? I don’t know what this world’s comin’ to.”

I nodded and thought of the flaming man run over by a car.

Harry picked at a strand of stray meat caught between his teeth. “You live up on the Westside right?”

“You got it,” I said.

“How far?”

“Just down Division, near the Handi-Mart at Twentieth—Antler Creek.”

He consulted the wall map. “Antler Creek, huh? By Maiden Cove?”

I nodded.

“Yeah, I know it. Like I said, you’re welcome to wait, but I can’t make any promises. We’re chargin’ a flat fifty for anywhere in town.”

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“*What the fuck? Fifty dollars?!* But I don’t have it...” I complained. “I only have enough for your regular rates. I need the rest for a cab tomorrow! Otherwise, I can’t get to work if the buses aren’t running.”

He chuckled. “Kid, tomorrow the rates’ll probably be a hundred; *if* we’re runnin’ at all. Radio said the government’s movin’ in—Martial Law.”

“Can’t you gimme a break?” I begged. “You *know* me! I ain’t got that kind of money! I’m not some head case that’s gonna attack your driver. I work at Lucky Mart. You know, for your buddy, Bryan. He told me to say howdy.”

“Sorry, kid. No dice. If I make an exception for you, I gotta make one for everybody. I gotta be fair.”

“No,” I said. “You don’t! You own this joint—you can do whatever you want! Fair is what *you* say it is, especially in times like these...”

I let him chew on that, but he was more interested in chewing on his roast beef. I pondered why I was continually forced to deal with morons.

Harry shrugged. “Fifty bucks, my friend, take it or leave it.” He went back to eating his sandwich. I wanted to slap the fat right off of him.

I looked at the clock, watching the seconds of my life slip by. “Well, shit, Harry! Are the buses still running or are they charging fifty bucks, too?”

“Beats me,” Harry said. “But I ain’t seen one in awhile... Better start walkin’. If they’re still running, they won’t be for long.”

I got up and stood there, mulling my options.

A radio call came in from one of his drivers saying he saw some kind of military roadblock being set up on Capital Way. He was going to have to take his fare the long way around.

“Fuck!” Harry exclaimed. “How long’s that gonna take? You know the phones are dead and we gotta rely on cruisin’ downtown to pick up fares!”

“Maybe the phone company’s got ‘em fixed by now?” the driver asked hopefully. “Did you check? Maybe it’s just that nobody’s called.”

“What are you, stupid?”

“But Harry—”

“Now you listen to me, you fuckface son-of-a-bitch! You dump that sweaty motherfucker off at the roadblock unless he can cough up an extra twenty dollars for the time it’s gonna take to go around those cocksuckers.”

“Roger that, base,” the driver said. I could hear his passenger start calling him every name in the book. He sounded drunk.

I bet half the people in town were drunk right about now. The bars would be packed. Now *that* was a good racket to get into! But then I’d have to deal with drunken losers *and* cigarette smoke. I’m allergic to both. Guess that’s why

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I figured selling voodoo spells was the way to go. Never have to see the customers! Money appearing like magic in my P.O. box everyday... Fuck! I bet the roadblocks'd be slowin' down the goddamn mail. I hadn't counted on that.

I didn't know what else to do, so I just stood there with what I imagined was a pleading, hopeful look on my face.

Harry ignored me in favor of yelling at *another* driver. This guy called in to say that he'd successfully dropped his fare off at the emergency room over at St. Sebastian's and was heading back to base. Harry growled, "Hurry up, shithead! I'm losin' money every second you ain't downtown."

"Was his passenger attacked by one of the crazies?" I asked after he'd hung up his mic.

Harry looked up, surprised I was still here. He only seemed mildly annoyed, so I guess he was, in some antisocial way, grateful for my company. "Bar fight," he explained. "Probably no crazier than most. Hell, there's all kinds of assholes out gettin' loaded tonight..." His eyes suddenly narrowed. "Why? You hear anything?"

"Just the same thing you heard on the radio. People getting sick and goin' nuts! We had a guy in the Lucky Mart tonight who said some homeless freak bit him."

"No shit?" Harry said, and dipped his sandwich back in the sauce. Juice dripped down his chin. A piece of roast beef clung to his upper lip, but he didn't seem to notice. "There's a lot of that goin' around. Sounds like rabies, if you ask me. Had to put down a dog once—terrible thing."

"I bet. My boss was over at the mall today. He said some hippies went apeshit and mauled an old lady real bad. Cops had to shoot to kill just to get 'em off of her."

"Goddamn," Harry wheezed and coughed into his fist. He studied what he found, decided he didn't like what he saw, and wiped it on his shirt.

I pretended I hadn't noticed. "The Eastside Arms are up in smoke; I saw people walking around on fire..."

"Yeah, I heard about that on the scanner! Fucking flea-trap had to go up sooner or later. It's run by some real penny-pinchin' homos. Did you know that? Queer as fuck."

"Yeah," I agreed. "I heard that, too. Look, Harry, can't you gimme a break? You know the kinda shit that's goin' on out there... I could get killed! You know me and you know Bryan down at the Lucky Mart. We're a couple of right guys like you. I know times are tough. I can give you twenty bucks, but that's all I got and I don't know how I'll get in to work tomorrow..."

He thought about it awhile, chewing his food.

I tried to look like somebody this fat fuck could trust.

Finally, he nodded his double chins at me. “Okay, kid. Since you’re a friend of Bryan’s, I’ll do it for twenty, but you gotta wait ‘round here ‘til we get another fare goin’ out your way. I’ll have the driver swing by the office and you can double-up with the regular fare. That’s the deal.”

“Thanks, Harry.”

“Don’t mention it,” he said, suddenly magnanimous.

It was better than nothing. Look at him, sitting there, stuffing his fat face. *Saint fucking Harry, savior of the working class!*

“Have a seat, son. There’s some magazines on the table.”

I sat down and waited while Harry barked orders into his radio. My cheap digital watch told me it was 9:25 p.m., the same time as the clock on the wall. I figured that even if I gave this greedy old Elvis-loving bastard all of my cab money tonight, I could get Bryan or Kim to pay my fare tomorrow when I showed up for work. If they didn’t wanna pay it, well... Fuck it! I’d already be there. If the driver wanted to call the cops on me for stiffing him, well... I figured the police had more important things to do, like chasing crazies.

\$100 cab fare, my ass!

Man, I hoped Ace wasn’t bullshitting me about his “connections” and he really could get us someplace safe. It was either risk that, or hole up in my apartment by myself and hope for the best. I didn’t want to go through this nightmare alone, but why should this be any different than the last year of my life? I was *always* alone—cut off from my past, sinking in my present, and adrift in my future.

I sorted through the pile of magazines, selected an old *Newsweek*, and flipped through it. The cover story was a report about the L.A. cops arresting that black dude, high on PCP and speeding—resisting arrest. That shit happened everyday and never made the headlines, but this time it was different. Some liberal media douche bag had a video camera on the scene. Instead of seein’ the truth, all anybody saw was what they media wanted them to see—THE MAN wailin’ on some poor, oppressed slob—shoving his face in the dirt. There it was, in full color, larger than life—a grainy image of men in blue beating that dumb bastard with nightsticks. Fucker probably deserved it, but you can’t print that—oh, no! Wouldn’t be politically correct.

The caption read, “CAN’T WE ALL JUST GET ALONG?”

I had to laugh.

Harry looked up at me like maybe he was worried I was goin’ nuts. He raised one bushy Neanderthal brow and asked, “What’s so fuckin’ funny?”

I held up the magazine cover.

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He snorted as if it was the dumbest thing he'd ever seen. "The day we all get along is the day the world fucking ends!"

I sensed a speech coming and threw the magazine on top of the stack to give Harry my full, undivided attention. I had to humor him or I had no ride, rip-off or not!

He scratched underneath one of his tremendous man-boobs. I watched it flop up and down under his Elvis shirt. He leaned back in his creaky leather chair and said, "Look, kid, we're the only animal that can't get along with a goddamn thing on this crummy planet. You know what I mean?"

I nodded politely, which seemed to please him greatly. Every asshole loves a captive audience. It occurred to me that if the phone lines were still out tomorrow, I would have no way to call him and get a cab to go to work. And if there were no buses—what the hell was I gonna do?

Harry kept right on talking. "Shit! If we ain't killin' each other over a dollar or a dame, we're killin' each other over race, religion, politics... And then, whenever we catch a break from killin' each other, we start killin' every other last goddamn thing in sight! Forests, wildlife, whatever... Man's an insatiable animal, kid. Our bellies are never full—we're always hungry."

With that, he seemed to run out of words. He picked his sandwich up and tore off a chunk with his tobacco-stained teeth. Whether or not this was supposed to emphasize his last point, I'll never know. He kept staring at me like he expected some kind of response. I had to admit, Harry had a point. I was about to tell him so when his radio crackled to life.

"—they're all around the cab, trying to break in! Hello? Help! Call the cops!"

Harry dropped his sandwich and clicked on his mic. "Who the fuck is this? Where's my driver?"

"Dead! They got him, dragged him out the front seat! I don't know what to—"

"Whaddya mean, he's dead? Who is this? Whatchu doin' in my cab?"

"Help! You gotta send somebody fast! The driver has the keys. I'm trapped!"

"What are you, drunk? Get the fuck out—"

"—Oh, God! They're eating him! They're ripping off his—"

"Now you listen to me, you shitbag cornhole motherfucker, if this is some kind of goddamn college prank, I'll make you eat your own ass—"

At just that moment, the cab company window shattered. A pair of bloody arms covered in broken glass thrust themselves through the blinds and clawed at Harry's face. The breeze blew the stench of rotting flesh inside the tiny one-room office.

The radio crackled with incoherent cursing and shrieks from whoever was trapped inside the cab, "...One of them's got a rock! He's using it to smash the—"

Harry moved remarkably fast for a blob I'd never seen stand up before. He pushed off hard with his stumpy legs—the chair shot back like a rocket.

The hands continued to flail around through the broken blinds, trying to grab hold of prey that was no longer there. A low, frustrated moan came from whoever the attacker was.

It was then that I noticed that the attacker's arms, while badly cut by broken glass, were not bleeding! The gore caked on the arms was dry, probably at least an hour old, because it had turned a scabrous shade of rusty-brown.

Harry recovered his wits enough to swear up a blue streak that would have put Bryan to shame. He shot his .38 three times through the window. The blinds obscured his aim, but I heard at least one of the bullets smack wetly into its target. The hands withdrew—the moaning continued!

Whoever was on the other end of the radio kept clicking the SEND button. "...ubbb... (crackle) ...ungh!" was all that came over the line—alternating sounds of static, low moans, and then what sounded like a meaty fist punching into a tub of Jell-O.

The eating noises began.

I could hear the slow, soft shuffle of dragging feet crunching on broken glass. It was coming closer to the front door, which, with my luck, had a large glass panel in it with the cab company's name and phone number stenciled on it in white. I struggled to stand, but my limbs were frozen with terror.

Shuffle-crunch, shuffle-crunch...

"Lock the fucking door!" Harry screamed, clutching at his bloody, badly clawed cheek with his free hand. He still hadn't gotten up, but he had swiveled in his seat so that his gun took aim at the front door.

Shuffle-crunch, shuffle-crunch...

"Move it, asshole!"

At the sound of Harry's voice, I leapt up and sprinted to the door, my hands fumbling with the deadbolt. I'd barely slammed it home when the attacker revealed himself as a little old man with a long face wearing a beret. His skin had a sickly, grayish cast to it. Blue and purple veins stood out in stark contrast to the leathery, pallid flesh. His clothes were badly torn, like a pack of wild dogs had been at him. As the shriveled head twitched, a puckered hole in his neck bent and widened, the flesh tearing with a wet, sucking sound. I guessed this was where Harry had shot him. Like the cuts on his hands and arms, no blood seeped out where the bullet had penetrated the skin. He was covered in dried blood from head to toe, his clothes dusted with shards of broken glass.

The old man's hands plastered against the door, leaving greasy smears. The maniac's mouth worked spasmodically, trying to bite me through the glass door. All this was terrible enough, but the eyes were the worst—gruesome, milky-

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white orbs, clouded over—as if they’d dried up inside. Cataracts, maybe...

I jumped away from the awful presence.

The old man’s eyes rolled, trying to track my movement.

I flipped him the finger.

He made a strangled, guttural war cry from deep in his throat. It ended as a hissing-gurgle. That’s when he began pounding his fists against the door.

Glass that cheap wouldn’t last long!

Harry told me to get the fuck out of the way. It took me several confused seconds to realize I was blocking his line of sight as he kept shouting at me. I sidestepped, looking wildly around the room for an exit. Only one avenue of escape presented itself, a door marked RESTROOM: EMPLOYEES ONLY. I stepped back and pressed myself against it. My hand reached for the knob.

Before I could turn it, everything became a blur of motion—dark and terrifying.

The old man stumbled forward, moaning and gnashing his teeth.

“Fuck you!” Harry growled, and fired his remaining three shots.

Want to find out what happens next?

Buy **DEATHBREED: A Zombie Novel**

By Todd Tjersland

392 Fear-Filled Pages, featuring Ghastly Cover Art by Isaac Cooper

Visit the official Deathbreed website and Fan Forum at

www.ZombieNovel.com



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

TODD TJERSLAND is an internationally renowned underground filmmaker and the author of *Sex, Shocks & Sadism!* His publications have included screenplays, novels, short fiction, film criticism, celebrity interviews, and comic books. He has written, produced, starred in, and/or directed 11 feature films, including the cult classic *The Necro Files* and the upcoming *Monster Party* (2008). He has been profiled twice on *Sin Cities*, a syndicated television series for the Bravo UK Network.

Currently single, he lives in Olympia, Washington, with his trusty shotgun—and a gnawing fear of the Zombie Apocalypse!

Visit the Deathbreed Website and Fan Forum:

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