

THE DEAD ZONE

Precipitate"

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Why do we live such a solitary existence? What would the world be like if we broke with decorum and chatted up the person waiting to cross the street with us or standing next to us in the elevator? Could we make their lives better? In this episode, six people reach out to Johnny anonymously by donating the blood that heals his broken body after an accident. But once their blood starts coursing through his veins, Johnny begins to have visions of their lives and sees that one of them is about to die. Now, Johnny must reach out to these people in return, find the one who's in danger, and save him or her

In the teaser, Johnny is pulling up to a small restaurant outside of town, a quiet little place tucked away on the side of a hill. He pulls around a mini-van and parks in front of it, a bit farther down the hill

In the van, two boys who are waiting for their mother start wrestling. One boy's foot bumps the parking brake free. As Johnny steps out of his jeep, the van brushes up against him -- it's rolling down the hill, out of control, taking the two boys with it. Johnny gets a vision from this contact with the van: it's going to crash into a lake at the bottom of the hill and the kids are going to drown. Johnny starts his car and gives chase

Bravely, Johnny pulls in front of the van, lets it run into his back bumper and, downshifting and braking, tries to stop the van's runaway descent. But the brakes on Johnny's old jeep quickly burn up. In the end, Johnny prevents the van from going in the drink, but at the expense of wrapping his jeep around a tree. Off an injured Johnny

Main titles.

We return to Bruce rushing into the ER where he bumps into Johnny's new Doctor. The Doctor relieves Bruce's worries — Johnny is fine; this is nothing compared to the accident which sent Johnny into a coma for six years. There WAS a slight complication with some excessive internal bleeding in Johnny's bruised arms, but it was quickly remedied with a small injection of cryoprecipitate: a blood product which encourages proper clotting...

Bruce checks in on Johnny and ribs him about his driving. Johnny is confused — he thought he pulled off a pretty good stunt stopping that van. Bruce says, I'm talking about clipping the van in the first place and sending it down the hill. Johnny is flabbergasted — evidently the two boys fibbed to their mother and she believed them. Bruce tells Johnny that the mother said she intends to sue, and Johnny caustically replies that apparently no good deed goes unpunished. But underneath this flip remark it's clear that's Johnny's really hurt. Here he is, once again, unselfishly helping other people, and a lawsuit is his reward? Maybe he needs to rethink his generous nature.

Suddenly, this conversation is interrupted when Johnny goes into one of the strangest visions he's ever had, specifically, a continuous vision of six different people's lives. It's all very confusing: before Johnny can get a read on exactly who each person is and what they're doing, the camera whip cuts over to the next person. In the vision, Johnny is playing ALL these people, and all he can tell is, he's seeing all these people during the same day and in the same locale: a town square — a verdant, pleasant commons in the heart of some town's business district (note: and they all work in adjoining buildings to the square and donated their blood in a Red Cross drive on the same day)...

Now, we're still developing our choice of characters but the goal is simple -- to introduce several different people the audience will care about and whose lives will

dramatically change on this day thanks to Johnny (plus one or two that are meant to provide humor). For this document, the six characters in Johnny s vision are:

- Lonely Manager. A middle-aged manager dying of boredom who suddenly and inexplicably finds himself the object of an attractive co-worker s affections.
- The Clerk. A nerdy, desperately sad video store employee, an unsuccessful writer who aspires to be the next Stephen King and is about to lose his day job
- Pregnant woman. A receptionist whose tattooed monster-of-a-man Harley-riding boyfriend just got out of the county jail...
- Fat Cat. A rich, overweight businessman having an expensive salmon lunch (which just might prove fatal)
- The Bum. A homeless man with a heartbreaking event in his past that brought him to his current condition.
- The Wildcard. A skateboarder all dressed in black.

[There are all sorts of fun ways we can play with this strange vision cinematically. For example: whip cutting from donor to donor; having all the visions appear in different areas of the frame at the same time; even a moment when several of these blood donors pass by each other in the square and they all have Johnny s face.]

Overall, this vision seems innocuous enough, just snapshots from these people s very disparate lives, but then it concludes with a strange image: a circle of people looking down at the camera — they re huddled around something on the ground — as a clock tower gongs three times in the distance

Johnny snaps out of the vision with a start, and Bruce calls for the Doctor who concludes that the cause of this strange multiple vision must be the cryoprecipitate, the blood product given to Johnny to stop his bleeding. Although administered in small

doses, Cryoprecipitate is made from the clotting agents in several different people's donated blood — the amount Johnny was given would have come from at least half a dozen different blood donors. Forget just touching someone to cause a vision, Johnny now has six different people's blood flowing directly through his dead zone!

How long is this condition going to last? Johnny asks, and the Doctor informs him that a person recycles their blood in a few weeks. A few weeks! laments Johnny. Still, although he's not wild about being stuck with recurring visions of these people for the near future, At least they took the time out of their day to donate that blood for me, Johnny says. Not everybody in the world is like the woman who's suing him

Johnny prepares to stay in the hospital for the next few weeks until these visions die down. Since the visions can strike at any moment, he can't drive a car, etc. He's also taking sedatives — lowered heart rate, less blood flow, hopefully less visions. All in all, this is just a bad trip he'll have to ride out. But his visions persist... seem to *demand* his attention... each time Johnny has a vision, he begins to see a bit more of that day on the square... and always at the vision's end, that same disturbing image: a circle of people huddled around something, looking down at the camera as the clock tower gongs three times. Finally, days later, he returns from one of these visions understanding that, unless he intervenes, one of the people who gave the blood that saved his life is going to die today at three o'clock...

But Johnny (and we) can't tell which one it is, because we see this event from the dying person's/Johnny's perspective

Johnny, who has recovered much of his physical strength by now, hurries out of the hospital.

Thus begins our hero's race against time: he has five hours to find the blood donor who is in danger and prevent his or her death. Bruce joins Johnny in this quest, but their first objective, an attempt to learn the names of the blood donors, proves to be a dead end. Blood banks observe the strictest confidentiality. But a kind nurse eventually throws Johnny a bone and tells him the location of the blood mobile that took the blood in question. It was in a town square in a nearby community. This rings true with Johnny's visions, and he and Bruce are off.

You may ask, even considering Johnny's powers, how in the world is he going to find these six different people in a matter of hours? Well, first of all, as noted, the donors all work in the same area plus there are distinguishing CLUES in each of Johnny's visions. For example, the restaurant the Fat Cat is eating in is very distinctive. Johnny is quickly able to find it. Or take the Video Clerk — He wears a distinctive blue polo shirt and baseball cap uniform. (Of course, when Johnny uses this info to find the correct store and walks into it, some hilarity results when he finds that ALL the clerks are wearing this uniform, and since in his vision Johnny WAS the video clerk, Johnny has no idea what HIS clerk looks like) Or take the receptionist and her Harley-riding husband and the homeless man, they're distinctive enough to find by their appearance alone. The same goes for the skateboarder — but catching this little bit of wheeled lighting that keeps zipping in and out of the square is another story altogether!

Unfortunately, when they reach this nearby community, Johnny and Bruce find that, unlike Walt Bannerman, the police here are not willing to provide them with help based solely on Johnny's premonitions, and he and Bruce quickly realize they're on their own. When they reach the square, Johnny recognizes the banner and other objects from

his visions, including a delivery truck that keeps driving recklessly by. There is even a bloodmobile out there again today.

And we finally see the clock tower Johnny kept hearing in his visions but, until now, had never seen. Throughout the episode, as it gongs on the hour, we are reminded of the inexorable approach of the deadly 3:00.

Johnny wastes no time, begins searching for the blood donors. Sometimes Bruce tags along with him, sometimes he goes off on his own when Johnny has two problems that need to be addressed simultaneously. They communicate by cell phone...

The problem is, as Johnny begins to find the donors and delves into their lives, they ALL seem to be candidates for disaster. The pregnant receptionist has found herself attracted to the warm soul of the lonely manager previously alluded to, who has agreed to be her Lamaze partner... But when Johnny sees the enraged and jealous tattooed monster of a husband coming across the square, is it the manager or the wife who is in danger?

The video clerk is so depressed — he's a struggling writer who's just received his 100th rejection letter and he's about to be fired — that it appears in Johnny's disjointed visions that he's going to climb to the top of the tallest building on the square and leap to his doom. So, is that it, a suicide? Or is it the rich businessman who will die? Will his tainted salmon lunch prove fatal? Or is it the homeless man who will finally die of exposure?

Johnny can't tell. All he can do is try to remove the danger from each of these people's lives, thus averting their possibly approaching doom. With the Fat Cat it's simple: don't order the Salmon. But with the Video Clerk and Homeless Man, Johnny

knows that the only way to get them out of danger is to ease their pain. To help them on a personal level.

And this is where our story takes on a whole new heartfelt dimension.

Think of it: all these people in this square, walking past each other blindly every day, but now Johnny is going to stop some of them, talk to them, try to help them. And just as in a Frank Capra film, we're going to find that a single man, in this case Johnny Smith, CAN make a difference...

As a result of his actions, when Johnny's multiple visions recur he begins to see that clearly he's steered some of these people free of the potential dangers lurking in their lives — they have different futures now — yet, the vision stubbornly keeps concluding in that same disturbing event: one of these people is lying dead, staring up at the sky as a hand closes his or her eyes and the clock tower gongs three.

At one point, when Johnny begins to doubt his progress, Bruce reminds him of the concept of Karma, the belief that all lives are ultimately interconnected and therefore no good deed is ever lost. A good deed done for a single person can create a ripple effect and help everyone, Bruce posits. Yeah, Johnny replies, like saving two kids from going in the drink and getting sued by their mother. You're missing the big picture, rejoins Bruce.

It's almost 3:00 and Johnny needs to dash off to the top of the tallest building on the square and make sure that the video clerk isn't up there preparing to jump. When Johnny gets there, he finds himself alone. Standing at the edge of the roof, looking down and around, Johnny sees the Video Clerk leaving the store. But instead of crossing the square and climbing up to this roof to consider ending it all — as he had done in the visions — he simply turns down the sidewalk and starts walking home, inspired by

meeting Johnny to write a new story about a psychic. Danger averted, Johnny thinks, but then, from this high vantage point, Johnny can finally see who's going to die:

It's the skateboarder.

That reckless delivery truck we keep seeing is speeding down an alley toward the street. Across the square, the skateboarder comes into view. They're on a collision course. Johnny runs for the stairs but fears he won't get there in time. He calls Bruce on his cell phone, warns him and Bruce takes off across the square but he's going to be too late, too.

And then something magical happens. Because Johnny has helped all these people today, they're all out on the square instead of being somewhere else. For example, instead of the Fat Cat lying in the hospital sick from food poisoning, he's taking a nice stroll through this square/park. Instead of sitting in jail for battery, the Harley-riding ex-con is about to ride out of town, having been talked out of his violent plans by Johnny. Instead of lying in an alley slowly dying of exposure, the homeless man is bundled up in the sleeping bag and coat Johnny just bought for him. And now, just like the children's game Mousetrapp, where you drop a marble and unleash a chain of events, each of these new players' lives intersects on the square leading to one simple change of fate

A bump, a stumble, a collision, an apology

The salmon guy avoids the panhandling homeless man and bumps into the biker who stumbles into the path of the skateboarder who is forced to skid and collides with the video clerk and they go down in a heap and the delivery truck whizzes harmlessly by inches away

and the clock tower gongs three times

Johnny and Bruce watch this from several yards away, realizing that this strange telemetry saved the day. Karma in action, says Bruce. No good deed is ever lost. Helping all these other people turned out to be the ONLY way to save the person who was about to die

The skateboarder and the Video Clerk dust themselves off. The video clerk begins a barrage of apologies when the skateboarder takes off his helmet and shakes out a head of beautiful, long blond hair. He s a she.

You re apologizing for saving my life !? she asks incredulously. I never had anybody save my life before

Their eyes beam. It is, without doubt, an enchanted moment. Bruce joins Johnny, and they watch the video clerk, instead of dejectedly finishing his walk home, head into a coffee shop with this girl. They stand there, filled with wonder at the way things have worked out, and as they leave the square, joking a bit about how this is going to be an interesting crew for Johnny to spend the next few weeks with (in his visions), we fade to black

THE END