

THE DEAD ZONE

"CYCLE OF VIOLENCE"

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I believe it is essential - that when we see a threat, we deal with those threats before they become imminent. It's too late if they become imminent ... and so that's why I made the decision I made. -- George W. Bush

Those willing to give up a little liberty for a little security deserve neither.
-- Benjamin Franklin

We're taking these precautions only because we love our students. And because Johnny Smith told us people would die if we didn't. - High School Principal Adam Rowin.

Johnny Smith is a Narc - Anonymous Graffiti

Teaser

1. INT. RACHEL'S HOUSE - DUSK. Johnny accompanies Rebecca as she makes the final inspection walk-through of her late sister Rachel's house; the other parties are a REALTOR and a perfect family - young mom & dad, two kids - who are delighted to be in their first house, full of hope and promise. This chipper scene is intercut with two short MEMORY FLASHES of Rachel's demise. When it comes time to sign papers, Rebecca is spent; she doesn't want to be alone. She asks Johnny to dinner; he says he can't go but offers instead to take her to the theater.
2. INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - NIGHT. The amateur all-ages student production includes kids from every grade in the Cleaves Mills school system, including J.J. and several of his friends; it's led by Mr. Talbot, the music teacher; the student tech director is a stylish and dark fifteen year old named Lyle. It's a funny, silly production, and it amuses Rebecca and takes her mind off her problems; she and Johnny click; Sarah is happy for them. After the play is over, when parents, family and friends are pressing into the student actors, Johnny gets a vision:
3. VISION: INT. HIGH SCHOOL - NIGHT. A student shoots up the halls; we see gunshots, we see chaos; we see

panicked mobs of students and teachers fleeing. The event has echoes of Columbine and scares Johnny.

4. INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT. Johnny turns around, desperate to know who, or what, he touched; he is surrounded by a sea of faces of parents, teachers, children, teenagers ... any one of whom could be the killer ... or a victim.

End Teaser

Act One

1. INT. PRINCIPAL ROWIN'S OFFICE - SCHOOL. Johnny tells Walt and PRINCIPAL ROWIN, (30's, true believer, energetic,) what he saw. Principal Rowin immediately suggests locker searches. Johnny asks Rebecca her opinion: she's the only one who has ever *talked* to a real school shooter, in her role as psychologist for juvenile offenders in D.C. raises the issue of student privacy; the principal professes to take that problem very seriously. That's why he wants to conduct the searches now, at night, so that no one will know that they happened. "The appearance of student privacy will be preserved."
2. INT. SCHOOL - NIGHT. The principal, Roscoe, Walt, and a few deputies methodically search the lockers of "problem kids"; the definition they use for "problem kid" is pretty broad. They want Johnny to touch the lockers where they think they've discovered something indicative of shooter behavior - pot, a Marilyn Manson album, *Catcher in the Rye*, serial killer books - whatever. Each time Johnny tries something, he gets evocative visions of teen angst and/or violence - he can rule no one out. Finally, they open every single locker in the school; even kids who seemed totally normal produce a few vision/hits - Johnny walks down the hall touching open lockers and we hear Dead Zone *WHOOSH!* after *WHOOSH*.

Johnny can't rule out many kids; nor can Rebecca, who is unable to state definitively that any particular kid won't become a shooter based on the information she's given. She points out that fitting a profile is not predictive of behavior; plenty of kids from bad backgrounds turn out good, and vice versa. The

- principal asks Johnny if he's sure he saw what he saw - a shooter in these hallways - and he nods; Walt vouches that Johnny is never wrong. Based primarily on Johnny's prediction, the principal decides they will interview troublemakers and others tomorrow, but in the mean time-
3. MONTAGE: SCHOOL LOCKDOWN. Metal detectors are installed. Cops take positions through the school. A dog sniffs lockers and backpacks. A long line of kids waits to get into the school, scared and worried.
 4. INT. SARAH'S CLASSROOM - DAY. Sarah's subbing again, teaching Junior High history; Johnny leans in to hear a fragment of her lesson which is about how no one stood up for anyone under fascist governments in Europe, and eventually everyone was either culpable, or a victim, or both. Johnny pulls her aside to ask where J.J. is; she tells him she kept him out of school. She heard the rumors. While he's there, Principal Rowin shows up, and singles out two kids, asking them to come down to the his office. Though he doesn't say why, everyone knows why. Johnny sees how instantly these two unfortunate kids are ostracized in the eyes of their peers, even though they have done nothing and are probably guilty of nothing.
 5. INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE. Rebecca interviews our P.O.V. character LYLE, (fourteen, smart, a bit of a chip on his shoulder but a talker - he brags about his web site); Johnny gets a hit of him blowing things up. The mix of sociability and anger make Lyle a difficult knot to untangle; they decide they can't rule him out. After he leaves they check out his web site, which is well-done, but troubling.
 6. INT. ENGLISH CLASS. Rebecca talks to a Goth girl who has a long record of misbehaving; gets only sadness and anger. Johnny gets a hit off of her that she's having an affair with the ENGLISH TEACHER ... tells the principal to keep an eye on them both;
 7. INT. BAND CLASS. In the band class taught by MR. TALBOT (40, loves kids and has lots of patience for them) Johnny talks to a COLIN, a transplanted New Yorker, a tough-looking black/Puerto Rican kid; Rebecca gets Colin to talk about the violence he saw

- as a youth. But Johnny gets a hit of the kid reading Malcolm X and trying to straighten out; tells him - "that's a good book." Johnny and Rebecca discuss whether Colin could be the one ...
8. EXT. FOOTBALL PRACTICE FIELD. Johnny and Rebecca talk to THE JOCK, who had some gory books in his locker; Johnny gets a hit of this kid blowing things away with AK-47's at a pay-per-shot gun range, having entirely too much fun shooting at things with his clean-cut looking gun-loving friends; tells the principal - watch out for this one.
9. INT. CORRIDORS - DAY. A paranoid sequence, Johnny, Walt and Rebecca, walking the halls of the school, seeing the security precautions, seeing the scared kids, seeing the cops - every time a kid reaches into his pocket everyone stares, every time someone drops a book, everyone jumps ... it's a scary place. Johnny touches a locker -
- VISION: OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL, Lyle is taunted, then pursued by a gang of kids who assume he's the shooter; then he's beaten up.*
- Johnny races outside.
10. EXT. SCHOOL - DAY. Johnny sees Lyle about to get pounded; then intervenes. It makes a huge commotion. Security Guards see this; grab Lyle away from Johnny and take him off to be searched and humiliated, this time not by his peers, but by officials ... and as he's being dragged away Lyle yells out: not thanks to Johnny for saving him, but anger at Johnny for singling him out. He even makes his hand into the shape of a gun, points it at Johnny, and pretend-fires at him; smirking.

End Act One

Act Two

1. INT. WAITING ROOM / OUTSIDE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY. Johnny sees Lyle coming out of the principal's office and tries to make peace with him. Lyle isn't buying it; in Lyle's opinion, Johnny is the cause of the crackdown and an authority figure, during a time when

- he's suspicious of all authority figures. Lyle explains what it's like to be a student in a high school filled with fear; they make a connection. But then again, he still could be the shooter. Johnny touches him -
2. *VISION: INT. LYLE'S HOUSE - DAY. Lyle takes a beating from his father for getting kicked out of school.*
 3. *RESUME: Johnny asks Lyle why he's getting kicked out. "They're thinking up a reason now. I didn't do anything. But they'll find something." Johnny steps into -*
 4. *INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY. Johnny asks the Principal why Lyle's getting kicked out; the principal says that a locker search turned up a hammer he'd brought in from home, that Lyle claimed was for use in shop class, but could be used as a weapon and therefore contraband. Rebecca articulates the basic unfairness of that action: if you enforce rules capriciously, it generates disrespect from the students, and can harm, rather than help, school security. She also reminds them that in an atmosphere of fear, they should expect some kids who otherwise would never break a rule, to arm themselves for self-defense. The principal finally gives in; calls in Lyle and his father to the room, and explains that Lyle's only been reprimanded, not suspended. Lyle shoots Johnny a dirty look, not realizing that he just saved his ass. The principal wonders if the actions they've taken have changed the future, yet; Johnny says he'll go see. Rebecca goes with him to --*
 5. *INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY. The same spot where Johnny witnessed the shooting has been turned into a mega-detention center. Twenty teens, some suspected of the mildest of infractions, have been gathered here where security guards keep an eye on them as they wait for interviews with the vice principal, who will decide if they should be isolated, detained, suspended or expelled. The kids see Johnny and harangue him - because, after all, he provided the prediction that allowed this to happen. Most of the kids Johnny and Rebecca talked to in Act One are there, too. Johnny touches the area where he saw the shooter -*

6. VISION: INT. AUDITORIUM / SPLIT REALITY - Panic and chaos fill the auditorium on the vision half as mobs of students and teachers crowd toward a door. Johnny sees bullets fly upward; Johnny sees the crowd part as the shooter heads for the door, but cannot see his face. He hears, "he's headed for the teacher's lounge!"
7. RESUME: Johnny tells Rebecca. They go ..
8. INT. TEACHER'S LOUNGE - DAY. Three teachers sit around doing whatever they do nowadays now that they can't smoke; one of them is Mister Talbot; another is the English teacher. Johnny tries to get a hit;
9. VISION: INT. TEACHER'S LOUNGE / SPLIT REALITY. Three or four teachers sit in the vision side of the lounge (but not Mister Talbot). Johnny tails behind the shooter, who looks at each of the teachers, who are cowering in fear; tells them not to worry, he won't shoot them; and then exits the teacher's lounge.
10. RESUME: Johnny quietly tells Rebecca that the shooter will be looking for one particular teacher; that it's not a shoot-anything-that-moves kind of rampage but a particular act with a particular motive. The school fire alarm rings. Johnny, Rebecca and the teachers move out.
11. INT. CORRIDOR - DAY. Panic. Most of the exits are locked off in the name of security; a kid gets knocked down, stepped on, his glasses crushed; other kids race backwards through the metal detectors causing a barrage of beeps. Walt peels off Rebecca and Johnny, takes them to a part of the hall that's been barricaded. They got a bomb threat linked to particular locker. While they watch, a bomb technician opens the locker.

BANG!

A balloon pops. A toy balloon filled with vinegar and baking soda. "You blew up our rights," says the note in the locker.

Everyone's okay. Walt and the principal ask Johnny to touch the locker. He does. We hear a Dead Zone WHOOSH!

but do not show what Johnny saw. The principal eagerly awaits an answer; Johnny shakes his head, as if he got no hit.

12. INT. MEETING ROOM - EVENING. An emergency P.T.A. meeting, with a town in panic. Johnny, Walt, Rebecca, Sarah, and the Principal attend. The principal lays out their new Zero Tolerance Policy, and ties Johnny closely to the precautions that are being put into place around the school. Johnny spots Lyle hanging around the edges of the meeting, signals for him to meet him; Lyle shakes his head, as if Johnny were the last person on earth he'd want to talk to.
13. INT. CHECKPOINT - THE NEXT DAY. Johnny and Rebecca witness the implementation of the Zero Tolerance Policy - plenty of students who want to go to school are turned away by stubborn professional security guards because their names are on The List. Kids who are obviously not threatening in any way (girls with pink backpacks) are submitted to full searches. Principal Rowin thanks Rebecca for having pointed out how unfair it would have been to suspend only Lyle; therefore, in the name of fairness, the principal is suspending everyone who had something in his or her locker that could be construed as a weapon. Rebecca tries to intervene and a guard threatens to banish her from school grounds "for interfering with a school employee in the performance of his duties." She's very angry.

BEHIND THEM

A fight occurs; you can tell by the circle of watchers (including Lyle) that instantly forms. It's a security guard taking down a student who mouthed off. Then a bottle flies from the crowd, and beans the security guard; no one can tell who threw it.

End Act Two

Act Three

1. INT. CHECKPOINT. Half a dozen guards have secured the checkpoint; they hold the student (who was getting a beating from the guard) as if he's the bad guy; the principal calls for an investigation. Each side claims

- the other was at fault; Johnny and Rebecca didn't see enough to be good witnesses. No kid wants to say what they saw, one way or the other; Principal Rowin assumes "the student must have done something to deserve it." Then, with all eyes watching, the principal asks Johnny to touch the bottle that struck the guard. Johnny touches it -
2. *VISION: SPLIT REALITY.* Johnny sees the security guard BAIT a student; the student doesn't do anything; then the guards SHOVES the student, still, he passively resists. Then the guard TRIPS the student. All of this is witnessed by LYLE, who stands in the crowd. Finally the student pushes back, and the guard goes into full beating mode, mercilessly shoving the kid down to the ground. Other students yell at him; he won't relent; finally, Lyle throws a bottle at the guard and the vision ends -
 3. RESUME. Johnny relays his opinion that the security guard was at fault, and might have hurt the kid far worse if someone didn't throw that bottle. The principal's not buying it. And he wants Johnny to name the kid who threw the bottle. Johnny refuses. The principal says, no matter who was at fault in the fight between the guard and the student, whoever threw the bottle was wrong, so why not name him? Johnny won't name names. From the edge of the crowd, Lyle sees this. The principal thinks Johnny is in the wrong; and vice-versa. Johnny and Rebecca leave the school.
 4. INT. JOHNNY'S HOUSE - DAY. Johnny discusses with Rebecca what he has wrought; has his prediction created more problems than it solved? Was the principal a little too eager to institute such drastic precautions? Rebecca describes the Stanford Prison Experiment: when you treat people like prison guards and prisoners, they are forced to take on those roles to survive. Johnny believes that Lyle is in trouble largely because of his prediction; he feels a need to warn the boy that he could be in more trouble than he thinks. They decide to go talk to him.
 5. EXT. BURNOUT PARK - DAY. Students who have been expelled or suspended hang out, skateboarding, reading, smoking pot ... they find Lyle, who is sort of

a spokesman for the group. Johnny tries to warn Lyle what's about to come; he wants to touch him, to see if he's going to be safe, but in a show of bravado Lyle refuses to let Johnny touch him. A couple cop cars roll up; Lyle and the others assume that's Johnny's doing ... then scatter. Walt crosses to Johnny and Rebecca. He wants to arrest Lyle; wants to know what Johnny knows; Johnny won't tell. Walt appreciates Johnny's position but disagrees with him; "safety has to come first in this situation." The two men agree to disagree. Johnny asks why they want to arrest Lyle, anyway -

cut to:

6. INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY. Close on security tape, which clearly shows Lyle throwing the bottle. There's universal agreement among everyone in authority that Lyle must be the shooter, including Lyle's father, who has been suspicious of his son for some time now. Unfortunately no one knows where Lyle is any more. Johnny and Rebecca are Lyle's sole defenders.
7. INT. JOHNNY'S HOUSE - DAY. Lyle comes to Johnny for help. Lyle can't go home because his father will raise hell with him; he can't go to school, because they'll arrest him. He even says that he threw the bottle only because he couldn't think of any other way to save the student who was getting beaten. Johnny believes him. Lyle tells Johnny that all he wants to do is go to school. We should hear a little about Johnny's childhood / pre-coma school experience & attitude about school. "Tell them it's going to be someone else," Lyle says. "It's not going to be me? Is it?" Johnny says he'll go look again.
8. INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR - DAY. Johnny & Rebecca walk the halls with the principal, who is pleased at the calm and quiet he's created (by cracking down.) Johnny asks him to call off the manhunt for Lyle; the principal agrees to, but only if Johnny can put a name on the real shooter. Johnny will try to get another vision. Johnny touches the spot where the bullets flew, triggering --
9. MATRIX VISION: INT. CORRIDOR - DAY. Johnny walks the location of the shooting. A mob of panicked students

is frozen mid-run; many more are on the ground, their heads covered in fear; two bullets are frozen mid-air; another bullet is mid-strike, tearing through the shoulder of THE VICTIM, who is trying to run through a door to get away. The vision ends -

10. INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR - DAY. The principal wants a name, but Johnny cannot give it to him; but he does point out the various places where the shooting takes place. One thing confuses Johnny ... he believes that the shooter runs through a door, but the door isn't there. With a little footwork, and by puzzling it out with Rebecca, Johnny figures out that they're going to build a new wing - but not for several years.

Johnny realizes this shooting won't happen for a long, long time.

End Act Three

Act Four

1. INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY. Johnny wants Principal Rowin to stand down and lower the alert level at the school, since the shooting won't happen until several years from now. The principal says he can't do that until the shooter is named by named and weeded out of the population. "Every kid who passes me could be the shooter," says the principal. He says that lots of others feel the same way. And he's going to continue to suspect everyone, until he has enough evidence to believe otherwise. "Especially after a warning by you - Johnny Smith, who is never wrong - I can't take chances. If anything happens they'll blame me." Johnny and Rebecca leave.
2. EXT. SCHOOL - DAY. Rebecca and Johnny walk and talk about all the possibilities for how this shooting could occur. He explains to her that his visions usually happen for a reason. She asks if the reason it happened now is that there is something that can be done now to avert it; alluding to the psychological belief that seeds of anger are planted early. They talk about who Johnny was touching when he had the initial victim - many of them were little kids. He believed at the time they were victims. But the penny drops for Johnny; the kid in his vision might be only

ten years old now; one of J.J.'s friends. Johnny says that they're all at music practice now; they can go see right away if that's the case.

3. INT. LITTLE THEATER - DAY. A lot of the same people who were in the show at the beginning are practicing new music; among them is music director Talbot, and J.J., J.J.'s friend Zeke, and a few others. They are not in costume. When they get to a break point, Johnny asks to talk to J.J. and his friends in the wings of the theater. They come over, and as Johnny greets them hello with handshakes and high-fives, he gets a hit off of Zeke --
4. VISION: *Zeke morphs from a happy-go-lucky ten-year-old into a bitter eleven year old into an alienated teenager and finally, into a dead-eyed school shooter in the hallways of a future school. This time, we see the victim: band teacher Mr. Talbot.*
5. RESUME. Johnny stares at Mr. Talbot, who is now conducting the next piece of music: the future victim. Johnny stays right where he is - to keep an eye on J.J., his friends, and Mr. Talbot - and calls Walt.
6. INT. THEATER - LATER. Walt arrives; he and Johnny have a quiet talk; Walt asks another teacher to take over the conducting duties; and asks Mr. Talbot to come with him to the principal's office.
7. INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY. Mr. Talbot looks at a police record for a man named Hildebrand with the same fingerprints and same photo - a registered sex offender from Wisconsin who molested kids on band trips. The guy breaks down and confesses that he is one and the same. The principal asks Johnny to confirm that the shooting really won't happen -
8. INT. THEATER - DAY. Johnny taps Zeke. This time gets a vision of him turning into a kid in a marching band uniform, age fifteen, very happy. Johnny calls Lyle, to tell him that the shooter has been found; he's no longer a suspect. Lyle wants to come down and thank Johnny, and rejoin the stage crew. He says he's pretty close by; Johnny tells Lyle he'd love to see him when he shows up.

9. INT. SCHOOL - CHECKPOINT - DAY. Lyle, bookbag in hand, tries to press his way back into the school, to rejoin the music crew, and moreover, to clear his name. AN obnoxious guard won't let him pass. Lyle tells the guard the crisis is over; the guard pushes him around and says it's not over yet. Johnny and Rebecca turn a corner in the hallway just as the fight escalates into a shoving match; the security guard brandishes a gun; Lyle reaches into his backpack to get his cell phone; even as Johnny and Rebecca yell at the security guard, the terrified guy pulls the trigger and puts a bullet into Lyle.

By the time Rebecca and Johnny run to his side, the boy is already dying.

END ACT FOUR

THE END