

THE DEAD ZONE

"INSTINCT"

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TEASER

EXT. WORDEN ROAD - NIGHT

Walt is at the scene of a car crash outside the small town of Worden. A small truck with a camper shell has crashed into a tree, and the driver - a WOMAN - is dead. Walt's puzzled... it looks as if the woman has veered off the road for no reason: there's no sign of another car being involved. And the woman is also covered with tiny, bloody cuts, as if someone has been slashing at her face and hands with razor blades.

INT. CLASSROOM - NIGHT

Johnny sits in the back of a classroom as Purdy gives a lecture about Revelation, Armageddon and the End Times. Purdy and the students are discussing what might or not be a sign that the End Times are approaching. Purdy agrees that such things as the depletion of the ozone layer and the unrest in the Middle East might or might not be warning signs, but also warns the students that they should look closer to home. Even the smallest aberration might be an indication that the world is coming to an end. Referring to a text that one of the signs involves "lay people who will become prophets", Purdy glances at Johnny. He's clearly somewhat unsettled by Johnny's presence in the back of the classroom.

As the lecture breaks up, Purdy approaches Johnny and asks what he's doing there. Johnny says that he's interested in the topic of Armageddon, and was curious to hear Purdy's take on it. He asks Purdy if he thinks Armageddon is inevitable: or can it be stopped? Can people stop it? Purdy, unnerved, starts to reply, but the shrilling of Johnny's cellphone interrupts them.

It's Walt. He'd like Johnny to come out and check out the car crash; there's something weird going on here that he can't quite figure out.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Johnny drives on a small country road. It's dark. The car radio crackles; not much reception out here. As Johnny fiddles with the radio, there's a fluttering sound from the back of the car. He glances back, but doesn't see anything. The fluttering sound returns, louder this time. Johnny clicks off the radio... and is suddenly swarmed by BATS, which swirl through the back window of the car, which we now see is a small truck with a camper shell... As the bats swarm Johnny, he loses control of the car, crashing into a tree...

And Johnny emerges from his vision to tell Walt that the woman's accident was caused by a flock of bats that were apparently roosting inside her camper. The crash killed her, but the bats were the reason she crashed her car. The coroner confirms Johnny's story when he pulls a tiny bat out of the woman's throat...

END TEASER

ACT ONE

INT. ARCADE - DAY

A television screen shows missiles flying. It looks like World War III has started, until we pull back to see that it's merely a game. Missile Command. Johnny and JJ are at the arcade, and Johnny's conspiring with JJ, letting him play one of the more violent games that Sarah doesn't really approve of.

Behind them, a little boy starts to cry. Johnny turns to see a kid on a coin-operated horse. The horse has stopped galloping; the kid is out of quarters. Johnny goes over and drops a quarter into the machine. The horse starts up again. The kid, delighted, starts pretending to ride across the prairie.

Johnny turns back to JJ, who's firing away at missiles. Suddenly, Johnny hears the sound of hoofbeats behind him. That's weird. That mechanical horse sounds incredibly

realistic. And, then, suddenly, the sound of hooves grows louder, as does the sound of a frightened horse SNORTING.

Johnny turns and moves towards the arcade's entrance. He's stunned to see first one, then another, then finally four horses galloping through the mall, striking out at people, acting aggressively, not acting like terrified fleeing prey animals at all. Johnny moves into the mall for a closer look, trying to figure out what this vision is all about...

And is suddenly YANKED to safety by JJ, who's grabbed his shirt and pulled him back just as one of the horses strikes out at him. Johnny's stunned: this isn't a vision. This is some kind of weird reality... as evidenced by the screaming of the terrified shoppers as they run from the rampaging horses.

EXT. MINIMALL - LATER

Johnny and JJ watch as Animal Control tranquilizes and rounds up the four frightened horses. Sarah arrives, freaked after having heard a report about the incident on the radio. Johnny assures her that JJ is okay, and JJ brags about having saved Johnny. Walt's there, too, directing the roundup, and comes over to tell Johnny and Sarah that the horses appear to be from a small farm/boarding facility in Worden. In fact, the farm is quite near the scene of the car accident.

When Johnny points out that two strange animal incidents centering around the same place is kind of odd, Walt at first dismisses him. So some horses got out and fled. That's what horses do. Johnny disagrees. These horses were aggressively going after people. Something weird is going on here. Walt agrees to take Johnny out to the farm, just to make sure everything's okay.

EXT. WORDEN FARM - DAY

Walt and Johnny drive up. The farmhouse looks empty, its front door banging in the wind. The yard is curiously quiet. A fence is torn down, as if the horses broke through it, and there are signs of a scuffle of some sort in the yard.

Johnny and Walt move through the yard. There's a dead DOG on a chain, clearly trampled to death by the horses.

Johnny hears a commotion in the henhouse. He opens the door and sees a HEN, its beak and feathers covered with blood, pecking furiously at something. It's a dead FOX, being consumed by the maddened chicken.

Johnny slams the door and turns to see Walt, who beckons him over. He's found a body. It's a man, lying on the ground, his body battered, pecked and clawed. It looks as if more than one animal has gone after him. Johnny touches the body, and gets flashes of animals attacking the man, driving him away from the house. He also sees a woman and a little girl, screaming, terrified, and hears a voice yelling at them to 'get into the cellar!'

INT. CELLAR - DAY

Johnny and Walt open the cellar door. Inside, huddled in the darkness, are a woman and a little girl: the people from Johnny's vision. They're traumatized, barely able to talk. As Walt calls for medical help, Johnny touches the woman, and gets another flash of the animals going crazy, the man in the yard being torn apart. The little girl tells Johnny that their pets, even their dog, tried to kill them...

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

As the woman and child are taken away by ambulance, the horse trailer arrives, returning the horses... which, as the trailer approaches the house, are beginning to whinny and stomp in fear. Johnny tells the Animal Control person what's happened, and asks what could have set off a bunch of different animals in such a way. The AC person has no idea: this is truly weird behavior. But if Johnny wants to talk to an expert, they should talk to the local Fish & Wildlife biologist, ALAN KEANE.

When he hears this, Walt is stunned. He knows this guy. Keane was picked up, apparently aggressive and half-crazy, on a road outside town just last night... Right now, he's in the psych ward on a 72-hour hold for observation.

INT. PSYCH WARD - DAY

Johnny and Walt talk with Keane, who still seems to be somewhat hysterical. Keane says that he was doing some

work in the woods. He's got a trailer out there, with his equipment and his notes. He's mainly been tagging bears to record their hunting patterns, but as he tracked them, he noticed that the animals have recently starting behaving in odd ways. As things escalated, Keane fled the woods, freaked by what was going on.

Walt thinks that Keane is just nuts, but Johnny's noticing that a few of the things Keane is talking about remind him of Purdy's talk about the End Times. He tells Walt that he doesn't think Keane is nuts: that something is truly going on out there. Excited, Keane grabs Johnny's arm, triggering a vision.

*Johnny's vision: Keane, on the floor of the hospital, screaming for help, standing in water up to his knees. In the background we hear a roaring sound, and someone is screaming "it's coming..."*

#### END OF ACT ONE

#### ACT TWO

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - DAY

Johnny and Walt argue out the "facts" of the case. Walt's adamant that they have nothing but a few incidents of weird animal behavior, and that if anyone should be investigating this stuff, it should be Animal Control or Fish and Wildlife. Johnny's not so sure. The vision he had of Keane seems to indicate that something pretty bad is going to happen in the next sixty hours or so - the remainder of Keane's time in observation. Johnny's confused about the vision, unsure about how the roaring sound ties into the animal behavior. However, he thinks Keane's notes might help them, and suggests going out to find Keane's trailer.

EXT. TRAILER - DAY

Walt and Johnny find the trailer on the side of a dirt road near the edge of the forest. It's pointed towards town, half on and half off the road, and it's clearly been investigated thoroughly by animals... some of which have been pretty destructive. The interior is covered with maps, pictures, and notes that get more and more garbled as they go along. Walt points out that this looks like the work of

a crazy person, but Johnny's not so sure. There's a pattern here.

Johnny checks out an electronic monitor that tracks the bears Keane has tagged. Keane has apparently tagged five bears, but only two are visible on the screen. One is far off, towards town, and the other is closer. In fact, as Johnny watches, the dot starts to move, slowly at first, then faster and faster... towards the trailer.

Johnny fumbles at the screen and gets a vision...

*Johnny's vision: A huge, bloody claw tears open the trailer's screen door...*

Johnny leaps to the door and slams it, just as something SLAMS against it, hard. Walt helps Johnny get the door closed and locked. Claws scabble against the outside of the door, and there's a frustrated howl. Then the trailer starts to rock. The bear is clearly determined to get inside, to get them.

There's a moment of silence, as if the bear's moved off, and Walt decides to go for his car. Walt manages to make it as the bear climbs onto the roof of the trailer, trying to peel off one of the overhead panels in an attempt to get inside. Walt skids up outside the trailer and Johnny flings himself out the door and into the waiting car. They flee, hearing the roar of the bear behind them.

Walt calls for assistance: somebody's got to come out and take care of what might be a rabid bear. He's told that no one can be spared. There's been an attack in town: a pack of dogs have attacked a school bus. Walt and Johnny are shocked to learn that the dogs aren't wild: they're a group of town pets, who've suddenly gone feral and are roaming the town in a pack. Walt hits the siren and he and Johnny speed back towards town.

INT. POLICE STATION

Walt tries to deal with a panicked bunch of town citizens, who are convinced that all the animals in town are rabid or diseased and would like the police to go out and shoot them. Johnny talks with the pathologist, who has run tests on the bat and on the horses. There's no disease, no toxicity, nothing to explain why these animals are suddenly

behaving so strangely. Johnny touches one of the dogs that's been brought in, and gets a vision.

*Johnny's vision: From the dog's POV, Johnny sees people shouting at him, fearful, while a piercing noise seems to surround him, to go right through his head..*

Johnny comes out of it, wincing in pain. There's clearly something external causing this dog, and perhaps all the other animals, some kind of distress that's making them act aggressively. Unfortunately, he has no idea what it is.

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

A Town Meeting. People are clearly panicked, with stories to tell of their domestic animals behaving frighteningly and aggressively. Sarah tells about her cat, which has killed over forty birds in one day, piling them up in rows on the kitchen floor. Johnny and Purdy talk. Purdy mentions that the Bible talks about animals going crazy as the End Times approach. A much calmer Keane, who's been released to use his expertise at the town meeting, broaches his theories. There could be some kind of seismic activity or some human encroachment on the wilderness that's started driving the animals crazy. After all, it did seem to start in the woods before moving into town.

There's a rep from the National Guard there, but when Walt asks him for help, he tells them that there's no real emergency here: what are they supposed to guard against? The most that will happen is that the town might be quarantined until officials can figure out if there's some kind of disease spreading.

Several local hunters, freaked by Walt's story of the bear, become convinced that the bear is rabid and is spreading the disease to other animals. They're determined to go into the woods and hunt it down.

As the meeting winds down, Keane tells Johnny that he knows the source of the problem. It's in the woods..

EXT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Johnny talks to Purdy about recent events. He brings up what Purdy said at his class, about a prophet, and asks if Purdy thinks any of this is due to him. Purdy shakes his head. He believes in the Bible, and he believes in Johnny,

but he can't agree that any of what's going on is Biblical. Johnny argues that even Purdy said that the End Times might start in what seems like small, localized ways. Purdy's taken aback by Johnny's insistence, and, hesitant, tells him that he knows Johnny's Armageddon board isn't just about Stilson. Johnny knows something. He wants to know what it is. He touches Johnny's arm, and

*Johnny's vision: Purdy, drowned, floating not down a river or a lake... but in the town's main street, which has become a raging torrent of water.*

Johnny blinks, and looks at Walt. He knows what's going to happen, why the animals might be going crazy - the town is going to be flooded.

## END OF ACT TWO

## ACT THREE

EXT. DAM - DAY

Johnny, Walt and Purdy go to the dam, where they express their concerns to an engineer who tells them that an inspection was just done two weeks ago: nothing is wrong, there are no leaks or weaknesses in the structure, and that there's nothing to worry about. However, when Johnny touches the dam..

*Johnny's vision: With a huge roar, the dam collapses from underneath, unleashing a torrent of water that heads towards the town...*

Johnny's insistent that no matter how safe the dam appears to be, it will burst, and that the town must be evacuated. However, Walt tells him that there's no authority to do so, and that it's unlikely they can get anyone to go along with them without proof of an impending disaster. He asks Purdy to use what connections he has, and Purdy agrees to try.

Johnny's sure that the animal issue ties in with the looming disaster: it would be odd to have two completely unrelated things going on at the same time. He wants to go back to town and talk to Keane about this possibility. Maybe the animals can give them a clue that will enable them to pinpoint the source of the upcoming disaster.

INT. PSYCH WARD - DAY

Johnny and Walt talk to Keane about the possibility that the animal behavior is related to the potential dam disaster. Keane says that the animal's weird migratory patterns might indeed be related to them fleeing from the area in fear, and that perhaps they've sensed some kind of seismic activity, for instance, that's causing them to leave the area. Johnny realizes that the animals are the only clue to what's going to happen. He needs to go into the woods, needs to try and figure out from the animals what they're reacting to. Johnny asks Keane, who knows the woods, to go with him. With some trepidation, Keane agrees.

INT. WALT AND SARAH'S HOUSE - DAY

Walt returns home, telling Sarah that she's got to evacuate the house and take JJ to safety. When Sarah learns that Johnny is going into the woods with Keane, she insists that Walt go with them. She can take care of JJ. Walt's not thrilled at the idea of leaving his family to fend for themselves, but Sarah is adamant. Johnny can't go out into the woods alone with someone who's clearly unstable.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Walt, Johnny and Keane head into the woods. At the edge of the woods, they meet the group of hunters who are going off after the supposedly "rabid" bear. Johnny tries to dissuade them, but they ignore him and head off.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

As they move into the woods, they begin to hear odd noises: the trees are creaking as if under some kind of pressure, and unseen animals are scurrying through the underbrush as if fleeing for safety. Keane points out various anomalies: weird spider webs, bizarrely built beaver dams, gopher holes that have been hastily covered up. Something weird is definitely going on here... and as they go deeper into the woods, Keane starts to revert to the paranoid, schizoid behavior for which he was arrested... Walt and Johnny confer, and Johnny's adamant that they keep going. Keane might be losing it, but they need him to guide them.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Forced to make camp for the night, the men are unsettled by the fact that there seem to be no normal night noises. Then, from a distance, there are flashes of light and booming noises. It's gunfire, and it seems to last a long time, accompanied by a muffled scream. Walt leaps to his feet, wanting to investigate, but Johnny stops him. They'd better wait until first light... who knows what's out there?

EXT. WOODS - MORNING

The men find the source of last night's disturbance: the hunters, all dead, most of them having been shot. One of them lies on the ground, a shard of deer antler through his chest. Walt's puzzled: what the heck happened here? Johnny touches the deer antler...

*Johnny's vision: From the POV of the deer, he rushes at the hunters. Hunters fire wildly at his direction and at each other, confused and maddened...*

Johnny comes out of the vision, dazed. He tells Walt that the hunters were deliberately firing not only at the deer but at each other, and that the deer's attack seemed to come out of some kind of furious rage... Johnny thinks that the animals are attacking because they're associating their fear, and their need to flee, with people.

As they travel deeper into the woods, Johnny touches animal tracks, bits of fur on trees, anything he can find that might trigger an animal vision. He's trying desperately to put the pieces together, to try to figure out what the animals are reacting to. And as they travel, whatever the mysterious force is seems to be affecting Keane more... and, now, Walt as well. He's furious that Sarah sent him off with Johnny. Walt should be home, protecting his family. Johnny even starts to feel a little paranoid, and starts musing about whether this is truly the beginning of the end of the world. Walt finally freaks out and pulls a gun on Johnny. Maybe Johnny is the trigger for the end times. Maybe Walt can end the whole thing right here. As Johnny tries to talk Walt down, Keane suddenly calls out to them. "This wasn't here before!" They both turn to see a huge rock, flames shooting out of it as if the rock is on fire...

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

EXT. WOODS - DAY

The men realize that the flaming rock is not some kind of supernatural sign from God, but a geothermal anomaly of some kind. Keane theorizes that there's something going on deep in the earth that could be causing seismic vibrations. The vibrations in turn might be emitting low frequency waves that are affecting the animals - and, now, since they're close to the source, themselves as well. They've got to get out of the woods, and they've got to find the source of the geothermal activity. Walt's radio crackles - the engineer at the dam wants him to come.

EXT. DAM - DAY

On their arrival, they find the engineer now slightly panicked. Several leaks have suddenly sprung in the dam, and there has been some odd seismic activity. The engineer's starting to think that it might be a good idea to evacuate the town after all.

At the dam, Johnny finds an injured hawk that's flown blindly into the side of one of the buildings. He touches it...

*Johnny's vision: From the hawk's P.O.V., Johnny sees an explosion in a clearing in the woods.*

Johnny tells the others that an explosion in the woods is going to trigger the collapse of the dam. They've got to find the site of the explosion. Using maps and Keane's knowledge of the woods, Johnny refers to landmarks he saw in the hawk's vision to pinpoint the area... a place several miles from the dam.

EXT. DRILLING AREA - DAY

They arrive at the pinpointed area. There's a new road there, and a drilling rig that's operating, drilling a huge core in the ground. Johnny's confused about how drilling here could cause the dam to collapse miles away. He touches the drilling rig...

*Johnny's vision: Under the rig, the drill hits a pocket of gas. It explodes... and the explosion travels underground,*

*at high speed, hitting a pocket of methane gas under the dam, which begins to collapse...*

Johnny tells the site foreman that he's got to shut down the drilling immediately. There's about to be an explosion. The foreman refuses, even after Walt explains about Johnny's psychic gifts. If he shuts down the site without permission, he'll be fired. Johnny tries shutting down the drill himself, but the workers rush forward to stop him. Walt finally pulls his gun and orders the foreman to shut off the rig. Furious, the foreman complies. Walt looks at Johnny, who touches the rig again...

*Johnny's vision: The pocket explodes, traveling underground, the dam collapsing...*

Johnny tells Walt that nothing has changed. But the foreman, starting to figure this out, says that they've got to burn off the gas themselves, triggering the explosion upward instead of downward and relieving the pressure underground. They sink a pipe and light the gas... and the gas explodes, but upward, not downward, as the men take cover. They're showered with dirt and rocks... and then everything's quiet.

Johnny touches the pipe and tells the others that it's worked... there's no imminent danger. However, they'll have to inform the authorities about the methane under the dam, so that it can be properly released and burned off...

EXT. TOWN - DAY

Johnny talks to Purdy, who should be relieved - it wasn't Armageddon after all. But Purdy says that this could be the beginning: Armageddon could be triggered in stages, starting with small, localized events, and culminating in the real End Times. Purdy tells Johnny that he knows he's seen it. What did he see? Can it be changed? Johnny replies "You tell me. You're part of it... and so am I..."

THE END