

## THE DEAD ZONE

"Vanguard"

Story by Juan Carlos Coto  
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We all have that teacher who inspired us, who changed our life. JOHNNY SMITH was that teacher for many kids - but perhaps most significantly for **ALEC TELLER**...

### TEASER

Our story begins with a reunion - a surprise one for Johnny - organized by former members of the SCIENCE CLUB Johnny ran as a teacher. You can imagine this group - from maladjusted, Napoleon-Dynamite nerdbuckets to successful doctors. There's also the gifted science geek who did hard time for mixing crystal meth.

All great students in their own way - but when Alec Teller arrives, we realize he and Johnny have a deeper bond. Alec, 27, was an awkward kid back in high school, but now he's assured and confident. He's also a leading researcher at a biotech company that makes "cutting-edge polymers." Artificial materials with life-saving medical applications - they can be second skins, they can provide instant sugar-level readings for diabetics.

In a short toast, Alec credits Johnny with his success (though he did fail him on that one pop quiz). Alec even ribs this "man of science" who now has a (very public) psychic gift. But Alec also recalls field trips to the quarry to discover new rock samples and study the ecosystem. Johnny challenged them. "Mr. Smith always told us to push the edge, to be the vanguard, to question everything," Alec says.

At the end of his speech, Alec returns a Rubik's Cube he "borrowed" from Johnny's desk years ago.

When Johnny takes the Cube, a shocker: *The cube burns WHITE HOT and IMPLODES and Johnny finds himself consumed by nuclear fire. Then he sees the ruins of Washington D.C.*

*It's a new angle (and a new special effect) on what Johnny has seen before...*

ARMAGEDDON.

### ACT I

Johnny and BRUCE at home. Johnny has gotten Alec to invite him to his lab under the guise of interested former-teacher.

Johnny's real intention, of course, is to discover how Alec is connected to Armageddon. Historically, Johnny has only gotten that vision off Greg Stillson.

Which brings them to the TV - Bruce points out the local news... **GREG STILLSON** is in Maine this week meeting constituents, pressing the flesh. Could Alec have come in contact with Stillson? Not sure. This new vision was the same Armageddon he has always seen, but from a new angle. Was Stillson in the vision? No, but D.C. was obliterated, as always.

How is it all connected?

At the RESEARCH PARK where Alec works, Johnny is surprised to find out the "polymer" Alec is developing has no "super-secret" implication or is even remotely related to weapons: It's medical, and goes on patients - in some cases inside them - to provide all kinds of benefits. But Alec has had trouble maintaining the polymer's longevity and stability. It has worked in some patients, but has to be removed after a few months.

Johnny offers help. Alec accepts, and they begin some cool, risky - *and very visual* - lab work involving everything from hand-manipulated 3-D models to extreme-heat testing. (NOTE: There's research to be done here, but this will all be cool at the same time it's based in science fact, not fiction. The polymers, for example, already exist in medicine.)

More importantly - there's a great relationship rekindled in the lab. Johnny and Alec, mentor and student, old friends. They fall into their rhythm, solving complex problems - completing each other's sentences.

Along the way, Johnny meets **EMERY BERG**, 19, Alec's assistant and an aspiring scientist. He's heard Alec mention his favorite teacher in the past. "You screwed him on that pop quiz, man."

But Johnny cannot find a direct connection to Armageddon. He shares his frustration with Bruce. Maybe Alec is part of Armageddon in some distant future. Johnny says he'll stick around as long as he can, to see if anything comes up. Bruce is more amused by how Johnny is loving this. He's having fun helping out his former protégé. Johnny can't deny it. While in a coma, he missed Alec's early achievements - it's like getting years back with a son he never knew. And why not help develop a medical breakthrough?

The next day, Johnny and Alec are operating on all cylinders, and they have a breakthrough - after re-formulating, they discover the polymer holds up to extreme heat, levels they've never seen. In fact, Alec says, "I'll bet this stuff is radiation-proof."

Johnny hears the "R" word and alarm bells go off. Is that even a goal? Alec says sure. You could use this polymer to protect patients receiving radiation therapy. Wrap it around unaffected organs...

When Johnny touches the polymer, a future vision: *Alec is congratulated by an ARMY GENERAL on a new radiation-proof component that can contain nuclear material... inside the heart of a next-generation weapon.*

To Johnny's relief, the polymer soon BREAKS APART... But he's afraid Alec is too intrigued and excited to back off. Sure enough, Alec calls down his boss, **JUDITH PECK**, 45, the director of the research park. She is thrilled. A supple, radiation-proof polymer could be a financial boon.

But when Johnny shakes her hand... *he witnesses a meeting between Mrs. Peck and Greg Stillson. She thanks him for pushing the bill through committee that got the company the funding for new research (the way Schwarzenegger is attracting stem cell money to California). Stillson says he's just trying to keep his constituents happy.*

Johnny is starting to see the connections.

## ACT II

Johnny must get Alec to stop his work. But how does a teacher destroy the dreams of his favorite student? Alec is on the brink of a lifetime achievement - maybe *Johnny sees Alec accepting a Nobel Prize for science in the future.*

But the Armageddon vision is still there, too.

Johnny and Bruce lock horns on the dilemma. Bruce says, "just lay it down for him, like you did with me." But will that really fly? Don't forget, we're dealing with a scientist here. Bruce says Johnny has no choice.

Not true, Johnny says. There's one other option - sabotage Alec's work and make it seem as if there's a design failure. Johnny hates the idea, but now that he's in the lab with Alec, it's the smartest move.

So, a reluctant Johnny sets out to crush Alec's work.

In the meantime, Johnny learns Stillson's sojourn through Maine, and his connection to the biotech firm, is about shoring up support with corporate donors... because he plans to run for President.

**MIRANDA ELLIS**, Stillson's fiancé introduced in "Saved," could be a conduit for some of this reveal, and also help Johnny discover Stillson's true motivations.

But keep in mind: Stillson is interested in this company as a cash cow. He has no idea Alec's work could have military/nuke implications. Nobody does. The only guy who can see the real future - the horrible future - is Johnny. And he doesn't share it with Miranda.

But he may have to share it with Alec... A day into Johnny's sabotage, Alec figures out what his former teacher is up to. Alec accuses Johnny of being jealous. Here he is, about to put himself on the map, and Johnny can't stand it. The Mentor-Student relationship that was thriving in Act One begins to devolve.

So, Johnny decides to "lay it down" for Alec - without the Armageddon. He tells Alec that he's going to create a newer, better polymer but it's going to have "non-medical applications." Johnny even shows Alec the exact formula that will result from his breakthrough. Alec doesn't buy it. He never bought Johnny's "psychic gift" either.

The treasured friendship is shattered.

By the time the moment escalates, director Judith Peck shows up with security. She has Johnny thrown out. As Johnny brushes past Alec, he gets a vision of the very near future: *Alec is brought into Mrs. Peck's office. Because of the amazing work he's been doing, and she wanted him to meet a friend. Judith says, "When I told him your former teacher was in the lab, he got concerned."*

*REVEAL Greg Stillson. Alec shakes hands with him. A bond is formed.*

### ACT III

Stillson meets with his handler, JANUS. He's pissed to hear Johnny Smith's name. This guy is like a bad cough. Judith Peck has told Stillson that "the young science whiz is onto something." Make sure Smith stays out of the way.

Meanwhile, Alec and his assistant Emery continue with the work. A seeming accident creates the result Johnny predicted. A supple, radiation-proof material. Even the formula matches.

A conflicted Alec goes to Johnny. Everything came true. But how can this be? Johnny says when it comes to his visions, he can't be much of a teacher. "You just have to trust me."

But Alec has a notion of the real truth Johnny is hiding. "This polymer I stumbled on is radiation proof. It's going to be used in some kind of weapon, isn't it?"

Yep. There's a reason Alec was Johnny's greatest student.

Johnny tells Alec about Armageddon. Now the young man is more conflicted than ever. Is he really contributing to the end of the world? He doesn't have to, Johnny says. He can simply put the genie back in the bottle. Go to Judith Peck and tell her the work has all gone to hell. Everything is unstable. The polymer is not going to make the company the millions they predicted.

Alec does that, calling Judith Peck down to the lab again. He even demonstrates the "failure." Everything seems to go well. But Alec doesn't see Janus... watching the proceedings from the next room.

And for Johnny, the Armageddon vision doesn't go away... So late at night, Alec and Johnny return to the lab, to erase whatever vestiges of his work they can find. When they arrive there, the place is ransacked.

Johnny sees Janus and his men, tearing the place apart. For Janus and Stillson, this has become a case of corporate espionage. But Alec never recorded his final notes. The secrets they want so bad are in his head.

Which means Alec is a target now.

#### ACT IV

Alec doesn't believe he's a target - in his mind, he's a bargaining chip. What could they possibly get from me if I simply decide to give them nothing? But Johnny informs Alec this is no simple case of corporate espionage. "These people will come after you, and they will never stop until they have the information they want. They will squeeze you, and then they will squeeze the people you love."

Johnny is torn apart by all of this - he has put his student in the crossfire. But, ironically, it is Alec who urges his mentor to stay strong. "You always told us to be the vanguard." That's what we are. We're the vanguard against these guys.

Early in Act IV, Stillson confronts Johnny, forcing a meeting in his limo one night. After the events of "Saved," this is a clash of sworn enemies. Stillson is mystified at why Johnny would roadblock the company - "I'm just trying to make a buck here." Stillson says there's nothing illegal, nothing even nefarious. The irony is that he's right - but he's clueless to where it is all headed. Stillson wants Alec, and he wants the research. It's company property.

Janus would like to make a move on Johnny, but of course his hands are tied. Kill Johnny, make a martyr. However, Janus uses Johnny to find Alec (TBD).

It all comes to a head at the quarry (where Johnny once took the Science Club for field trips). Johnny is using it as a place of refuge for Alec. To no avail.

As they find themselves surrounded, Alec tells Johnny he's having a change of heart. He's worked too hard to write off his research. He's going back to the lab to give this next-generation polymer a shot. Maybe it will be used for something more than weapons. Johnny can't believe what he's hearing, but Alec says the genie's going to get out. There's nothing they can do. If Alec stays with it, maybe he can steer it clear of where it's headed...

In every mentor-student story, the student becomes the master.

Johnny begs him not to go back, but he doesn't listen. Before he goes, Johnny sees *Armageddon* again.

That night, however, Johnny gets a VISION of Alec returning to the lab... to set off an explosion that will finally destroy his work and himself in the process.

Alec is going to martyr himself for the cause.

The CLIMAX: Johnny races to save Alec, and he does - from the explosion. But Alec is exposed to a fatal dose of radiation. As he fades away, he tells Johnny he was just trying to "be the vanguard." Alec dies. For Johnny, it's as if he's lost a son.

LATER, IN A CRAMPED APARTMENT: Emery Berg uploads the contents of a portable hard drive into his computer. He makes a call... to Janus. He's got something he's going to be interested in.

*The genie is not quite back in the bottle.*

Losing Alec is a huge blow, but perhaps more significantly, the stakes have been raised for Johnny. *Armageddon* - still a powerful, haunting vision - has somehow become more horrific. No longer an abstract concept. There's a body now. A loved one lost.

Consider it Johnny's own private *Armageddon*. And as he watches Greg Stillson at a public rally in the last moments of the show, we can see it in Johnny's eyes.

*Armageddon* is coming. It's getting closer every day.