

"DEAD LINE"

A short screenplay

by

Steven JC Johnson

FIRST DRAFT
17th FEBRUARY, 2012

COPYRIGHT © STEVEN JC JOHNSON 2012.
THIS SCREENPLAY MAY NOT BE USED
OR REPRODUCED WITHOUT THE EXPRESS
WRITTEN PERMISSION OF THE AUTHOR

FADE IN:

EXT. DESERTED RAILWAY LINE - DAY

We can hear the twitter of birdsong and a pair of butterflies dance by the camera as we look at a long, curving stretch of lonely railway track. Blades of grass are beginning to grow through the ballast stones.

Green countryside stretches to the horizon on either side of the track. It is an idyllic scene.

A MAN appears in CLOSE-UP and he frantically looks up and down the track. He is in his thirties and drenched with sweat. Dirt and blood streak his face.

We hear a noise and the man turns to see bushes rustling by the railway line. His eyes widen with fear as a pair of infected victims emerge, one male and one female, their bloodshot eyes fixated on him and him alone.

MAN

Shit!

He begins running awkwardly along the tracks, the uneven, stony surface and sleepers making his gait awkward. The zombies continue after him, their progress equally laboured.

MAN

(looking back)

Get away from me! Jesus!

The man spies a dilapidated signal box several hundred yards away and makes a bee-line for it. The shuffling creatures continue their relentless, if slow, pursuit.

The man reaches the signal box and rushes up the rusting, iron steps to the door, finding it secured with a heavy, old padlock.

MAN

Oh, for fuck's sake!

He looks around, trying to find something to break the lock. The infected couple reaches the foot of the steps and begins climbing towards him. He shrieks and kicks out at the male, sending him sprawling to the bottom, almost knocking over the female.

The female zombie lunges forward and grabs the man's leg. He kicks at her, but her incisors scratch his ankle before she joins her kin at the foot of the steps.

MAN
(grinning maniacally)
Yeah, take that, you fuckers!

He begins kicking the door and the latch that is secured by the padlock begins to buckle and come away from the rotting wood.

MAN
That's it! Go on!

He continues kicking, aware that the zombies are almost upon him. Suddenly, the door springs open and he dives inside, slamming it shut behind him, trapping the female's fingers in the door frame.

INT. SIGNAL BOX - DAY

We hear a gurgling moan and the fingers wriggle spasmodically. The man pushes over a mouldy filing cabinet that was beside the door, pinning it shut. The door shudders and the man realizes that the zombies are attempting to break through.

MAN
Get the fuck away from me!

The banging only becomes more frenzied. The fingers wriggle more feverishly.

MAN
(dropping to his knees)
Ohhhhh!

The door opens slightly and the fingers are pulled out of view. There is a long pause and the man slowly gets back to his feet. Have the creatures gone?

We FOLLOW as he creeps towards the partially open door.

MAN
Stuart? Holly?

He leans over the filing cabinet and peers through the thin gap between the door and the jamb.

MAN
Holl? Stu?

Suddenly, a clawed hand grabs his hair and he screams. The door begins to shudder again and the cabinet shifts as the creatures resume their assault.

The man screams and tries to pull away, but the grip on his scalp is strong. Filthy fingernails dig into his skin and blood starts to trickle down onto his face and ears.

MAN

Aaargh! Fuck! Get off!

A crack rings out, followed by another and the grip on his hair loosens. The man pulls free and falls backwards onto the grimy floor of the signal box. He crawls backwards into the dusty shadows, sobbing and coughing.

We hear SHUFFLING outside and the door is forced open to reveal a WOMAN and a TEENAGE BOY. The woman is holding a hunting rifle, while the boy brandishes an automatic pistol.

WOMAN

Hello? Are you okay?

They peer into the dusty gloom, their eyes adjusting from the exterior brightness.

BOY

He's over there.

The woman follows the boy's pointing finger.

WOMAN

Hello? You can come out now. We got them. (pause) Are you bitten?

The boy readies his pistol, but the woman raises a hand to calm him.

WOMAN

I'm Sue. This is Benjamin.

BOY

Ben.

The woman smiles.

SUE

Ben. We're not going to hurt you. You can come out.

The man slowly emerges from the shadows, his face a crimson mask. The woman raises her rifle.

SUE
Are you bitten?

MAN
(glancing down at his ankle for a
brief moment)
No. I... I don't think so.

SUE
Are you sure? There's a lot of blood on
your face.

The man puts his hands to his face and examines the blood. He feels his scalp and winces.

MAN
Stuart scratched me.

The woman slowly lowers her rifle, but the boy keeps his pistol trained on the man.

SUE
You knew those two things?

MAN
(nodding)
We drove up from London together. We
ran out of petrol a few miles from
here, so we started walking. Next thing
I knew, this thing grabbed Holly and
bit her hand. We fought it off and
Stuart bashed its head in with a rock.
But then Holly bit Stuart and I fucking
ran. I ran, man. I fucking ran.

Sue looks to Ben, who shrugs and lowers his pistol.

SUE
Okay. Look, we're following the line to
Ipswich. It's supposed to be okay up
there. Or so we've heard.

MAN
What about the zombies?

BEN

They seem to be sticking to the roads,
mostly. Must be easier for them or
something.

SUE

Your friends out there were the first
we've seen since we got out of the
city.

Suddenly, the signal box shakes and, through the grimy
window, we see a commuter train made up of two carriages
thunder by.

SUE

Where did that come from?

They all race outside.

EXT. RAILWAY LINE - DAY

The train disappears around the curve and we hear a loud
BANG, following by a reverberating THUMP and RUMBLE. Dust
and smoke rises above the greenery that borders the track.

SUE

Shit! I think it derailed!

The man stares at the still bodies of Holly and Stuart at
the top of the steps. Sue nudges him and they begin heading
towards the scene of the accident, the man limping
slightly.

BEN

I thought none of the trains were
running, Sue.

SUE

I don't know, love. Maybe whoever was
driving it stole it. You never know
these days. People will do anything to
get out of London.

She glances back at the man.

SUE

You okay? You can wait back there if
you want.

MAN

No thanks. I'll be fine. We're nearly there, look.

We follow his gaze and see the train lying on its side, shrouded by a cloud of dust and with a fire blazing in the driver's cabin. A burning form can be seen by the train.

As they draw closer, we begin to hear moaning and wailing coming from the carriages.

BEN

Why did it derail?

SUE

I don't know, Ben. Maybe they hit something.

MAN

I think the driver took the curve too fast. He seemed to be going flat out at the signal box and I think they're supposed to slow down a bit.

They reach the train and Ben clambers onto the carriage. Oddly, the moaning and wailing abruptly ceases.

SUE

Be careful, Ben.

He ignores her and pulls open the nearest door. A plume of black smoke puffs out and he waves it away, aiming the pistol down into the dark carriage.

BEN

Hello? Can anybody hear me?

He looks down to Sue and shakes his head.

SUE

Don't even think about going in there, Benjamin!

Ben smiles and stuffs the pistol into his back pocket.

SUE

No, Ben!

Ben drops out of sight.

SUE

Shit! Stupid little...

She turns and sees the man sitting on the track, nursing his ankle. Her eyes widen when she sees the deep teeth marks in his skin.

SUE

I thought you said you weren't bitten!

MAN

I'm not! Holly kind of scratched me...
with her teeth.

SUE

Are you fucking kidding? 'Kind of
scratched me with her teeth'? Are you
fucking stupid or what?

She raises the rifle and aims it at the man's head.

MAN

Jesus! No! I'm not a fucking zom...

A crack rings out and the man slumps backwards, the bullet hole in his forehead oozing dark blood. We hear several more GUNSHOTS coming from inside the train.

SUE

Shit. Shit, shit, shit, fucking shit!
(then shouting) BENJAMIN!

She climbs onto the carriage and looks into the carriage.

SUE

BEN! (then to herself) Fuck. I'm going
to have to go in there, aren't I? Shit.

INT. TRAIN - DAY

She drops into the carriage, rifle at the ready, and coughs as she inhales acrid smoke. She peers into the gloom, light from outside barely penetrating the dense smoke.

SUE

Ben? BEN!

BEN (O.S.)

I'm down here, Sue.

Sue sighs with relief and begins making her way forward. There are no bodies in the rear carriage, but when she reaches the front carriage, she has to step over a pair of corpses. Slowly, she kneels down to examine them.

One is an elderly man and he has a ballpoint pen sticking out of his left eye socket. The other is a woman who appears to be pregnant. The bruises on her neck suggest she was strangled. Sue looks to the old man.

SUE

(to herself, quietly)

Did they kill each other?

She rises and continues on. Suddenly, a figure lurches out of the gloom.

SUE

Ben! Thank G...

It is not Benjamin. The zombie reaches out and grabs her rifle. Sue wrestles with the creature, a powerfully-built young man in a tee-shirt and with heavily-tattooed forearms. Half of his throat has been torn away, exposing a gaping trachea.

They struggle in silence, save for Sue's grunts and gasps. A CRACK is heard and Sue's face is spattered with blood. She cries out as the creature slumps onto her. She pushes it off and we see Ben standing over her, pistol in hand.

BEN

You okay?

SUE

No, I'm not bloody okay, Benjamin! Give me a hand.

Ben helps her up and she wipes the blood away with her jacket sleeve.

BEN

They're all dead. I think one of them turned and the rest panicked or got bit. I shot four of them including this chap.

SUE

Let's get out of here.

EXT. RAILWAY LINE - DAY

Sue and Ben are standing by the smouldering train, looking along the track that recedes into the distance. Ben rubs his eyes with his sleeve.

BEN

You really think things are better that way?

SUE

I don't know, love. Can't be any worse than back there, though.

Ben looks down at the body of the man.

BEN

Poor sod.

SUE

Come on. We've got a long way to go and it'll be dark soon.

They begin walking away from the train and we PULL BACK AND UP to see the wider scene of the smoking train in the midst of the countryside.

To the East, we glimpse the North Sea and a large passenger ferry slowly making its way towards the horizon.

FADE OUT.

THE END

FIRST DRAFT
17th FEBRUARY, 2012

COPYRIGHT © STEVEN JC JOHNSON 2012.
THIS SCREENPLAY MAY NOT BE USED
OR REPRODUCED WITHOUT THE EXPRESS
WRITTEN PERMISSION OF THE AUTHOR