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Stephen King
THE DEAD ZONE

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В детстве Джонни Смит сильно ударился головой о лёд. Тогда он первый раз столкнулся лицом к лицу с «мёртвой зоной» и в первый раз увидел то, чего не дано видеть никому другому. Теперь, много лет спустя, очередное видение предсказывает разрушение всему человечеству, и Джонни оказывается неспособным игнорировать его зов.

Текст произведения снабжен грамматическим комментарием и словарем, в который вошли все слова, содержащиеся в тексте. Благодаря этому книга подойдет для любого уровня владения языком.

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PROLOGUE

1.

By the time he graduated from college, John Smith had forgotten all about the bad fall he took on the ice that January day in 1953. In fact, he would have been hard put to remember it by the time he graduated from grammar school. And his mother and father never knew about it at all.

They were skating on a cleared patch of Runaround Pond in Durham. The bigger boys were playing hockey with old taped sticks and using a couple of potato baskets for goals. The little kids were just farting around the way little kids have done since time immemorial—their ankles bowing comically in and out, their breath puffing in the frosty twenty-degree air. At one corner of the cleared ice two rubber tires burned sootily, and a few parents sat nearby, watching their children. The age of the snowmobile was still distant and winter fun still consisted of exercising your body rather than a gasoline engine.

Johnny had walked down from his house, just over the Pownal line, with his skates hung over his shoulder. At six, he was a pretty fair skater. Not good enough to join in the big kids' hockey games yet, but able to skate rings around most of the other first

graders, who were always pinwheeling their arms for balance or sprawling on their butts.

Now he skated slowly around the outer edge of the clear patch, wishing he could go backward like **Timmy Benedix**¹, listening to the ice thud and crackle mysteriously under the snow cover farther out, also listening to the shouts of the hockey players, the rumble of a pulp truck crossing the bridge on its way to U. S. Gypsum in Lisbon Falls, the murmur of conversation from the adults. He was very glad to be alive on that cold, fair winter day. Nothing was wrong with him, nothing troubled his mind, he wanted nothing... except to be able to skate backward, like Timmy Benedix.

He skated past the fire and saw that two or three of the grown-ups were passing around a bottle of booze.

“Gimme some of that!” he shouted to **Chuck Spier**², who was bundled up in a big lumberjack shirt and green flannel snowpants.

Chuck grinned at him. “Get outta here, kid. I hear your mother callin you.”

Grinning, six-year old Johnny Smith skated on. And on the road side of the skating area, he saw Timmy Benedix himself coming down the slope, with his father behind him.

¹ **Timmy Benedix** — Тимми Бенедикс

² **Chuck Spier** — Чак Спайер

“Timmy!” he shouted. “Watch this!”

He turned around and began to skate clumsily backward. Without realising it, he was skating into the area of the hockey game.

“Hey kid!” someone shouted. “Get out the way!” Johnny didn’t hear. He was *doing* it! He was skating backward! He had caught the rhythm—all at once. It was in a kind of sway of the legs...

He looked down, fascinated, to see what his legs were doing.

The big kids’ hockey puck, old and scarred and gouged around the edges, buzzed past him, unseen. One of the big kids, not a very good skater, was chasing it with what was almost a blind, headlong plunge.

Chuck Spier saw it coming. He rose to his feet and shouted, “*Johnny! Watch out!*”

John raised his head—and the next moment the clumsy skater, all one hundred and sixty pounds of him, crashed into little John Smith at full speed.

Johnny went flying, arms out. A bare moment later his head connected with the ice and he blacked out.

Blacked out... black ice... blacked out... black ice black. Black.

They told him he had blacked out. All he was really sure of was that strange repeating thought and suddenly looking up at a circle of faces—scared hockey players, worried adults, curious little kids.

Timmy Benedix smirking. Chuck Spier was holding him—

Black ice. Black.

“What?” Chuck asked. “Johnny... you okay? You took a hell of a knock.”

“Black,” Johnny said gutturally. “Black ice. Don’t jump it no more, Chuck.”

Chuck looked around, a little scared, then back at Johnny. He touched the large knot that was rising on the boy’s forehead.

“I’m sorry,” the clumsy hockey player said. “I never even saw him. Little kids are supposed to stay away from the hockey. It’s the rules.” He looked around uncertainly for support.

“Johnny?” Chuck said. He didn’t like the look of Johnny’s eyes. They were dark and faraway, distant and cold. “Are you okay?”

“Don’t jump it no more,” Johnny said, unaware of what he was saying, thinking only of ice—black ice. “The explosion. The acid.”

“Think we ought to take him to the doctor?” Chuck asked **Bill Gendron**¹. “He don’t know what he’s sayin?”

“Give him a minute,” Bill advised.

They gave him a minute, and Johnny’s head did clear. “I’m okay,” he muttered. “Lemme up.” Timmy Benedix was still smirking, damn him. Johnny de-

¹ **Bill Gendron** — Билл Гендрон

cided he would show Timmy a thing or two. He would be skating rings around Timmy by the end of the week... backward *and* forward.

"You come on over and sit down by the fire for a while," Chuck said. "You took a hell of a knock."

Johnny let them help him over to the fire. The smell of melting rubber was strong and pungent—making him feel a little sick to his stomach. He had a headache. He felt the lump over his left eye curiously. It felt as though it stuck out a mile.

"Can you remember who you are and everything?" Bill asked.

"Sure. Sure I can. I'm okay."

"Who's your dad and mom?"

"Herb and Vera. Herb and Vera Smith."

Bill and Chuck looked at each other and shrugged.

"I think he's okay," Chuck said, and then, for the third time, "but he sure took a hell of a knock, didn't he? Wow."

"Kids," Bill said, looking fondly out at his eight year old twin girls, skating hand in hand, and then back at Johnny. "It probably would have killed a grown-up."

"Not a Polack," Chuck replied, and they both burst out laughing. The bottle of Bushmill's began making its rounds again.

Ten minutes later Johnny was back out on the ice, his headache already fading, the knotted bruise

standing out on his forehead like a weird brand. By the time he went home for lunch, he had forgotten all about the fall, and blacking out, in the joy of having discovered how to skate backward.

“God’s mercy!” Vera Smith said when she saw him. “How did you get that?”

“Fell down,” he said, and began to slurp up Campbell’s tomato soup.

“Are you all right, John?” she asked, touching it gently. “Sure, Mom.” He was too, except for the occasional bad dreams that came over the course of the next month or so... the bad dreams and a tendency to sometimes get very dozy at times of the day when he had never been dozy before. And that stopped happening at about the same time the bad dreams stopped happening.

He was all right.

In mid-February, Chuck Spier got up one morning and found that the battery of his old ‘48 De Soto was dead. He tried to jump it from his farm truck. As he attached the second damp to the De Soto’s battery, it exploded in his face, showering him with fragments and corrosive battery acid. He lost an eye. Vera said it was God’s own mercy he hadn’t lost them both. Johnny thought it was a terrible tragedy and went with his father to visit Chuck in the Lewiston General Hospital a week after the accident. The sight of Big Chuck lying in that hospital bed, looking oddly wasted and small, had

shaken Johnny badly—and that night he had dreamed it was *him* lying there.

From time to time in the years afterward, Johnny had hunches—he would know what the next record on the radio was going to be before the DJ played it, that sort of thing—but he never connected these with his accident on the ice. By then he had forgotten it.

And the hunches were never that startling, or even very frequent. It was not until the night of the county fair and the mask that anything very startling happened. Before the second accident.

Later, he thought of that often.

The thing with the Wheel of Fortune had happened *before* the second accident.

Like a warning from his own childhood.

2.

The travelling salesman crisscrossed Nebraska and Iowa tirelessly under the burning sun in that summer of 1955. He sat behind the wheel of a '53 Mercury sedan that already had better than seventy thousand miles on it. The Merc was developing a marked wheeze in the valves. He was a big man who still had the look of a cornfed mid-western boy on him; in that summer of 1955, only four months after his Omaha house-painting business had gone

broke, **Greg Stillson**¹ was only twenty-two years old.

The trunk and the back seat of the Mercury were filled with cartons, and the cartons were filled with books. Most of them were Bibles. They came in all shapes and sizes. There was your basic item, *The American Truth Way Bible*, illustrated with sixteen color plates, bound with airplane glue, for \$1.69 and sure to hold together for at least ten months; then for the poorer pocketbook there was *The American Truth Way New Testament* for sixty-five cents, with no color plates but with the words of Our Lord Jesus printed in red; and for the big spender there was *The American Truth Way Deluxe Word of God* for \$19.95, bound in imitation white leather, the owner's name to be stenciled in gold leaf on the front cover, twenty-four color plates, and a section in the middle to note down births, marriages, and burials. And the Deluxe Word of God might remain in one piece for as long as two years. There was also a carton of paperbacks entitled *America the Truth Way: The Communist-Jewish Conspiracy Against Our United States*.

Greg did better with this paperback, printed on cheap pulp stock, than with all the Bibles put together. It told all about how the Rothschilds and the Roosevelts and the Greenblatts were taking over

¹ **Greg Stillson** — Грег СТИЛЛСОН

the U. S. economy and the U. S. government. There were graphs showing how the Jews related directly to the Communist-Marxist-Leninist-Trotskyite axis, and from there to the Antichrist Itself.

The days of McCarthyism were not long over in Washington; in the Midwest Joe McCarthy's star had not yet set, and Margaret Chase Smith of Maine was known as "that bitch" for her famous Declaration of Conscience. In addition to the stuff about Communism, Greg Stillson's rural farm constituency seemed to have a morbid interest in the idea that the Jews were running the world.

Now Greg turned into the dusty driveway of a farm-house some twenty miles west of Ames, Iowa. It had a deserted, shut-up look to it—the shades down and the barn doors closed—but you could never tell until you tried. That motto had served Greg Stillson well in the two years or so since he and his mother had moved up to Omaha from Oklahoma. The house-painting business had been no great shakes, but he had needed to get the taste of Jesus out of his mouth for a little while, you should pardon the small blasphemy. But now he had come back home—not on the pulpit or revival side this time, though, and it was something of a relief to be out of the miracle business at last.

He opened the car door and as he stepped out into the dust of the driveway a big mean farm dog advanced out of the barn, its ears laid back. It vol-

leyed barks. “Hello, pooch,” Greg said in his low, pleasant, but carrying voice—at twenty-two it was already the voice of a trained spellbinder.

The pooch didn’t respond to the friendliness in his voice. It kept coming, big and mean, intent on an early lunch of traveling salesman. Greg sat back down in the car, closed the door, and honked the horn twice. Sweat rolled down his face and turned his white linen suit darker gray in circular patches under his arms and in a branching tree-shape up his back. He honked again, but there was no response. The clodhoppers had loaded themselves into their International Harvester or their Studebaker and gone into town.

Greg smiled.

Instead of shifting into reverse and backing out of the driveway, he reached behind him and produced a Flit gun—only this one was loaded with ammonia instead of Flit.

Pulling back the plunger, Greg stepped out of the car again, smiling easily. The dog, which had settled down on its haunches, immediately got up again and began to advance on him, growling.

Greg kept smiling. “That’s right, poochie,” he said in that pleasant, carrying voice. “You just come on. Come on and get it.” He hated these ugly farm dogs that ran their half-acre of dooryard like arrogant little Caesars, they told you something about their masters as well.

“Fucking bunch of clodhoppers,” he said under his breath. He was still smiling. “Come on, doggie.”

The dog came. It tensed its haunches down to spring at him. In the barn a cow mooed, and the wind rustled tenderly through the corn. As it leaped, Greg’s smile turned to a hard and bitter grimace. He depressed the Flit plunger and sprayed a stinging cloud of ammonia drops lets directly into the dog’s eyes and nose.

Its angry barking turned immediately to short, agonized yips, and then, as the bite of ammonia really settled in, to howls of pain. It turned tail at once, a watchdog no longer but only a vanquished cur.

Greg Stillson’s face had darkened. His eyes had drawn down to ugly slits. He stepped forward rapidly and administered a whistling kick to the dog’s haunches with one of his Stride-King airtip shoes. The dog gave a high, wailing sound, and, driven by its pain and fear, it sealed its own doom by turning around to give battle to the author of its misery rather than running for the barn.

With a snarl, it struck out blindly, snagged the right cuff of Greg’s white linen pants, and tore it.

“You sonofabitch!” he cried out in startled anger, and kicked the dog again, this time hard enough to send it rolling in the dust. He advanced on the dog once more, kicked it again, still yelling. Now the dog; eyes watering, nose in fiery agony, one rib

broken and another badly sprung, realized its danger from this madman, but it was too late.

Greg Stillson chased it across the dusty farmyard, panting and shouting, sweat rolling down his cheeks, and kicked the dog until it was screaming and barely able to drag itself along through the dust. It was bleeding in half a dozen places. It was dying.

“Shouldn’t have bit me,” Greg whispered. “You hear? You hear me? You shouldn’t have bit me, you dipshit dog. No one gets in my way. You hear? No one.” He delivered another kick with one blood-spattered airtip, but the dog could do no more than make a low choking sound. Not much satisfaction in that. Greg’s head ached. It was the sun. Chasing the dog around in the hot sun. Be lucky not to pass out.

He closed his eyes for a moment, breathing rapidly, the sweat rolling down his face like tears and nestling in his crewcut like gems, the broken dog dying at his feet. Colored specks of light, pulsing in rhythm with his heartbeat, floated across the darkness behind his lids.

His head ached.

Sometimes he wondered if he was going crazy. Like now. He had meant to give the dog a burst from the ammonia Flit gun, drive it back into the barn so he could leave his business card in the crack of the screen door, come back some other time and