

"DEAD LAND"

A short screenplay

by

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FIRST DRAFT
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FADE IN:

EXT. ENGLISH COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

We are flying high above green fields and peaceful woodland. The narrow, country lanes that cut through this idyllic scene are bereft of traffic. It is a gloriously sunny day.

A single car appears in frame. It is an old Austin Montego, bright red, with many patches of rust. We glide down towards it and see five people crammed inside.

INT. CAR - DAY

STEVE SHARP is driving. He is in his mid-thirties with a serious face and short hair. He steers the car around a curve, the wheels leaving the road for a moment and kicking up dust from the verge.

Beside him sits his wife, AMY, an attractive brunette, also in her mid-thirties. She is hanging on to the handle above the passenger door. Her eyes are wide and her teeth are clamped together.

In the back seat are their three children, PAUL (17), SUZANNE (15) and MICHAEL (12).

PAUL

Slow down, dad! You're going to get us killed!

Steve ignores him and presses down harder on the accelerator.

AMY

Look out!

We WHIP PAN forward and see a shuffling form in the middle of the road. It is a MAN of about fifty, with thinning hair, wearing denim overalls, the left leg of which is torn, leaving bare flesh exposed.

A huge, bloody gouge can be seen on his exposed left leg. Steve has seen it and has an evil smile on his face.

STEVE

C'mon, you zombie bastard!

MICHAEL

I thought you said that they were only
in the cities, dad. That we'd be safe
in the country.

Steve ignores him and accelerates. Amy looks from the
zombie to Steve and back again.

AMY

No!

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRY LANE - DAY

Amy grabs the steering wheel and the car swerves around the
zombie, careers off the road and through a hedge. It leaves
the ground and sails through the air before crashing into a
field, the front bumper digging into the soft earth.

One of the front wheels flies off, bouncing across the
furrowed soil, and the bonnet springs open, before the car
is at rest, steam rising from the exposed engine.

INT. & EXT. CAR & FIELD - DAY

Steve's head is pressed against the top of the steering
wheel. Blood trickles from a wound on his forehead. Amy
groans and unclips her seatbelt. She immediately checks on
the kids in the back seat.

We follow her gaze and see that Michael and Suzanne are
nursing Paul's head. His face is a mass of blood and
bruised flesh. His nose has been decimated and his eyes are
closed.

AMY

Paul!

Amy scrambles out of the car and runs around to the rear
passenger door. She pulls it open and leans inside.

SUZANNE

I... I think he's dead, mum.

Amy moans and takes Paul's face in her hands. His head
flops around lifelessly. Amy breaks down, releases Paul and
sinks to her knees outside the car, ignoring the mud. She
wails with despair.

Michael exits the car and opens the driver's door.

MICHAEL

Dad. DAD!

Steve groans and his eyes flicker. Then they open and he sits upright. His hand goes to his forehead and he looks at the blood on his fingers.

STEVE

Wha... What happened?

MICHAEL

We had an accident, dad.

Amy pulls herself to her feet and runs around to where Michael is standing by the open door. She ignores her young son and grabs Steve by the shirt, attempting to drag him out of the car, screeching at him. The seatbelt foils her efforts, though.

AMY

You fucking bastard! You stupid,
fucking murdering bastard!

Her arms flail as she slaps and hits Steve repeatedly. He tries to fend her off, but he is trapped in the seat.

STEVE

What's going on! Amy!

SUZANNE

Paul's' dead, dad!

Steve looks around and sees Suzanne still nursing his eldest son in the back seat.

STEVE

No... NO!

He unclips the seatbelt and pushes Amy away. She flops to the ground, still wailing. He pulls Paul out of the car and sits on the ground, rocking back and forth with Paul's body in his arms.

Michael stands a few steps away, tears streaming down his young face. A movement catches his eye and he sees the zombie climbing through the hole in the hedge.

MICHAEL

Mum! Dad!

They both ignore him. Steve is sobbing, still rocking, while Amy has her face buried in her hands.

Suzanne looks to where Michael is pointing.

SUZANNE

Shit!

She clammers out of the car and rushes to her young brother.

SUZANNE

Mum, one of those things is coming.

Amy looks up and sees the zombie shuffling towards them. She dries her eyes on her sleeve and sniffs. Then she climbs to her feet and stumbles around to Steve.

AMY

Steven, we've got to go.

Steve ignores her and continues rocking with Paul. He has stopped sobbing and is now staring into the distance, his back to the zombie heading inexorably towards them.

AMY

STEVE! (pause) For Christ's sake!

She slaps him hard and he looks at her with surprise. She points and he looks around, seeing the zombie.

STEVE

I don't care. Let it come.

AMY

You bloody coward! What about Suzanne and Michael?

Steve looks towards his two other children with glazed eyes. The zombie is quite close now and we can hear it moaning quietly.

Amy opens the boot of the car and pulls out a cross-shaped wheel brace.

AMY

Shit.

She rummages around in the boot, but there is nothing else that she can use, only a couple of small suitcases, an old jacket and some mouldy blankets. She turns back to the zombie and we see it is only a few feet from Steve.

AMY

Suzanne, Michael, get away from the car.

The two children move away, putting more distance between themselves and the zombie. Amy steps towards Steve, gingerly brandishing the tyre iron.

AMY

Steve?

Her husband is paralysed with grief. The zombie screeches and lunges towards Steve. Amy springs forward, the brace high above her head.

She brings it down on the zombie and one of the spokes sinks deep into its cranium, sending skin, bone and brain matter spewing through the air.

It looks at Amy for a second, then its eyes roll back and it flops to the muddy ground, lying motionless as the soil soaks with blood.

Michael and Suzanne rush to their mother and hold her tightly. She is shaking with shock and terror.

Steven blinks and looks up at his wife and children. Then he looks down at his dead son.

STEVE

My fault. All my fault.

He gently sets Paul down on the ground, kisses him on the forehead and stands up, turning to face his wife.

STEVE

I'm sorry, Amy. I... I don't know what...

AMY

There's nothing you can say, Steven. Paul is dead. (pause) And we're stuck out here. Wherever here is.

Suzanne points to a collection of buildings at the far side of the field.

SUZANNE

There's a farm. Maybe somebody there can help.

Michael looks at the dead zombie on the ground, the wheel brace still protruding from its head.

MICHAEL

I hope it wasn't his farm.

EXT. FARMYARD - DAY

The family enters a small, untidy farmyard. Steve is carrying Paul's body, over which he has draped the old jacket from the boot of the car. Amy is carrying the bloody wheel brace.

AMY

Hello? Is anybody here?

Nobody replies. Suzanne has a mobile phone in her hand and stares at the screen with despair before sliding back into her jeans pocket.

SUZANNE

No signal!

They head towards the farmhouse. As they approach, we see that the front door is slightly ajar. Amy reaches out to push it open and peek inside.

STEVE

No, wait. I'll do it. You three stay out here.

He gently sets Paul's body down on the ground and takes the brace from Amy. He pushes open the door and peers into the dusty gloom

STEVE

Hello?

A large dog leaps out of the door, knocking Steve back into the farmyard. Steve scrambles back to his feet, but we see that the dog is bounding away, heading towards the field where the family crashed.

SUZANNE

I don't think anybody's in. Mum, this place is freaking me out. Can we go?

AMY

Maybe they have a phone. We can call your gran and see if granddad can come and collect us.

Steve nods and steps inside the house.

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

Steve looks around and we see he is in a kitchen. A large, wooden table dominates the room. It is empty. Nearby, a pan with two eggs is boiling. Steve turns and sees his family huddled in the doorway.

STEVE

Somebody's around. Look that pan's boiling.

He turns off the heat under the pan and the simmering ceases immediately. Looking around, he spies a telephone on a dresser and picks up the receiver. He sets it down again, a look of disappointment on his face.

STEVE

No dialing tone.

He turns at the sound of door CREAKING open and a shotgun COCKING. We see a middle-aged WOMAN pointing a double-barrelled shotgun at his head.

WOMAN

What the hell are you doing in my house?

Steve drops the wheel brace and it CLATTERS to the stone floor of the kitchen. He raises his hands.

STEVE

I'm sorry. We had an accident. My son is dead. We...

WOMAN

Was he bit?

STEVE

What?

WOMAN

Did one of them things bite him?

STEVE

No... er, we... I crashed the car. He was killed then. (quieter) My fault.

The woman lowers the shotgun and Steve relaxes.

WOMAN

Phone's not working.

STEVE

We're trying to reach Wareside. My wife's parents live there.

WOMAN

That's about four miles, as the crow flies.

Amy and the kids step inside.

AMY

Is that all? We can walk there. Which direction is it?

The woman eyes Amy suspiciously, the shotgun still cocked under her arm.

WOMAN

Off that way. Follow the road. Takes you right to it.

AMY

Come on, Steven. We can be there before dark.

WOMAN

Won't do you no good. Those things are everywhere. I imagine nobody's left in Wareside by now.

Amy sighs.

AMY

Have you been there? How can you know that?

The woman breaks the shotgun open and sets it down on the table. She turns to the cooker and turns the light back on under the eggs.

WOMAN

'Cause my husband went there this morning and came back changed. One of them creatures like on the news, I reckon.

She turns back to the family.

WOMAN (CON'D)

Attacked me us he did. Bit our Billy
before we could do anything. Bit him on
the leg of all places.

We see a FLASH-CUT of the zombie Amy killed with the wheel
brace.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

By the time I got the gun, both had
disappeared. Locked myself in the
pantry till I heard you talking.

STEVE

I'm sorry, but we have to try and get
to Amy's parents' house. Maybe they're
fine. Locked in the house like you
were.

Steve turns to his family.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Come on.

They start to head back outside.

WOMAN

Wait. Take Billy's Land Rover. Keys
should be in it. It's out back.

EXT. FARMYARD - DAY

The family is standing next to an old, battered Land Rover.
Steve is just placing Paul's body into the back of the
vehicle. Then he walks round to the driver's door, climbs
in and we hear the engine BURST into life.

Amy and the kids pile in and they set off out of the
farmyard, back towards the road that will lead them to
Wareside.

INT. LAND ROVER - DAY

As they drive away, Steve looks into the rear view mirror
and we see the woman, standing in the doorway of the
farmhouse, slowly receding.

Suddenly, she is grabbed from behind and a man bites deeply
into her shoulder. Blood begins flowing down her light-
coloured clothes.

STEVE

Oh, shit!

AMY

What?

STEVE

Never mind. Nothing. Let's just get to your mother's.

MICHAEL

Look, dad, more of the zombies. Over there.

They follow his gaze and we see dozens of shuffling forms in a field, heading towards the farm.

AMY

Oh, God.

EXT. ENGLISH COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

The Land Rover turns onto the road and speeds up, heading towards Wareside. We start to pull back, gaining altitude, and see that more fields are dotted with zombies, hundreds, if not thousands of them.

FADE OUT.

THE END.

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