

= Nebraska (The Walking Dead) =

" Nebraska " is the eighth episode of the second season of the post-apocalyptic horror television series The Walking Dead . It originally aired on AMC in the United States on February 12 , 2012 . In the episode , the survivors deal with the aftermath of the barn shooting , which causes Hershel Greene (Scott Wilson) to order Rick 's group to leave and then start drinking and disappear from the group , leading Rick Grimes (Andrew Lincoln) and Glenn (Steven Yeun) to try to find him . Meanwhile , Dale Horvath (Jeffrey DeMunn) becomes more suspicious of Shane Walsh 's (Jon Bernthal) actions .

" Nebraska " was written by Evan Reilly and directed by Clark Johnson . Two trailers were released as part of promoting the episode ; the former aired shortly after the broadcast of its predecessor , " Pretty Much Dead Already " , while the latter premiered a month preceding the airing of " Nebraska " . Following the broadcast of the episode , The Walking Dead took a three-month hiatus from television . It features guest appearances from Michael Raymond-James and Aaron Munoz , as well as appearances from several recurring actors and actresses including Lauren Cohan , Scott Wilson , Emily Kinney and IronE Singleton .

The episode received general acclaim from television critics , who praised the episode 's concluding scene alongside the character development and storylines . Upon airing , it attained 8.1 million viewers and a 4.2 rating in the 18-49 demographic , according to Nielsen ratings . " Nebraska " achieved the strongest demographic ratings out of any basic cable telecast in history until the airing of the series ' second season finale . The episode became the highest-rated basic cable television program of the day , as well as the most-viewed cable program of the week .

= = Plot = =

After the grisly massacre of all the walkers in the barn , a grieving Hershel Greene (Scott Wilson) demands Rick Grimes (Andrew Lincoln) and the rest of the survivors to leave his land . Rick confronts Shane (Jon Bernthal) , who accuses Rick of being just as delusional as Hershel and argues that , despite Hershel 's denials , the old man knew of Sophia 's presence in the barn the entire time (Hershel and Maggie denied this , stating that it was Otis who put the walkers in the barn) . Shane also confronts Dale (Jeffrey DeMunn) , arguing that , unlike Dale , he is keeping the group safe . The group decides to bury a few of the walkers , including Sophia (Madison Lintz) and Hershel 's wife and stepson , and burn the other bodies .

Carol (Melissa McBride) refuses to attend Sophia 's memorial service , saying that her daughter died a long time ago and the corpse at the farm was not Sophia . Carol sinks into a deep depression and tears up plants in the nearby woods (including a Cherokee Rose) to vent her bottled up anger . Shane later finds her emerging from the woods in a semi-catatonic state and helps her wash her dirty hands , telling her he had no idea Sophia was in the barn . Lori (Sarah Wayne Callies) , meanwhile , is horrified when Carl (Chandler Riggs) coldly states that killing Sophia was the right thing to do , and he would have killed her himself .

Hershel finally throws out his wife 's belongings , before disappearing . His absence is not noted until his younger daughter Beth (Emily Kinney) collapses and goes into a catatonic state . The survivors discover that Hershel has begun to drink again , for the first time since Maggie 's (Lauren Cohan) birth . Over the objections of Shane , Lori , and Maggie , Rick and Glenn (Steven Yeun) , believing Hershel may be at a bar in town , go out to find him .

Dale argues with Andrea (Laurie Holden) and T-Dog (IronE Singleton) when they say they agree with Shane 's actions in clearing the walkers from the barn . Dale later has a private conversation with Lori , wherein he shares his suspicions that Shane sacrificed Otis to the walkers . He warns Lori that Shane may end up killing someone else .

As Beth 's condition deteriorates , Lori asks Daryl (Norman Reedus) to drive into town to check on Rick . When Daryl refuses , Lori accuses him of being selfish , an accusation which Daryl furiously denies in light of what he had to go through during the search for Sophia . He ends by stating that

he 's " done looking for people " . Lori then leaves the group by herself to find Rick , but along the way her car hits a walker on the road and overturns into a ditch .

Rick and Glenn find Hershel in the town bar , relapsing into his alcoholic habits and lamenting his futile hopes of a cure for his reanimated loved ones . After some time , Rick finally convinces Hershel to return to his family , just as two men enter the bar ? Dave (Michael Raymond @-@ James) and Tony (Aaron Munoz) . From the two men , Rick hears that Fort Benning , the survivors ' initial target destination , may be overrun with walkers . The situation at the bar deteriorates as Dave and Tony stubbornly prod Rick 's group into revealing the location of the farm , going as far as to offer up their services if allowed to stay there . Rick , however , rejects their offer and flatly refuses the two men safe haven . Frustrated by Rick 's response , Dave reaches for his gun , but Rick is quicker on the draw and kills them both with his revolver . The episode ends with Shane , Andrea , and T @-@ Dog burning the remaining walkers .

= = Production = =

" Nebraska " was written by Evan Reilly and directed by Clark Johnson . Following the broadcast of the previous installment , " Pretty Much Dead Already " , The Walking Dead took a three @-@ month hiatus from television . Two trailers were released as part of an advertising campaign for the episode ; the first was broadcast after " Pretty Much Dead Already " aired , while the second aired in January 2012 . A promotional image was released shortly thereafter , which featured Rick Grimes holding up a gun at Sophia . The first three minutes of " Nebraska " were leaked online .

The episode introduces two new characters to the series , portrayed by Aaron Munoz (Tony) and Michael Raymond @-@ James (Dave) . Although they were killed off in the episode , writer Robert Kirkman wanted to evoke a reaction that the characters would recur throughout the series . " With the casting of those two guys and everything involving that scene we were really trying to convince the audience that they were going to be new regulars , so the end would be that much more shocking . " Kirkman felt that Tony and Dave represent new threats and anxieties for the group . " I think this was a particularly good episode coming back because the two guys in the bar represent new threats and they are really just the tip of the iceberg , " he stated . " It 's really good to come back and be off of the farm and see that there are more dangerous things out there than the zombies . Things just keep getting worse from here . " . " The Regulator " by Clutch was the song used as the closing title sequence .

Johnson devised the scene in which Rick shot and killed Dave and Tony in a bar , and presented it to Reilly . Johnson sought to authorize man 's animalistic qualities during a state of disaster . Reilly contacted showrunner Glen Mazzara via cell phone , and wanted to add the scene to the episode 's script . " That was an incredible scene , " reflected Lincoln . " We were so lucky to get such cracking actors . And we didn 't play the problem , we just played the fact that this is a reunion of human beings . The tension is inherent in the fact that they encounter this other group . "

" Nebraska " contains a stunt sequence , in which Lori Grimes slams into a walker , causing her to swerve on the side of the road and overturn her car . Kirkman said of the scene : " I had nothing to do with it . But it did turn out really well . I love the trailers for this season where it 's like , " This is happening : People shooting guns ! Cars are flipping ! ' " .

= = Title reference = =

Tony shares with Rick the rumors survivor groups have circulated about safe destinations . Nebraska is one such rumored location , considered safe - Dave explains - because of its low population and numerous guns . When Rick refuses safe haven at the farm to Dave and Tony , Tony asks where else he would suggest they go . Rick 's reply , " I hear Nebraska 's nice " , triggers Tony and Dave to draw their guns on Rick , who shoots them first .

Nebraska was also notable as " Ground Zero " (i.e. , the target of) Russian nuclear bombs in the 1950s and 60s , in the event of a nuclear war . Therefore , the Federal Civil Defense Administration (FCDA) devised plans that would give civilians a chance to survive a nuclear war , and cartons of "

Nebraskits " (compressed biscuits made from grain) and dairy @-@ based milk bars , collectively designed to satisfy survivors ' nutritional requirements during a stay in a fallout shelter , were stored in fallout shelters throughout the United States .

== Reception ==

=== Ratings ===

" Nebraska " was originally broadcast on February 12 , 2012 in the United States on AMC . Upon airing , the episode garnered 8 @.@ 10 million viewers and a 4 @.@ 2 rating in the 18 ? 49 demographic , making it the most @-@ viewed episode of the series thus far . Following two encore presentations , total viewership accumulated to 10 @.@ 1 million . The episode attained 5 @.@ 4 million viewers in the 18 ? 49 demographic , while subsequently obtaining 4 @.@ 4 million viewers in the 25 ? 54 demographic ; this makes " Nebraska " the highest @-@ rated basic cable telecast in history demographically up until the airing of the second season finale , " Beside the Dying Fire " . The accolade was previously held by the second season premiere , " What Lies Ahead " , which received 4 @.@ 8 million spectators amongst adults in the 18 ? 49 demographic and 4 @.@ 2 million viewers in the 25 ? 54 demographic . " Nebraska " became the highest @-@ rated basic cable program of the day , as well as the most @-@ watched basic cable telecast of the week dated February 12 . Ratings and total viewership increased significantly from the previous installment , " Pretty Much Dead Already " , which garnered 6 @.@ 62 million viewers and a 3 @.@ 5 ratings amongst key adults between 18 and 49 .

" Nebraska " debuted in 122 countries worldwide in 35 languages . In the United Kingdom , the episode garnered 737 @,@ 200 viewers thus making it the most @-@ viewed television program of the week on FX . " Nebraska " attracted a 3 @.@ 05 rating in the 18 ? 49 demographic , translating to 558 @,@ 400 viewers . It subsequently becoming the highest @-@ rated telecast on pay television . Similarly , " Nebraska " achieved the highest demographic ratings out of any pay television program in Spain and Italy , where it attained a 3 @.@ 93 rating (193 @,@ 080 viewers) and a 3 @.@ 26 rating (215 @,@ 264) in the 18 ? 49 demographic , respectively . In Spain , the episode received 330 @,@ 000 viewers and aired simultaneously with an episode of Castle , ultimately outperforming it by 78 % . In Italy , it obtained 328 @,@ 180 spectators , denoting a 19 % increase from " What Lies Ahead " . " Nebraska " performed well demographically in several Latin American countries . In Chile , the episode garnered a 0 @.@ 78 in the 18 ? 49 demographic , thereby becoming the highest @-@ rated telecast on pay television there . It outperformed its timeslot in that respective demographic by 136 % . Similarly , " Nebraska " outperformed the timeslot average by 24 % in Argentina , ultimately attaining a 0 @.@ 88 rating amongst adults in the 18 ? 49 group . In Mexico and Colombia , the episode obtained a 2 @.@ 19 rating and a 1 @.@ 07 rating in the 18 ? 49 demographic , respectively .

== Critical response ==

" Nebraska " was widely lauded by television commentators . Alex Strachan of the Ottawa Citizen felt that the episode was very poignant , adding that various scenes were " beautifully acted " . In his A ? review , Verne Gay of Newsday opined that " Nebraska " accurately established the progression of a dark atmosphere for the second half of the season . Rawlings asserted that the episode gives the audience " plenty to chew on " , and that it nicely sets up a foundation for future storylines . The A.V. Club 's Zack Halden evoked similar sentiments ; " ' Nebraska ' doesn ? t entirely rectify this concern , but it ? s a solid hour of television , and a promising indication of where the series is headed . " Writing for IGN , Eric Goldman commended the installment 's sense of direction ; " I liked how this episode thrust us right back into it , and the understandable misery everyone was going through . [...] It was a mixture of chaos , sadness and zombie killing ? a mixture this show can do very well . " Concluding his review , Goldman issued " Nebraska " an eight out of ten , signifying a "

great " rating . The Atlantic 's Scott Meslow iterated : " ' Nebraska ' largely spends its first two acts reiterating things that happened earlier in the season , which in this case can somewhat be forgiven [...] . But just when it looks as though the series will devote another episode to wheel @-@ spinning , " Nebraska " surprises with a final act that serves as a reminder of why it 's too soon to give up on The Walking Dead . " Morgan Jeffrey of Digital Spy noted that it successfully addressed the concerns of fans about the episodic pace , while also raising expectations for succeeding installments . Not all reviewers were enthusiastic about the episode as the general consensus . Boston Herald journalist Mark Perigard affirmed that " Nebraska " was inferior to its predecessor , ultimately giving it a C + grade . Starlee Kine of New York wrote that it was " just one huge whirlpool of pointless drama , pulling everything in its path under with it " , while Entertainment Weekly writer Darren Franich thought that it was a setback from the previous episode .

Commentators criticized the character development of Lori Grimes . Goldman was angry upon viewing the crash sequence , avouching that it stunted any development intended for the scene . He stated , " The Walking Dead really needs to work on strengthening its female characters , and it doesn 't help when Lori has a major accident for such a stupid reason , getting distracted as she looked at a map while she drove . Yeah , yeah , there was a zombie in the road , but it could have been an animal [...] just as easily , and it really undercut the intended drama of her situation when it just seems so stupid that it happened at all . " Halden thought that the foundation set up for furthering storyline progression was contrived , while Aaron Rutkoff of The Wall Street Journal said that the premise of the dilemma made no sense . Jeffery was much more optimistic about the scene , ultimately evaluating it as a " jaw @-@ dropping moment " .

Critics adulated the character development of Rick Grimes , as well as the concluding scene of " Nebraska " . Kine appreciated the attempt to incorporate a suspenseful feeling in the series . She wrote : " Mazzara wants to infuse some horror movie suspense back into the show and his intentions are evident in this scene . Even though I personally didn 't find it that tense , I appreciated the effort . It means that the show is trying to expand and become about something bigger . " Los Angeles Times ' Gina McIntyre felt that Rick emulated Justified character Raylan Givens , and Halden commented that Rick was becoming " something of a badass " . Halden further praised the conclusion of the episode , calling it the series ' best scenes . " This is one of the best scenes I 've seen on the show so far , and it does any number of things that The Walking Dead has struggled with in the past , " he opined . " The tension builds naturally [...] , the dialogue has actual subtext , and there 's a clear sense of risk here that never pauses to telegraph itself . " Meslow affirmed that the scene was an achievement for the writers . " There are characters with new information [...] , " Meslow commented . " There is dialogue with subtext [...] . There is intriguing parallel plotting [...] . And there 's the surprisingly swift , violent dénouement , when Rick guns down Dave and Tony before they can do the same to him . It 's a necessary action , given the circumstances , but it also rings in an honest @-@ to @-@ god character change for our hero , who , having dispatched zombie Sophia , seems to have developed a new recognition of the ruthlessness and self @-@ centeredness it may take to survive in this new world order . " HitFix writer Alan Sepinwall appreciated James ' performance , and opined that the scene was " as suspenseful as any the show has ever done featuring actual monsters " .

Jeffrey complimented Bernthal 's performance , while Josh Wigler of MTV celebrated his scene with DeMunn . Wigler summated : " Jon Bernthal and Jeffrey DeMunn are very likely the finest actors on The Walking Dead , and their increasingly tense interactions have been a highlight in recent episodes . ' Nebraska ' was no exception , with Shane giving Dale an earful about ' Barnageddon ' and why he did what he had to do . "