

= What Lies Ahead =

" What Lies Ahead " is the first 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 October 16 , 2011 . It was written by series developer Frank Darabont (under the pseudonym Ardeth Bey) and series creator Robert Kirkman , and directed by Gwyneth Horder @-@ Payton and Ernest Dickerson . In this episode , Rick Grimes (Andrew Lincoln) leads his group toward Fort Benning , Georgia , but during an encounter with a herd of zombies , colloquially referred to as " walkers " , Sophia Peletier (Madison Lintz) goes missing , and a search group is formed .

" What Lies Ahead " was the last episode written by Darabont , who had been fired from the show in July 2011 . It was first previewed at the San Diego Comic @-@ Con International in San Diego on July 22 , 2011 . Production commenced in June 2011 . Unlike the first season , most of the principal photography for " What Lies Ahead " took place outside the city limits of Atlanta , Georgia ; filming took place in Smyrna and Henry County , Georgia . Before its first airing , several segments were announced and broadcast , including a six @-@ part internet series and a live after @-@ show hosted by Chris Hardwick .

" What Lies Ahead " was well received by television critics , who said it made a strong start to the season . Ratings were similarly positive : in the United States , it broke the record for the most @-@ watched drama in the history of basic cable , attaining 7 @.@ 3 million viewers . Worldwide , it averaged a 2 @.@ 0 rating in most television markets .

= = Plot = =

After the destruction of the Center for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta , Rick Grimes (Andrew Lincoln) and the survivors decide to travel to Fort Benning . Their group consists of Rick , his wife Lori Grimes (Sarah Wayne Callies) , his son Carl Grimes (Chandler Riggs) , Carol Peletier (Melissa McBride) and her daughter Sophia (Madison Lintz) , Shane Walsh (Jon Bernthal) , Dale Horvath (Jeffrey DeMunn) , Andrea (Laurie Holden) , Glenn Rhee (Steven Yeun) , Theodore " T @-@ Dog " Douglas (IronE Singleton) , and Daryl Dixon (Norman Reedus) . Before leaving Rick tries one last time to contact Morgan Jones (Lennie James) and tells him to be safe but doesn 't reach him . The group encounters a blockade of abandoned vehicles , and Dale 's RV breaks down . Dale and Glenn try to repair the vehicle , while the rest search for food , water , and clothing .

A large herd of walkers appears in the distance , prompting the survivors to seek shelter under abandoned vehicles . Andrea is trapped in the bathroom of an RV , where a walker discovers her . Dale hands her a screwdriver through an opening in the truck 's roof , and Andrea uses it to vanquish the walker . Meanwhile , T @-@ Dog slices his arm , attracting walkers to his trail of blood . Daryl rescues him by stabbing a walker , and they hide under nearby corpses , whose scent protects them . Two walkers spot Sophia hiding under a car and chase her into the woods . Rick pursues them , catches Sophia , and urges her to seek refuge in a hole near the riverbed while he distracts the walkers . Once Rick does so , Sophia escapes . While the others continue to clear the blockade of cars , Shane tells Lori he plans to leave the group on his own accord . Daryl and Rick fail to track Sophia down and the search is temporarily called off . A frantic and distraught Carol blames Rick for losing Sophia , exacerbating the guilt he already feels .

The search for Sophia resumes the next morning . Andrea argues with Dale , requesting her gun for the search , and claiming his decision to stay with her at the CDC deprived her of the choice to end her life on her own terms . The group arrives at a church and kills the three walkers inside . Afterward , Lori and Carol go inside to pray . Carol begs for forgiveness and for Sophia 's safe recovery . Andrea overhears Shane arguing with Lori about his plans to leave , and Andrea tells him she is willing to go with him . As the tension heightens , Rick questions his position as leader of the group . He also decides to go into the church to pray . At the altar , where a statue of Jesus stands , Rick asks God to give him a sign that he is making the right decisions .

Rick , Carl , and Shane discover a deer in the woods . Rick is initially in awe and takes this rare sighting as the sign he 'd petitioned God for , but as Carl approaches the deer a gun is fired and the

bullet passes through the deer and hits Carl 's stomach . With his tenuous faith shattered , Rick frantically rushes to his severely injured son .

= = Production = =

= = = Background = = =

An early concept for the season premiere by Frank Darabont never materialized , allegedly as a result of budget cuts .

This initial idea would have been an episode @-@ long flashback , illustrating the fall of Atlanta and centering on the mission of a doomed soldier who loses his team . Darabont was influenced by the American war film *Black Hawk Down* (2001) . " All they have to do is travel maybe a dozen blocks " , he said , " a simple journey , but what starts as a no @-@ brainer scenario goes from ' the city is being secured ' to ' holy shit , we 've lost control , the world is ending ' . " The episode would have introduced several characters , including Andrea , Dale , and Amy (Emma Bell) .

The concluding scene would have tied into the pilot episode , " Days Gone Bye " . Darabont says that the episode shows a soldier dying , hidden in a tank , after which there is a " shot @-@ for @-@ shot reprise from the first episode of the first season " . The idea was to tell the soldier 's story , because " every zombie has a story " . Samuel Witwer , who was cast as the soldier in the pilot for this backstory that would eventually unfold , was frustrated by the story 's rejection and questioned the need for such a budget cut .

Ultimately , the premiere written and filmed would begin after the events of Season 1 , although a brief flashback scene of Shane and Lori witnessing the fall of Atlanta from a distance would appear during the season .

= = = Filming = = =

At PaleyFest 2011 , it was announced that the second season of *The Walking Dead* would mainly be produced outside the city limits of Atlanta , Georgia . Most of the principal photography for " What Lies Ahead " took place in unincorporated Henry County , Georgia on June 5 ? 9 , 2011 , using a stretch of Georgia State Route 20 that was closed to traffic for the purpose . On June 8 , 2011 , the first promotional image was released . Darabont described the scene : " At this moment , I ? m standing on a stretch of post @-@ apocalypse interstate in Georgia , littered with abandoned cars ... " .

Principal photography for the episode resumed at the Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre in Smyrna , Georgia , which was depicted as the headquarters of the CDC . Several neighboring roads were closed for 4 hours for it . Production then moved to a nearby office park , where it commenced over a period of sixteen hours . The scene was later cut from the season premiere prior to its broadcast . In an interview with *Entertainment Weekly* , series creator Robert Kirkman said that after editing " there were certain things that just got left on the cutting room floor " .

= = = Editing = = =

" What Lies Ahead " is an extended premiere , the result of a decision to combine what were originally designed to be the first two episodes of the season . This led to much of the original first episode , titled " Miles Behind Us , " to be discarded , and is also the reason that the premiere contains dual credits for both writer and director .

" Miles Behind Us , " which was written by then @-@ showrunner Frank Darabont and directed by Gwyneth Horder @-@ Payton (an alumnus from the first season) , began immediately where the Season 1 finale left off , with the group departing the destroyed CDC . Soon after , Shane finds himself left behind when one of the tires of his jeep is punctured . Frantically trying to catch up on foot , he is nearly overrun by a multitude of walkers when he is rescued in the nick of time by the

rest of the group , Daryl having noticed Shane 's absence in the convoy . Shane reveals to Rick that despite their slow gait , the walkers do not seem to ever tire , knowledge that informs Rick 's fateful decision to temporarily leave Sophia .

The group decides to look for refuge with Guillermo 's gang at the Atlanta nursing home , last encountered in the episode " Vatos , " but arrive to find the location overrun with walkers and the entire group dead . After clearing out the area to spend the night , the group observes that the people were not killed by walkers , but execution @-@ style by human pillagers , in what was likely intended to be foreshadowing of The Governor .

Resolving that they will never again let their guard down , the group decides that they will try to reach Fort Benning , the alternative to the CDC proposed by Shane in the prior season . As in the final version of the episode , a narration scene with Rick speaking to Morgan on the walkie @-@ talkie was included , but was re @-@ shot with modified dialog that served to replace the above material , allowing the premiere to begin with the group putting Atlanta behind them . Rick sports his full sheriff 's wardrobe in the reshoot , whereas in the original version he is wearing the white undershirt he was wearing in the Season 1 finale .

" Miles Behind Us " was likely meant to end with Rick returning to the highway to break the news to Carol that Sophia went missing , while in the final version the group is informed by implication , with a search in the woods underway following a commercial break . It is estimated that only about fifteen minutes of the original first episode appears in the final cut , with the balance of the premiere consisting of the " second " episode that was written by Robert Kirkman and directed by Ernest Dickerson .

Many of the deleted scenes from " Miles Behind Us " appear as bonus material on the Season 2 DVD , though it does not include the events leading up to Shane 's rescue nor the original rooftop walkie @-@ talkie monologue . Footage can also be seen in the Comic @-@ Con trailer . The original title was seen on early marketing material for the season before the decision was made to " cannibalize " the original premiere into what would become " What Lies Ahead . " Following in the tradition established by the pilot , " Miles Behind Us " was taken from the title of the first issue of the second volume of the graphic novel .

In the Season 2 DVD commentary , Robert Kirkman and Glen Mazzara described the decision to retool the premiere in such a dramatic way as an amicable decision agreed upon between both the producers and AMC to make the premiere more of an " event " as well as to push the story forward . However , reports at the time had suggested that the situation was the result of strife between Frank Darabont and AMC , who deemed footage from the first episode " unusable , " with some speculating that the network was looking for a " pretense " to oust Darabont due to its ongoing conflict with the showrunner over budget cuts . Darabont was ultimately fired from the show only a few episodes into production (" Ardeth Bey , " as he is credited as co @-@ writer on the premiere , is a pseudonym) , and Horder @-@ Payton has directed no further episodes of the series .

Not knowing at the time that he would be referring to deleted scenes , Andrew Lincoln told Entertainment Weekly , " I remember going on set for the season premiere and seeing a couple of the prop guys , and they just looked at me as they gave me my gun and they went , ' You know , in this episode we kill more zombies than in the whole of Season 1 . ' They actually counted the kills ! And when it came time for the taking @-@ of @-@ the @-@ courtyard scene , that was just carnage . " He added , " It really wasn 't that well plotted . We just got sent zombies towards us and we had to improvise stabbing , so it was a bit touch @-@ and @-@ go from time to time . "

Similarly , Neil Brown Jr . , the actor who plays Guillermo , gave an interview where he obliquely referred to possible participation in the Season 2 premiere . This ultimately never made it to the screen .

= = = Marketing = = =

" What Lies Ahead " was heavily promoted in the months before its premiere . A four @-@ minute trailer was released at San Diego Comic @-@ Con International on July 22 , 2011 , and a one @-@ minute preview was broadcast on July 27 , 2011 , during the season @-@ 4 premiere of Breaking

Bad , in which Grimes kills two zombies with a rock . A six @-@ part internet series was broadcast on AMC on October 3 , 2011 . It showed the events before the zombie outbreak from the perspective of a woman named Hannah , who appeared in the first episode . On the same day , a screening of " What Lies Ahead " commenced at the Nokia Theatre in Los Angeles . After the premiere of the episode , a live after @-@ show titled Talking Dead was broadcast , hosted by Chris Hardwick .

This is one of the last episodes of The Walking Dead to feature Darabont as an executive producer and the showrunner . In July 2011 he stepped down as showrunner . Initial reports suggested that he was unable to adjust to the schedule of running a television series , but it was later confirmed that he was fired because of the show 's reduced budget and his strained relationship with the executives of AMC . In addition to the main cast , Melissa McBride reprised her role as Carol Peletier , IronE Singleton reprised his role as T @-@ Dog , and Madison Lintz reprised her role as Sophia Peletier . All three were promoted to the recurring cast , as was Norman Reedus .

= = Reception = =

= = = Ratings = = =

" What Lies Ahead " was first broadcast in the United States on October 16 , 2011 , on AMC . It received 7 @.@ 3 million viewers and attained a 4.8HH rating , breaking the record for the most @-@ watched drama in the history of cable television . It received the second highest viewership of the week ending October 16 , scoring higher than Jersey Shore but less than a 2011 NFL season game between the Detroit Lions and the Chicago Bears . " What Lies Ahead " achieved similar feats , attaining a 3 @.@ 8 rating ? translating to 4 @.@ 8 million viewers ? in the 18 ? 49 demographic , according to Nielsen ratings . In the 25 ? 54 demographic , it garnered 4 @.@ 2 million viewers . Total viewership after two encore presentations was 11 million viewers , an increase of 38 % over the series premiere , " Days Gone Bye " , which got 5 @.@ 35 million viewers on its initial airing . Viewership in the 18 ? 49 demographic showed similar increases , having nearly doubled from the series premiere .

The episode received a similar response in international markets . It premiered in 122 countries in thirty @-@ five languages , with a total viewership of 10 million and an average rating of 2 @.@ 0 in most metered television markets . It was first broadcast in Spain on October 17 , 2011 , to an estimated 432 @,@ 000 viewers , nearly 73 % of them in the 18 ? 49 demographic . Total viewership increased 411 % from the previous season 's premiere . The episode 's first UK broadcast received 693 @,@ 300 viewers and achieved a 2 @.@ 204 rating in the 18 ? 34 demographic . An estimated 439 @,@ 800 viewers were in the 18 ? 49 demographic , making it the second highest rated show of the week on FX . Total viewership in Mexico increased by 30 % from the previous season 's premiere , translating to 296 @,@ 090 . It became the highest @-@ rated program of the night on pay television . It was also the highest @-@ rated pay television program of the night in its timeslot in Colombia , attaining 296 @,@ 950 viewers and achieving a 2 @.@ 57 rating in the 18 ? 49 demographic , or 92 @,@ 240 viewers . In Italy , it was the highest @-@ rated program amongst men in the 18 ? 49 demographic and the second most viewed program in its timeslot .

The episode 's performance sparked reactions from several executives of the series ' broadcasting affiliates . Hernan Lopez , CEO of Fox International Channels (FIC) , commented , " The Walking Dead has gone from phenomenon to pandemic . The numbers that came in [that] week combined with the astounding launch results in the US [told] us that the virus is now out of control . " Charlie Collier , president of AMC , felt that The Walking Dead was a rarity that successfully reached its core audience as well as broadening its fanbase , saying , " That The Walking Dead is now the most watched drama in the history of basic cable is staggering , just like our zombies . "

= = = Critical response = = =

" What Lies Ahead " was met with general acclaim from television critics . Gina McIntyre of the Los Angeles Times felt it was the series ' best installment , calling it " thrilling " and " heart @-@ wrenching " . Similar sentiments were echoed by Josh Jackson of Paste , who gave the episode an 8 @. @ 8 out of 10 ? a " commendable " rating . Darren Franich of Entertainment Weekly liked what he called the " casual " atmosphere of the opening scene and described the ending as " daring " . IGN 's Eric Goldman felt the episode got the second season off to a strong start ; he gave the episode 8 out of 10 ? a " great " rating .

Hank Stuever of The Washington Post found the pace of this episode " sleeker " than that of previous ones , adding , " This has the subtle but immediate effect of making The Walking Dead less predictable and more frightening . " Derek Boeckelmann of Daily Nexus commended the episode , deeming it " frighteningly good " . He praised the performances of Holden and Reeder and described the former as one of the show 's strongest characters . David Chute of Indiewire approved of the special effects and commended the highway sequence , saying , " a sequence in which the humans hide under the wrecked cars in a freeway pileup , able to see only the feet of the flesh eaters shuffling past , is a classic nail @-@ biter . " David Hickley of Daily News gave " What Lies Ahead " three out of five stars and expressed the view : " The Walking Dead may be under new management , but it seems to have kept its rhythm , moving easily between bursts of intense violence and long stretches of psychological sparring . " The Hollywood Reporter writer Tim Goodman concurred . " It 's 90 minutes of skill " , he wrote , " bringing viewers back into the story without missing a beat , adding immediate depth to characters , ratcheting up suspense [...] , plus expanding the emotional palette of the series . " In his 3 @. @ 5 @- @ star review , John Griffiths of Us Weekly liked the personal dynamics almost as much as the bloodthirstiness .

Some critics were less enthusiastic about the episode . Zack Handlen of The A.V. Club gave it a B + grade ; he praised the horror sequences in the episode , but called the character development " tepid " . " At the very least " , he wrote , " the show does a fine job working within its restrictions . There are a handful of absolutely top @-@ notch set pieces in [' What Lies Ahead '] , starting with an attack on the highway that seems to go on forever . " Alex Hanno of The Tufts Daily felt that , although entertaining , the plot lacked " a much needed rush of energy " . He gave it 3 @. @ 5 out of 5 stars . Likewise , Nick Venable of Cinema Blend wrote : " I won 't say I got bored , but much of the episode left me unmoved , and far less tense than I should have been . "

= = = Awards = = =

This episode won a Creative Arts Emmy Award on the 64th Primetime Emmy Awards , for Outstanding Prosthetic Makeup for a Series , Miniseries , Movie or a Special . It was the second award in this category for the series , after Gregory Nicotero and his team were awarded for the first season premiere , " Days Gone Bye " .