

THE DEAD ZONE

"SPEAK NOW"

First Draft Outline

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TEASER

*INT. CHAPEL - NIGHT*

*A wedding is in progress. The bride and groom are lovely, flanked by groomsmen and bridesmaids (including Sarah); the bride holds the hand of a chubby four year old flower girl. Everyone seems happy. Johnny sits in the audience, watching the proceedings. He seems unsettled. Not happy for the happy couple. As the minister gets to the "speak now or forever hold your peace" part Johnny suddenly LEAPS to his feet. "I object!" All eyes turn to Johnny and we CUT TO -*

*INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT*

*Johnny, roused from a vision, is shaking hands with the future groom, BRYAN. Johnny is at the rehearsal dinner for the happy couple, and meeting Bryan for the first time. We play some small talk between them - Sarah is a friend of the bride, MARIA. Walt couldn't come because of a prior work thing, so Johnny is filling in as her escort. Bryan makes a remark that he's pleased Johnny could be here for the big event. Off Johnny, wishing he were anywhere but here...*

MAIN TITLES

ACT ONE

*INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT*

*Johnny pulls Sarah aside and tells her he's had a vision that he's going to stop the wedding. Sarah doesn't understand why that would be - Bryan and Maria are so perfect for each other. And Maria loves Bryan's daughter-from-a-previous-relationship, BRIANNA, like she was her very own. Sarah is concerned. Maria has been through some hard times and now she's finally found happiness - what*

could be wrong with that? Johnny doesn't know, he just knows he must be having the vision for a reason.

Johnny, in an attempt to suss out more information, glad hands a little with the guests. We'll set up some amusing wedding runners -  
DANCING GUY - He's shy and withdrawn now, but after a few drinks at the reception he'll be busting a move -- and wrenching his back.

SHY GIRL - She has a crush on a completely inappropriate fellow, not noticing that her best "guy friend" is the one who's perfect for her.

A LECHEROUS MAN - Hitting on all the women in the place and never getting a nibble because he's coming on too strong.

Johnny returns to Sarah to tell her that he's learned nothing, but they're interrupted by a NOSY WEDDING GUEST (a distant aunt of the bride, just happy to be invited anywhere and wanting to know everything about everything). Thinking that Johnny and Sarah are "together," she wants all the details of how they met, etc. Some amusingly awkward moments as Johnny and Sarah try to explain their complicated relationship to this busybody, which culminates in the arrival of Walt. He's managed to get out of his previous obligation and be here for the wedding tomorrow. Johnny, rattled by the busybody and the objecting vision, is pleased that Walt is here to be Sarah's escort, and he tells Sarah and Walt he's going to leave. Maybe he *does* have the visions for a reason, but he can't see how stopping the wedding of this clearly happy couple can be of any help to anyone. If he goes now, maybe he can forever hold his peace.

Johnny is inches from a clean getaway when the bride, Maria, steps up to introduce herself. Johnny tells her that he's leaving since Walt is here, and she invites him to stay anyway - her cousin Betsy had to cancel at the last minute so there's a free place at the reception. Johnny demurs. Maria tells him that at the very least he has to take a wedding favor and hands him a small box. Johnny opens it. Inside is a keychain. He takes it out, triggering -

A VISION

*Maria, carrying groceries and a bag of videos, the keychain dangling from her fingers, is in the hallway of a small apartment complex. She reaches a door and knocks. Calls in to someone named Jeff to open up. When there's no response, she uses a key to unlock the door and pushes it open. Johnny follows Maria inside. The apartment is a mess. Dirty dishes and clothes strewn about - whoever lives here can barely take care of himself. Johnny watches as Maria sets down the bags and calls out to Jeff again. No answer. Now she's worried. Moves into the bedroom. There, Jeff lies on his bed, his body still. Maria rushes to him, but he's already dead. An empty bottle of pills lies beside him along with a note, "Forgive me." Maria is distraught.*

Johnny comes out of the vision. Tells Maria that he'll take her up on her invitation to stay if it's still open. Maria says that it is.

Johnny finds Walt and Sarah and tells them about his vision. Sometime in the future, Maria will be devastated when she finds someone named Jeff has killed himself in his apartment. Sarah is shocked. Asks Johnny if he's absolutely sure. Johnny says that he is. Sarah tells Johnny that "Jeff" is Maria's old fiancée, but that he's been dead for three years. Maria, Jeff and Bryan were all in the Peace Corps together in a small village in Sierra Leone when rebels attacked. All Sarah knows is that Maria and Bryan escaped, and were told later by the government that Jeff had been killed.

Clearly, the information they got was incorrect, and Jeff is still alive. Somewhere. And somehow, stopping the wedding is linked to Jeff's eventual suicide. Johnny, Sarah and Walt decide they need more information, but just then the dinner breaks up and everyone starts to scatter. They agree to reconvene in the morning and plan a strategy.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

Johnny, Sarah and Walt meet. Looks like activities are planned for the wedding guests - girls are off to brunch. The boys are going to the hotel court for a game of

basketball. Sarah agrees to get what information she can out of Maria about her relationship with Jeff, while Johnny and Walt deal with Bryan.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. BASKETBALL COURT/INT. BRIDAL SUITE - DAY

Sarah finds a quiet moment to talk with Maria. We learn that Maria didn't even want a big wedding - her parents insisted. She and Bryan just wanted to run off and get married under an oak tree somewhere... Sarah probes Maria for information about Jeff, but Maria is reluctant to give her any details about his "death." It's not something she talks about. Sarah finds herself in the difficult position of trying to pump her friend for details, using her own painful past experiences to pave the way. Maria tells Sarah that she'll always love Jeff. She still wears the locket he gave her when they were eighteen, and she and Bryan are both still close to Jeff's parents. Maria points out an OLDER WOMAN across the room and tells Sarah that she's Jeff's mother.

At the basketball game, Johnny doesn't play but still manages to find a way to touch some of the guys. Mostly what he gets is information about our runners -

DANCING GUY - He's been practicing in his room. Hopes to impress his wife with his new moves.

SHY BOY - Wants to tell his "friend" that he cares for her, but doesn't know how to do it.

LECHEROUS GUY - Is really looking for true love, but can't seem to let down his guard and treat a woman like a human being instead of a sex object.

Finally, as the game is breaking up Johnny gets Bryan to toss him the ball, which triggers -

A VISION

*Bryan, Maria and Jeff are in Sierra Leone, playing basketball with the local kids. Jeff and Maria are in love and newly engaged. Bryan is happy for his friends. We establish that Jeff works as a paramedic back home. All seems right with the world. Then there's a rumbling sound,*

*and tanks roll into the village. Soldiers round up the villagers and the Americans. Several people are shot. Jeff causes a distraction, enabling Bryan and Maria to escape. Johnny watches as the soldiers land on Jeff and drag him inside a small hut. Johnny starts to follow so he can see Jeff's fate, but the vision abruptly cuts out.*

Back in the present, Johnny shakes off the vision as Bryan encourages him to shoot the ball. Johnny does. *Swish.*

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

Johnny, Walt and Sarah reconvene. Walt tells Johnny that he learned Bryan and Maria didn't get together until about a year ago. Bryan was there for her, helping her over Jeff's "death," and they fell in love. She's very close to Bryan's daughter. Feels like a second mother to the girl. It's gonna be pretty heartbreaking for everyone if this wedding doesn't come off.

All three of them feel the weight of their responsibility here. Sarah tells Johnny about Jeff's parents being at the wedding and Johnny wonders if they might have something of Jeff's he could touch. Maybe it'll give him some guidance.

INT. HOTEL BAR - DAY

Johnny finds Jeff's parents and strikes up a conversation. They tell him about their son, and how much they miss him. But they're also happy for Bryan and Maria. If Maria couldn't be with Jeff, they're glad she's making a life for herself with his best friend. Still, they wish they knew what happened to their son. They hope he didn't suffer. Jeff's mom carries a memento (TBD). Knowing about Johnny's "abilities," she lets him handle it, hoping he can tell her what happened to Jeff after Maria and Bryan escaped. The object triggers -

A VISION

*Johnny sees that Jeff has been kept alive by the rebel soldiers for the past three years. While the war still rages they need someone with medical training to patch up their wounded soldiers, and Jeff's paramedic training suits them fine. Jeff is physically and mentally holding it together, but he's obviously desperate to get out.*

Back in reality, Johnny hands the object back to Jeff's mother. Doesn't know what to tell her, so he lies and tells her he didn't see anything.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Frustrated, Johnny meets with Walt and Sarah. They know now for sure that Jeff is alive, but there are still so many unanswered questions. Walt steps into the other room to call Purdy and see if he can't pull some strings to find Jeff's current location through his contacts at the state department.

With Jeff's rescue in the works, Johnny and Sarah discuss the situation at hand - do we stop the wedding or not? Johnny wants to tell Maria that Jeff is alive. He feels strongly that Maria is still in love with Jeff, and that if she knew he were coming home she would not go through with the wedding. Sarah disagrees. She didn't know Jeff, but she's known both Maria and Bryan for two years and she's never seen a couple more in love. Everyone is so glad that they got together. And Maria and Brianna have bonded - Johnny's not just talking about stopping a wedding, he'll be breaking up a family. The conversation gets heated between them. This whole situation has brought up certain issues about their own pasts that they'd rather not remember.

Johnny finally asks Sarah - at your wedding to Walt, if someone told you I would wake up in six years, would you have waited for me? Sarah doesn't know what to say. Walt appears in the doorway. Tells them pointedly that if he were Bryan, he'd sure want to know. Off the three of them, still unsure what to do -

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. HOTEL BAR - DAY

It's the cocktail hour before the wedding. Johnny, Walt and Sarah are dressed in their black tie finery but still no decision has been reached. They all agree on one thing: Johnny needs to see a future vision in order to know what to do. How will Maria react when she learns Jeff is alive? What will Jeff be like when he comes home? Let's not forget, the first vision Johnny had was of a man so depressed he had killed himself. Was that because Maria

had married another man, or because of his experiences in the jungle?

Sarah remembers the locket that Maria wears, and tells the men that she's pretty sure it will tell them what they need to know. She heads off to "borrow" it from Maria as we play a moment between Johnny and Walt. Although the three of them have tried to move on from the events of the last couple of years, it's clear that a lot of feelings remain unresolved.

INT. CHAPEL ANTEROOM - DAY

Maria is getting ready. Other bridesmaids mill about. Sarah makes an excuse as to why she's been absent from the festivities. She "notices" that Maria's locket is a little tarnished, and offers to clean it before the ceremony. Maria reluctantly parts with it, telling Sarah that she'll need it back before the wedding begins. Although Jeff is gone, she feels closer to him when she wears the locket. Sarah falters - perhaps Johnny is right and she *is* still in love with Jeff...

INT. HOTEL BAR - DAY

In the crowded room, Johnny is jostled by our amusing runners.

SHY BOY - He's planning to leave town next month. Johnny tells him to confess to his friend how he feels first. Who knows - maybe she feels that same way about him...

LECHEROUS GUY - Johnny steers him toward a seemingly Lecherous Woman who's also putting on an act while looking for true love.

Sarah returns with the locket and hands it to Johnny, triggering -

A VISION

*But it's not what Johnny expected. The vision, as Sarah fingers touch his palm, is of the two of them before his accident, planning their own wedding. A small affair. Outside under an oak tree... We see a happy couple, madly in love and completely unaware of the tragic circumstances to come.*



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Johnny emerges from the vision. Walt and Sarah want to know what he saw and he tells them - it was a vision of him and Sarah. Walt is clearly unhappy. Moreover, what does it mean? What are they supposed to do? They still don't know, but the guests are filing into the chapel and the wedding march is beginning to play. Johnny takes Sarah's arm. He thinks the vision is telling him that true love should win here.

INT. CHAPEL - NIGHT

The wedding has begun. Sarah stands beside the bride. Johnny sits in the audience. He's nervous. Unsure. The minister gets the "speak now" part and the moment of silence hangs heavy in the air. We're on Johnny, about to force himself to his feet when we hear a female voice, "I object."

It's Sarah. Maria and Bryan turn to her. What the hell are you doing? Sarah steps forward. Tells them quietly that Jeff is still alive. They react. Jeff's parents overhear and react as well. Bryan demands to know how Sarah has gotten this information and she meekly gestures back at Johnny. All eyes turn to look at the disruptive, "psychic."

INT. ANTEROOM - NIGHT

Johnny, Sarah, Walt, Maria, Bryan, Brianna and Jeff's parents have all gathered to discuss this problem. Bryan is skeptical, and very angry. Maria doesn't know what to think. Jeff's parents want to know why Johnny lied to them earlier, and more importantly where their son is right now. Walt assures them that they have people working on finding Jeff. Brianna is inconsolable. She doesn't understand why any of this is happening. Bryan tells Maria that he loves her and will support whatever she decides, but it's clear his heart is breaking too. He loved Jeff like a brother, but he can't bear the idea that Jeff being alive means his own relationship with Maria might be ending. Maria puts her foot down. The wedding will go on. Right now. Bryan tells Johnny that he'd appreciate it if he'd leave before the reception.

INT. CHAPEL - NIGHT

The wedding redux. Johnny stands in the vestibule with his coat on, ready to go when the ceremony ends. But when the minister gets to the "speak now" part it's Maria who can't go through with it. Bursting into tears, she flees the chapel.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

An hour or so later, Johnny, Walt and Sarah are packing to leave and discussing what's happened (and how they've screwed up) when there's a knock on the door. It's Maria, and she's furious. She doesn't understand why they've given her this information now, and what they want her to do. She feels disloyal no matter what she decides, and it's killing her. Johnny and Sarah assure Maria that they debated for over a day before they told her, and Sarah admits that, having been in a similar situation, she would have wanted to know.

Maria knows she needs to make up her mind what to do, but she's too confused to think straight. Johnny assures her that her decision has already been made. She just doesn't know what it is yet. Maria asks for his help - if he could vision her future she'd know better what to do today.

Johnny takes Maria's hands, triggering -

A VISION

*Maria and Jeff stand in front of a small jet on an airstrip. A car waits for them several feet away. Jeff, scruffy and unkempt, has just gotten off the plane. Johnny watches as they talk quietly, but we can't hear what they're saying over the roar of the plane's engine. It looks like a reconciliation, and Johnny can't help but feel a certain amount of satisfaction and happiness - true love won out.*

*In reality, Johnny tells Maria what he's seeing as it happens. Maria is happy that Jeff is home, but wonders where Bryan is...*

*In the vision, Jeff holds Maria's gloved hands. She takes the glove off her left hand and shows him her wedding ring as Bryan emerges from the car. Although we can't hear what they're saying, we see the news hit Jeff. Then he nods, understanding. They hug.*

*Johnny described the scene to Maria, who begins to cry. She'll always love Jeff, but she's not the girl she was when they were together. She loves Bryan now and she wants to marry him.*

EXT. HOTEL GROUNDS - DAY

The next morning, Maria and Bryan are having their "simple" wedding beneath an oak tree of the grounds. Maria's mother isn't too pleased with the casual air, but everyone else thinks it's terrific. Maria wears a lovely dress, and the wedding party is in comfortable clothes.

DANCING GUY bemoans the fact that there won't be a reception, and Johnny tells him that he's far better off.

SHY BOY is there with her guy friend. Overcome by the happiness around them, he takes this moment to confess his feelings. It works like a charm. This new take charge attitude is very attractive to her.

LECHEROUS MAN and WOMAN are blissfully happy making overt comments to each other that are clearly more about their feelings than sex.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

The gang is readying to go. Bags packed, waiting for transport home. Maria and Bryan approach Johnny and Sarah to tell them that they've canceled the honeymoon in Fiji and they're heading back to Sierra Leone to pressure the consulate to look for Jeff. They're going to bring him home.

Jeff's parents find Johnny and thank him for helping their son. Jeff's dad hugs Johnny, triggering -

A VISION

*Of Johnny in the hallway of a small apartment complex. He's carrying videos and a pizza. Johnny knocks on the door and it's opened by a smiling Jeff. Clearly, Maria and Bryan going back to get him has made a world of difference. He's not suicidal, he's getting his life back together. And although it took some time to get over it, he's glad that Maria and Bryan are happy together. One day, he'll have a relationship like theirs, he's sure of it. But in the meantime, he and Johnny are going to watch a movie and shoot the breeze.*

Back in reality, Johnny tells Jeff's parents that their son will be okay. They leave as Sarah takes Johnny aside. Looks like they did the right thing. Maria and Bryan were meant to be together and true love has won. This time. Sarah reminds Johnny that he never got an answer to his question the other night. If she had known at her wedding that Johnny would wake up six years later, she would have waited for him. Then she smiles at the irony.. "Only you weren't there to tell me."

THE END