

THE DEAD ZONE
“OLD DEAD”
Beat Sheet
by Loren Segan & Christina Lynch
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Theme: what happens when you punish the people you love the most.

TEASER:

INT. CAR – Johnny agrees to accompany Sarah and JJ to visit Sarah’s father at the local retirement home that he moved into the day before. Bruce has Physical Therapy patients there and recommended this particular facility. Sarah, emotionally on edge, hurries Johnny and JJ up. They roll their eyes at each other: Sarah’s obsession with punctuality has driven them both crazy for years. We learn that Sarah’s Mom passed away nearly 15 years previous and her father has been living by himself in a Florida condominium. But he’s now had a second stroke and, although mostly recovered, his doctors suggest he can no longer live alone and he’s steadfastly refused to live with Sarah, another thorn in the rosebush of their relationship since Mom’s untimely death. We get a sense that Sarah has never spoken to either Walt or Johnny about the specifics of that time in her life.

INT. FOXGLOVE - Arrival at Foxglove, a postcard perfect, Stephen King-like facility. Wide front porches, green grass and white picket fences. We meet Sarah’s feisty father, MARTY, retirement homeowner MARY JANE STAMPWELL and part-time rocker/orderly/gravedigger SPYDER. At first JJ is shy with Marty, whom he doesn’t really know, until the kid blurts out “*what happens when you die?*” Sarah is mortified. But Marty is amused by the kid’s bold personality as the old man and the boy begin to bond, something Sarah has been unable to do since her mother’s death.

Johnny also takes the time to get reacquainted with Marty, whom he hasn’t seen in years. Marty has a bit of a memory problem, mixing up Walt and Johnny as Sarah’s husband. When they shake hands, Johnny gets a MEMORY FLASH from when he and Sarah were young teens—Sarah’s parents were chaperoning them to a movie. Two things (whose importance we don’t yet understand) come through in the flash: how much Sarah’s father adored his wife, and that Sarah was always late for everything. Johnny’s amused and intrigued by the memory: Sarah’s never late to anything; in fact she’s always annoyingly on time. What’s that all about? Another part of this particular mystery to be solved.

While making a quick stop in the bathroom before they leave, Johnny reaches to turn on the faucet and gets a startling VISION of *a dead woman lying in an open field*. He comes out of the bathroom and finds himself face-to-face with the very same sweet looking little old lady – except she’s very much alive – at least for now.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE:

INT. FOXGLOVE – Marty is stunned when he sees the old woman from Johnny’s death vision. He introduces her as BEBE ANDERSON. It turns out Bebe’s husband served in Marty’s old Army unit. The couples had been friends, and now her husband is gone. It seems to lift the old man’s spirits to make a connection from his younger days. Johnny tries to act natural, although for him, Bebe is a walking, talking corpse.

As Sarah and Johnny are leaving, they run into Bruce, who’s walking an old man who has recently had a hip transplant. Johnny mentions how well he seems to be getting around and the old man responds, *“I just hope it’s fast enough to stay a step ahead of the Shadow Man.”* At first they all laugh, but it’s quickly clear that he wasn’t joking. Sarah asks what he’s talking about and the guy tells her about the legendary ‘Shadow Man’ that walks the halls of the home late at night, spooking away any poor soul unlucky enough to cross his path. It would be funny if he weren’t so damn serious about it. Bruce just shrugs his shoulders and continues walking with his patient. Johnny and Sarah, although slightly bothered by the man’s tone, brush it off as the overactive imagination of an aging mind.

INT. SHERIFF STATION - Johnny tells Walt about his vision of Bebe turning up dead. Walt says, *“Everyone who goes to live there, dies there.”* He asks Walt about Sarah’s relationship with her father. Johnny remembers them as a close-knit family, but admits there are a lot of things he lost track of after his accident. Walt suggests Johnny stick close to Marty if he thinks something might happen to Bebe, otherwise he can’t very well put a 24-hour guard on every resident of the home. Besides, Sarah could use the moral support as it relates to her father. Johnny agrees.

INT. FOXGLOVE – Sarah, JJ and Johnny return the next day but Marty claims to be too busy to see them, this time playing cards with some of the residents, including Bebe. He seems to be content, yet Johnny hears from Bruce that Marty was sitting alone by the window a few minutes earlier. He only got ‘busy’ when he saw their car pulled up out front. Marty’s obviously lying to Sarah. But why?

Finally, Johnny engineers a moment between Marty and JJ as he mentions the old man’s Korean War adventures—JJ perks up. War stories? Marty begins to tell JJ a story. Sarah and Johnny step outside the room for a moment. She’s happy that JJ and Marty are connecting, but Johnny can see there’s a part of her that wishes it was her. Johnny suggests that the road might be blocked from both sides, but Sarah bristles at the comment and suggests he stay out of ‘family’ business. Sarah walks off to unpack a few of her father’s things brought over from the house.

Meanwhile, Bruce enlists Johnny to fill in at Live Entertainment night, it seems the line dancer’s truck broke down and they can’t make it. Apparently the old folks really look forward to this night every week. Johnny reluctantly agrees to put on a “little demonstration” of his psychic gifts. At first he gets a couple of visions we don’t see about a few of the old folks, says things about their lives that make them smile, then gets

another disturbing VISION of *Bebe dead in a field*. An old man asks whether Johnny ‘sees’ him encountering the ‘Shadow Man’ anytime soon? Several others join in the questioning about the fabled intruder. They all seem seriously concerned, until Mary Jane steps in and saves Johnny. Johnny warns Bruce not to let Bebe take any long walks by herself because “*she’s going to die in a field.*”

INT. JOHNNY’S HOUSE - The next day, Johnny gets the news from Sarah that Bebe was found dead in her room before breakfast.

ACT TWO:

INT. FOXGLOVE - Johnny arrives at Foxglove to see that Bebe did not die in a field the way he saw her. She passed quietly in her bed of heart failure. Her doctor is there and Johnny hears him say that this was inevitable: Bebe was a walking timebomb. Johnny assumes that he changed the future (where Bebe was going to die) by telling Bruce, but Bruce admits he never spoke or saw Bebe after he and Johnny talked. Whispers rise among the residents that the Shadow Man took her. Marty is deeply upset by Bebe’s death.

EXT. CEMETERY - Arriving at Bebe’s funeral, Johnny learns that Spyder, the home’s lead orderly, also works at the funeral home and cemetery, apparently it takes at least two minimum-wage jobs to make a living in this town. Johnny overhears Spyder say his bandmates told him they’re gonna get a new drummer unless he gets a new drum kit. He swears he will with the cash infusion he’s gonna get later tonight.

During the funeral, Johnny gets another VISION: *dead Bebe in the field (why is she still in the field, he wonders?) plus a seemingly dead African American man lying face up underwater in a shallow stream a few feet away from her. Johnny also notices that they each have a 3-digit number stenciled on the inside of their right forearm...* Johnny comes out of the vision wondering what the hell is going on.

While at the cemetery, Johnny joins Sarah and visits her mother’s grave. Marty has abruptly declined the offer from Sarah and returned to the home. While at her gravesite, Johnny gets a past VISION, from days after the mother’s funeral of *Marty crying alone at the grave. Sarah, wanting to ease his pain, tentatively approaches, whispering “Daddy...?” Marty stops and growls: “Go away! I want to be alone.” Sarah, cut to the bone, runs off.* Johnny flashes out of the vision as Sarah kneels quietly on the grass beside the granite headstone bearing her mother’s name.

INT. FOXGLOVE - Back at the home, Marty is having a hard time handling Bebe’s sudden death—Sarah doesn’t understand. Johnny wonders if maybe her sudden death has brought up the pain of her mother’s passing. Johnny doesn’t remember the details surrounding Sarah’s mother’s death, it happened when they were in college at a moment when Sarah had pulled away from Johnny. He asks Sarah if her father really grieved at

the time. *“He was too angry,”* says Sarah. Johnny coaxes: angry? Sarah says curtly: *“He believes that I killed my mother.”* She walks away, leaving Johnny stunned.

Johnny has a moment alone with Marty. He thinks Marty should open up with Sarah. Marty doesn't take to Johnny's "head shrinking-touchy-feely-unmanly meddling." He lashes out *“what do you know about my family?”* But Marty does think there's something 'unnatural' about Bebe's death. If Johnny wants to help, he should figure out who the so-called "Shadow Man" is. Johnny is even beginning to wonder if there's any truth to this mythic demon that steals elderly souls in the dead of night. After all, everything he's seen so far is unexplained.

Johnny goes looking for JJ, when he sees a photo on the wall of the very same African-American man from his previous death vision (the man was under water in a small stream). Johnny asks Mary Jane about the man and learns that he was indeed a resident of the home who died three months earlier. The plot thickens!

Off this bizarre, unexplained coincidence and amped up by Marty's suspicions, Johnny goes to Bebe's room to do some Dead Zone investigating. While searching the room he has a VISION: *a dark figure passes by in the shadowy hallway, Bebe dead in the field again, the African American man in the stream, and now Marty, also dead in the woods and oddly propped up against a tree – a similar looking 3-digit number stenciled across the inside of his right forearm!* Johnny comes out of this vision not sure of anything or anybody residing in this seemingly haunted or at least cursed retirement home.

ACT THREE:

Out of the vision, Sarah enters, troubled to see her father so undone and seemingly more distant than ever. Johnny gets a VISION off Sarah: *Sarah's in college, supposed to pick up her Mom at home for a shopping trip. Sarah's late as usual, as her mother checks the clock and then stumbles and falls to the floor... dead. When Sarah gets to the house, she discovers the body and calls 911. Sarah's father arrives shortly after and, realizing what's happened, he collapses in the doorway... A young PARAMEDIC comments that the woman had a massive heart attack. At least she didn't suffer—death was instantaneous.*

Johnny tells Sarah about Marty's suspicions about the Shadow Man and Johnny's subsequent vision of the shadowy figure and the dead old people in the wooded area, including... Marty. Sarah is stunned by this revelation. Johnny also tells Sarah how he saw what happened to her mother. *“It wasn't your fault. Your mother died almost instantly. I saw it. Even if you had been there, you couldn't have saved her.”* But Sarah just looks at him: *“But I wasn't there, was I? And nothing can ever change that.”*

Despite Sarah's emotional distance from her father, she's not going to abandon him to any danger, and she and Johnny try to convince Marty to leave the home and come to Sarah's place. Marty refuses to go, which hurts Sarah even more, she doesn't care what

Marty wants, she'll take him by force, if necessary. It escalates, Marty threatens to call the police, Sarah points out her husband is the police, and finally Mary Jane intervenes and reminds Sarah that legally she can't take Marty out of the home against his will. As Mary Jane helps Marty back to his room, she overhears Johnny tell Bruce about the dark figure he saw in his vision; we see a flicker of something on her face...

INT. SARAH'S HOUSE - Sarah is really upset about leaving Marty at Foxglove, but Walt assures her that he'll keep an eye on the place. He reminds her that Johnny himself is not sure exactly what he's seeing. JJ is angry because Sarah forced him to leave Marty alone where the Shadow Man lives. Walt tells him there's no such thing as a Shadow Man and sends him off to bed. Sarah and Walt have an argument about her obsessive punctuality that turns into a heart-to-heart with Walt about how if only she could turn back time... She has never been late to anything since the day her mother died. Walt says she has to forgive herself, and Sarah asks how can she when her father hasn't? **(If this episode is going to air before Saved, we can have some talk here about their having another baby.)**

Unbeknownst to Sarah and Walt, JJ slips out of the house to go find Marty...

INT. FOXGLOVE – JJ sneaks into the home to investigate what he has overheard Sarah tell Walt about the “Shadow Man” He tells Marty he's there to help him. Marty is touched by his grandson's bravery and compassion. Taking a page from the Korean War stories Marty shared with him, JJ convinces his grandfather that they should take turns watching the hallway, waiting for a glimpse of the soul-snatching demon.

INT. FUNERAL HOME - Meanwhile, Johnny and Bruce return to the funeral home/cemetery, troubled by his repeated visions of Bebe's body in a field, convinced that her body must have been taken elsewhere post-mortem. Bruce is not comfortable with anything having to do with death. *“Then you're really not going to enjoy this...”*

In the storeroom, Johnny finds Spyder's musical instrument catalogs—drum sets circled. He and Bruce dig up Bebe's casket. As Johnny suspected, the casket is empty—which he takes as proof that his visions of Bebe were not wrong after all. But then the funeral home director arrives with Spyder, *“Of course it's empty, her body was cremated according to her wishes. The burial was a ceremony for family and friends.”* He says he has Bebe's ashes in his office, but won't allow Johnny to touch them.

Walt arrives after being called by the funeral director. Johnny explains what they were trying to do as Walt convinces the director that no harm was done. After everyone leaves, Johnny returns with an increasingly nervous Bruce as they break into the funeral home and touch Bebe's ashes, but Johnny doesn't get any answer concerning her death, just some crazy POV of somebody or something CHASING A TENNIS BALL. He concludes that the ashes are those of a DOG!

Now even more determined to uncover the truth, Johnny goes to the place where dog ashes come from: the Dog Shelter. It's closed, but they do, however, discover that one of the part-time employees is the industrious Spyder. They track Spyder to the dingy apartment where he lives. Spyder's distinctive band van is just pulling out. Johnny tells Bruce to follow it.

After a long trip along windy country roads, Spyder's van disappears behind tall, ominous gates that clang shut before Bruce and Johnny can follow. They try to call Walt, but are out of range. If they leave now, they may miss catching Spyder red-handed. They park nearby and find a way to scale the tall fence with barbed wire on top. There are No Trespassing signs everywhere. It's very creepy. What is this place? Johnny stumbles over something and falls. When Bruce shines his flashlight on him, Johnny sees what he tripped over: an ARM WITH PAINTED FINGERNAILS sticks up out of the dirt. A NUMBER is visible on it.

ACT FOUR:

EXT. WOODS - Utterly freaked out, Johnny and Bruce hear dogs in the distance, start to run. As they do, they start to stumble over and see other bodies, arranged in horrible ways: hanging from trees, in water, etc. What the hell is going on?

INT. FOXGLOVE - Back at the retirement home, Marty and JJ haven't seen anything unusual so far. Suddenly, Marty hears footsteps. He looks over at JJ, now fast asleep in bed. Marty doesn't want to wake him or endanger him, so heads off solo on the trail of the receding footsteps...

Marty's in the basement, comes around a corner and sees a light in the trash room. Peers around the doorjamb and sees Mary Jane shove a black hooded robe in the trash incinerator: Mary Jane is the Shadow Man?

Marty confronts her: "*You killed Bebe and those other people!*" She tries to calm Marty down, but he's worked himself into a near stroke, as he collapses to one knee. Mary Jane tells him to stay calm as she goes to get help. As she heads off, Marty decides to pull the half-burned robe out of the incinerator as evidence! —But when he does he spreads some burning embers into the recycling pile as stacks of newspapers burst into flames...

Johnny and Bruce are caught by guards, sure that they are going to be killed in this bizarre hell on earth. But instead, the guards drag them to an office where they discover what's really going on here: it's a Forensic Training Facility, a BODY FARM where coroners and police are trained. Johnny asks them where Spyder is—he just dropped off a body and left. Johnny asks them if it's a woman—Bebe Anderson. It is. The guards have called Walt, aren't going to let Bruce and Johnny go or answer their questions until he arrives.

Marty goes back to his room with the remnants of Mary Jane's Shadow Man robe, but there's no JJ—where did he go? At that point, the smoke alarm goes off and Mary Jane

quickly begins to herd the residents out of the smoke filled building. Marty gets panicked about JJ and pushes past Mary Jane and reenters the now burning building.

Walt arrives at the Body Farm at the same time as the facility's director, who assures them that relatives have to sign the bodies over to the farm for scientific purposes. They ask to see Bebe's paperwork and tell him it's forged. Spyder faked the paperwork and sold bodies to the body farm. He didn't do it often enough to raise suspicion, just when he needed some extra cash—"like for a new drumset," Johnny says. Walt's phone rings—fire at the retirement home. They race off.

Sarah has meanwhile discovered JJ is missing at home and arrives at Foxglove. A distraught Mary Jane confesses that she did indeed dress up as the Shadow Man—but only to scare residents into staying in their rooms at night after several of them fell and broke bones. She didn't kill anyone. Ironically, she was just trying to keep the residents safe. Even though Mary Jane tells her the fire trucks are on their way, Sarah's not going to wait, as she prepares to enter the building to find JJ and Marty. Suddenly, JJ appears through the smoke, he's all right, but he didn't see Marty. Sarah kisses her son and rushes into the burning structure...

Sarah finally locates Marty. He appears to have broken his ankle. Sarah helps him stagger into a nearby room and sit down. Marty tells Sarah to leave, but she won't go. Marty can't walk on the ankle and she damn sure can't carry him. Sarah looks around and then grabs an elastic bandage and uses a broken table leg to set a temporary splint on Marty's injured leg. *"I know you blame me for Mom's death I won't have you blame me for yours too,"* Sarah says. Marty is shocked: what??? He says that he never blamed her. Sarah asks him why, then, if he doesn't blame her, he's been so cold to her? How come he never wanted her around? Marty looks at her with tears in his eyes: *"Because you were everything that I loved about your mother. I guess it was just easier to push you away, than have to think about what I lost. I know now that was stupid. I know now how much I miss you both."* As Marty reconciles their fate to the flames, Sarah boldly helps him to his feet and supports his body. *"If you think I'm going to lose you again, you really don't know me."* Then they make a dash for their lives...

Walt, Bruce and Johnny rush to the fire at the retirement home— Johnny gets a VISION of where Sarah and Marty are, sees that the staircase is going to collapse. Johnny and Walt go in, get to Sarah and Marty just before they head down the ill-fated staircase, get them out another way.

They emerge through the smoke and flames, Sarah, helping support her injured father. It's a beautiful moment for everyone...well almost everyone. Mary Jane breaks down when she sees that they are all safe. Johnny reveals the truth to Mary Jane: nobody at the home was ever killed, but when someone died of natural causes, Spyder sold their bodies for extra cash instead of burying or cremating them.

In the wrap-up, Spyder is apprehended buying the drum set, Sarah lets herself be late for the first time in years, and Marty is back at Foxglove. JJ wants him to finish his tale of

his Korean War adventure, but instead, Marty decides to tell another story about Sarah. We realize this will be a new beginning for father and daughter.

Johnny and Sarah realize that the only Shadow stalking the halls is the one that's waiting for us all, which makes life all the more precious.

THE END