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THE DEAD ZONE

Valley of the Shadow

When we last saw Johnny Smith, he was standing on a stage beside Reverend Purdy and Greg Stillson, hands linked with theirs in a victory salute. And through that link he was plunged into a shattering vision of Washington in ruins — a vision of nuclear Armageddon. Post 9/11, we've all had such visions, but whereas ours assail us because we feel helpless to prevent the awful events we've imagined, Johnny's are all the more terrifying because the future he sees is real. And, what's more, experience has taught him that maybe, just maybe, he can change it.

In other words, Johnny now has a burden no one should have to shoulder alone: the literal fate of the world. His efforts to learn how Armageddon may come about, and how to stop it, will be the framing story of the second season, and likely beyond. But in this first episode, we need to remind our old fans and show our new ones what our show is about at its core. The franchise, in other words. And that franchise remains a troubled hero who uses his unusual gifts to help people, despite the fallout to his personal life. So as we bring viewers up to speed on the many changes in Johnny's world, we're going to challenge him with a new mystery, one arranged by a troubled and dangerous man to test Johnny's powers. The price of failing this test: the death of an innocent child. And meanwhile Armageddon lurks in the background, throwing all into shadow.

Welcome to Season Two. Everything is changed. *Again.*

Blackness. And over it a crunching electric guitar chord that sounds like a dozen Harleys backfiring at once. It ushers in a chorus: Radiohead's front man declaring *I'm a creep! I'm a weirdo!* And we fade in

Just a few weeks have passed since that fateful moment on the Stillson campaign stage, but as we begin our show, we quickly realize that it *isn't* our show. Instead, it's a quickie VH1-style documentary on celebrity psychic Johnny Smith. We've cut into it as it chronicles Johnny's early years, complete with still photos that jiggle to the bass beat of the hard rock soundtrack some Gen Y exec thought appropriate to the subject. Snippets of Johnny's third grade teacher talking about her former pupil; a neighbor's camcorder footage of a very young Johnny in an ice hockey uniform as he's coached by his dad (out-takes from *Quality of Life*); geeky high school yearbook shots and local newspaper headlines trumpeting the teen-aged

hockey star's triumphs. And as the documentary continues, we begin a series of scenes that re-introduce our characters, each of whom has at least one eye glued to a TV set.

The first set is bolted to the wall of a hospital rehab room where Bruce Lewis is helping a septuagenarian with a new hip learn to walk again. Only right now the old man is fixated on the TV as he winces in pain. Sure he doesn't do any faith healing? he asks hopefully. Bruce shakes his head, says good-naturedly: The only hands that are gonna be laid on you are mine, if you don't get your butt moving again. And as the old man sighs then shoves himself another few inches down the parallel bars, Bruce glances up worriedly at the TV images of his friend.

Cut to a big screen TV in an upscale bar where Dana Bright is having a drink alone as she works her cell phone. She speed dials Johnny's number but gets an impersonal recording. Frustrated — clearly this has happened a lot lately — she snaps the phone shut, as meanwhile a well-dressed man snags the stool next to her and nods to the TV. What's the world coming to when you can't see a game in a sports bar? Dana smiles thinly, gulps the rest of her white wine. Guess it's going to hell, she says, and stands and heads for the door, a little unsteady on her heels. You okay to drive? the man calls after, genuinely concerned. But she ignores him, pausing at the door for one last look at the TV, as we:

Cut to another set, this one in the Bannerman kitchen, where Walt and Little Johnny watch as they stuff envelopes. But what happens if you *don't* get enough votes, Little Johnny asks worriedly. Then I *don't* get to be sheriff any more, Walt says. But as Little Johnny's eyes widen, Walt ruffles his hair reassuringly. Don't worry. I'll get enough votes, just keep licking those envelopes. Sarah enters cheerfully carrying a cardboard box, but her expression falters when she sees what's on the tube. Do we have to watch this? she says. Walt shrugs. He's a celebrity. Next thing you'll know, he'll be dating Madonna.

She's *married*, remember? Sarah says with subtle emphasis, and then smiles again as she opens the box and reveals her surprise: straw hats and buttons proclaiming Bannerman for Sheriff. She sets a boater jauntily on Walt's head, gives him a warm look. Bannerman for Sheriff, she says, and they laugh and kiss — until Johnny Jr. blurts, Look, mommy, it's *you*. And now they turn back to the TV, where pictures of Johnny and Sarah as teachers are

juxtaposed as images of a re-created car wreck dissolve over them. Sarah can't help but wince at the awful sound of the simulated crash, as we:

Cut inside Purdy's limo, where the good Reverend, Greg Stillson, Stillson's aide Sonny Elliman and Purdy's legal counsel Mike Kennedy watch as the show does a fast-forward through Johnny's coma years — flashes of Monica Lewinsky, OJ Simpson, Dubya being sworn in, all scored to hit songs from the passing years.

Dreck, Elliman says. *Embarrassing dreck*, and gives his boss a pointed look. Stillson can't help but agree, telling Purdy he's more than a little concerned about Smith's indirect association with his campaign. But Purdy's not worried. Nodding to the TV, he says that while this sort of programming might not be to their taste, it doubtless appeals to a younger demographic — a demographic Greg needs to reach if he's going to beat an entrenched liberal incumbent like Harrison Fisher. We're not looking for the Goth vote, Elliman counters, as another heavy metal song spills out of the TV speakers. No, Purdy counters amiably, we're looking for miracles. And when Johnny provides one — and, trust me, he will — you won't be regretting your association. And as the documentary continues with a shot of Johnny's house, we:

Cut to Johnny's front gate, now locked and topped with a security camera, as a private patrol car makes a slow pass. We move up the driveway, then cut into the darkened interior. The documentary's playing on a TV in the living room. Now it's a rush of headlines and images recounting Johnny's post-coma doings, from the Dodd murders to Johnny being hounded by the press as he exits the hospital at the end of *Quality of Life*. Only no one's watching. Instead, camera moves out of the living room to find an open doorway which reveals a stairway we've never seen before. This one heads *down*, and we follow it into a basement where old broken furniture and clutter dating back fifty years has been augmented by some large computer boxes. A DSL cable snakes from a new wall outlet to a huge flatscreen monitor. On the screen: a six-year-old Bangor Daily News story with the headline: *Improprieties Alleged in Shady Pines Deal*. Pull back to reveal Johnny eyeing the screen intently as he scrolls down to a photo of then-mayor Greg Stillson. Johnny clicks on a link and finds a *retraction* to the newspaper story.

Apparently, the story's unnamed source reversed his claims. Johnny's eyes narrow as he studies the item, then he taps the keyboard and the articles spit out of a high-speed printer. He takes a couple of brightly colored plastic push pins from a box and tacks the stories up on a large bulletin board that looks like a media collage in the making: newspaper and magazine clippings, other items printed off the internet, photos of Stillson, and, in the center, an aerial shot of the Washington Monument. As Johnny studies the board, trying to draw connections, we:

Cut once more, this time to a small, portable TV hooked into a van's cigarette lighter. A man with his back to us listens through an earplug speaker as he trains a pair of binoculars out the window. We see what he sees through a scrim of trees: the back of a sizeable house, sliding glass doors facing a patio. As the last house lights go out, the man puts the binoculars down and turns back to the TV screen, just as the program finishes by freeze-framing the shot of Johnny, Purdy and Stillson on the stage, their hands raised. The narrator intones: Johnny Smith. From small-town school teacher to local psychic hero to ? And as the unasked question — and Johnny's future — hangs in the air, the man pulls out a knapsack and checks its contents: glass cutters, a roll of duct tape, a stun gun. Satisfied, he gets out and shuts the door behind him. Off the still-frozen image on the TV, as the program's end credits scroll...

We return to find Johnny and Bruce doing a workout turn around the neighborhood. A familiar scene except for one element: the dark limo trailing behind them. Bruce can't stop glancing back at it as Johnny fills him in on his latest Stillson research. We quickly gather that Bruce knows about Johnny's Armageddon vision, along with Johnny's conviction that Stillson, and possibly Purdy too, will somehow bring about the awful destruction the vision prophesies. Right now, Stillson's Johnny's main focus. He's already learned that the man's a slippery character. Although he's been dogged for years by claims of corruption, nothing seems to stick to him; his anonymous critics always clam up. Which tells Johnny that Stillson's probably not above blackmail or even strong-arm tactics. Bruce eyes him skeptically. He's always been Johnny's biggest booster but even he's a little taken aback by his friend's seeming obsession with Stillson. He wants to know if Johnny has proof for his suspicions. Johnny knows what

he means, and admits he doesn't. And the reason is pretty worrisome in its own right: In the weeks since he touched Stillson and Purdy on that campaign stage, Johnny hasn't had a single vision. Ironically, his gift — which he's mostly viewed as a curse — has deserted him just when he needs it most. He feels helpless, but what can he do?

Bruce doesn't know what to make of this, but he does know that if Stillson is corrupt, then it's even harder to imagine him wanting to blow up the world — there's no profit in it. And for that matter, if Johnny thinks Purdy's also linked to this Armageddon thing, then why's he working for the man? Johnny says Bruce has it backwards: Purdy's working for *him* — opening his mail, keeping the press off his back. Besides, he says, I've got to stay close.

Stay close to what? Bruce wants to know. Purdy? Stillson? Faith Heritage? All of it, Johnny says. It could all be part of it.

Bruce gives up, steers the conversation toward Johnny's personal life, another source of frustration for Johnny. He's been trying to call Sarah ever since — well, since that night — but she hasn't returned his calls. And what about Dana? Bruce asks. And when Johnny guiltily admits that he hasn't seen her since the Sarah incident, Bruce just shakes his head. Johnny's got a smart, beautiful woman who cares about him that he's ignoring. And a married ex he won't let go of. It was a one-time thing, Bruce says. Accept it. But that's not what Johnny wants to hear. As he motions the limo forward to scoop him up, cut to:

Greg Stillson, at the moment hardly looking like a man who'll someday have his finger on the button — since right now he can't even find his way out of a high school basement. He and Sonny are being led around the bowels of Cleaves Mills High by a local advance man — an anxious, ineffectual type who fumblingly tries to fill his boss in on the day's events while vainly searching for a stairwell. They're rescued by Sarah, who walks around a corner, a clipboard under her arm and a Bannerman button pinned to her blouse. She recognizes Stillson immediately and jokes that a candidate who can't find his way back from the men's room hardly inspires voter confidence. At least I could find my way there, which is more than I can say for some of my opponents, Greg jokes back, admiring her spunk, and, more covertly, her trim figure. Sarah leads them up to the school cafeteria, where a Meet the Candidates bazaar is in

full swing, aimed at reaching young voters. Sarah's running Walt's booth and it's an island of efficiency, neatly organized, tables stocked with smart-looking brochures. Stillson pauses to peruse the wares as they continue to swap one liners. He's a quick study where women are concerned; it only takes him a couple of minutes to see past Sarah's defensive humor to discern that for whatever reason (and we may understand that it's her recent infidelity) she's a woman searching for some meaning in her life. When Walt returns to the booth after talking to a student newspaper reporter, Greg introduces himself and says he hopes Walt's paying his wife well, otherwise someone might steal her away. Good campaign managers are hard to find. Oh, I'm paying all right, Walt says with typical dry humor. I'll be doing the dishes for a year. Greg smiles too, then moves back to his own booth, which is a disorganized shambles. He eyes it with disgust, then looks back at Sarah. I like that girl, he tells Sonny. His aide smirks. Want me to slip her the key to your room? Greg eyes him sharply. How about slipping her the key to my *office*, offering her a full-time salary, and seeing if she can make any sense of our files. That is, if anyone here is actually interested in *winning* this election.

Meanwhile, Walt catches Sarah glancing back at Stillson, intrigued by the man despite herself. Maybe I *should* pay you, Walt says, following her look, just to keep you from turning into James Carville. Then his phone rings. He listens for a beat, then looks up, grim-faced. I gotta go, he says. A kid's been

Kidnapped? Johnny's walking with Purdy on the Faith Heritage campus, reacting in surprise as Purdy fills him in. Apparently, six-year-old Billy Kirby, the son of a prominent local family, was snatched from his bedroom in the middle of the night. The Kirbys are members of Purdy's congregation and they immediately called him for help. Johnny knows where this is heading, and cuts Purdy off at the pass: If Walt Bannerman feels he needs a psychic helping hand, he'll call. But Purdy doesn't want to wait. The Kirbys are good people and their little boy's in danger. Surely Johnny can sympathize. Johnny reacts to his pointed tone: does Purdy know he's a father? But whether Purdy does or not, we sense that what Johnny's mostly feeling is insecurity. He's not sure he *can* help. He haltingly starts to tell Purdy that he may have lost his powers, but this time it's Purdy who stops him, saying, I truly believe you were put on this

earth to help people. Your gift is part of you. It won't desert you any more than God would desert me. And it's not a line; his conviction is genuine. Off Johnny's own doubts, cut to:

Johnny arriving at the Kirby house, where Walt, his deputies, and local police have just begun their investigation. Walt's not unhappy to see Johnny, but he is surprised at the entourage Johnny's brought with him. In addition to Purdy, there's a pair of bodyguards retained by Faith Heritage; Mike Kennedy; a staff photographer and the Alliance's perky communications director, who already has a statement typed up and photocopied for the assembled press. Dana, who's one of those reporters, tries to approach Johnny but is kept back by the bodyguards. And though she catches Johnny's eye, he only offers an apologetic nod as the Purdy team goes about expertly managing this Johnny event from the get-go. We can see that Dana's hurt, even angry. Walt, who's used to working with Johnny alone, is put off as well. But he's not about to turn down Johnny's help. No ransom note has been found and he's terribly worried about the young victim. There's an expectant beat as Walt and everyone else waits for Johnny to do his thing. Johnny crouches to touch a muddy shoe print on the patio — and nothing happens. Ditto when he touches a circle of glass that was cut out of the sliding patio door. We feel Johnny's embarrassment and frustration at his psychic impotence; he's starting to feel like a fraud as the others watch and exchange curious looks. And then his eye is drawn to a non-evidence item — a small framed family photograph of the two parents and their young son that's sitting on a table in the foyer. Johnny picks it up; it's hard not to make the connection between the tow-headed young boy in the photo and Johnny Jr. And then, suddenly, he has a vision of a masked and gloved kidnapper also pausing to study the photo. Excited, Johnny sets the picture down and soon has a series of first-person and P.O.V. visions for the first time in weeks that allow him to reconstruct the crime. As Johnny moves about touching walls, banisters, etc. with a strange mixture of relief and horror, we see flashes of the kidnapper creeping up the stairs, clamping a hand over a sleeping little boy's mouth, and zapping him with the stun gun. When Johnny touches a smudge on a hallway mirror, he has a vision of the kidnapper holding the unconscious boy as he stares into the mirror for what seems an inordinately long time. Why? And then Johnny notes a painted portrait reflected in the mirror — the eyes of the figure seem to be staring

back at him. Johnny comes out of the vision, goes to the painting, and finds an envelope taped behind it. Walt doesn't let Johnny touch it right away, not until a forensics technician has carefully removed the single piece of paper within. It's not a ransom note but instead displays a familiar biblical quotation, color printed in a kidnap font. The message reads: Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Walt studies the odd note, then lets Johnny touch a corner — and Johnny has an equally odd vision of the note being printed out at a local Kinko's, then stuffed in the envelope which in turn is placed in a larger Fed-Ex mailer. He comes out of the vision realizing that the kidnapper must've worked this out so he never touched the note itself: emailing the text to the store and having the printout mailed back. Thy rod and thy staff, Johnny repeats quietly, and then looks at the cane in his hand as the meaning of this strange note becomes alarmingly clear. It wasn't intended for the police or the family. It was meant for *Johnny*, a challenge designed to test his psychic abilities while hiding the identity of his adversary.

And now what promised to be a type of story we have seen before — Johnny using his powers to solve a crime — has taken a sudden, surprising turn. The kidnapper's goal seems to be to lure Johnny into a deadly chess game. At stake, or so it would seem, is the life of Billy Kirby, although the true stakes won't become fully apparent until the end of the show. For now, though, the danger seems very real and immediate as Johnny begins following a trail of psychic clues that the kidnapper has left for him and has a vision of the kidnapped boy bound and locked in a small windowless vault. And then Johnny's cell phone rings. It's the kidnapper, who seems to have anticipated this vision and who tells him that the boy is indeed locked in a vault and has less than a day's worth of air left. He challenges Johnny to save the boy in time. The clock is ticking.

Walt stays with Johnny every step of the way, using his own investigative skills and resources to make the most of the clues Johnny unearths. He assigns his men to track down every bank vault within a fifty mile radius. It's no easy task; there are literally hundreds, and getting access to each of them on a weekend is difficult and time consuming. Time that Johnny and Walt don't have, which makes it all the more frustrating when the kidnapper seems to take

pleasure in deliberately misleading them. Though even in these moments there seems to be an odd purpose at work, a hidden agenda, almost as though the chase is designed not to just to keep his pursuers at a distance, or at times to bring them close, but ultimately to tell them a story. For example, a clue leads Johnny to a modest house where his adversary was apparently raised. The young couple who now own it are surprised when Johnny and Walt knock on their door, and even more surprised when Johnny touches a wall or a door and reacts to frightening visions of the kidnapper as a young boy being viciously abused by his bible-thumping father while his meek, ineffectual mother turned a blind eye. Johnny can't help but feel sympathy for the bleeding, terrified boy praying alone in his room for succor that never came. The visions don't bring Johnny and Walt any closer to locating the kidnapped child, but they do provide the first solid clues to the kidnapper's identity. Dana, who's naturally just a step behind them as she follows the story — ducking around Purdy's press screen — now assists by checking public records to track down the home's former owners, and their son. Gradually, Johnny and Walt seem to be closing in on the kidnapper, but time is still running out for his victim.

And periodically during this psychic scavenger hunt, the kidnapper checks in with Johnny, calling his cell phone or a nearby payphone. He alternately congratulates Johnny on his performance — he indeed seems to be *the real thing* — and taunts him by reminding him how little time remains. At this rate, you'll never save him, he says. For his part, Johnny tries to trick the kidnapper into revealing more information, and in the process a strange dialogue develops. Johnny comes to realize just how much this man knows about him, things never reported in the press; at times it feels as though he's acquired a shadow, a dark secret sharer.

As the investigation continues, we continue to follow several other plot threads. We see Purdy's media team expertly working the press. This is Purdy's first opportunity to orchestrate the Johnny image, and he makes the most of it, ensuring that Johnny, and by association the Alliance, is portrayed in the most flattering light. Purdy even gets Johnny to pause for the occasional photo op — the alternative, he reminds Johnny, is the kind of feeding frenzy he hates — and while Johnny is aware of the spin doctoring going on around him, for the moment he's too

grateful for the buffer that Purdy's providing to notice how he's being turned into a commodity and marketing tool — the Alliance's saintly hero — that is a far cry from the real man.

Stillson watches the spectacle from a distance, still dubious about Johnny's bona fides but realizing that his growing fame could indeed make him a potent political ally. It might be time to jump on the Johnny bandwagon, provided Johnny can be convinced to jump on his. At one point, Sonny and his other handlers urge Stillson to get more directly involved in the kidnapping story: appeal to the kidnapper on the family's behalf, or even comfort the grieving parents if the poor kid croaks. Either way, it's good TV, Sonny says. Which earns him another sharp rebuke from Stillson. We're not going to use a dead kid to score votes, he says. And this isn't a bout of conscience; it's another example of Stillson's political savvy. He may be the best friend the common man ever had up in Maine, but he's already grooming himself for a national political role, and that requires a certain amount of gentlemanly restraint. Though not where his perpetually roving eye is concerned. As he follows the press coverage of the kidnapping, he can't help but remark a certain attractive reporter who's always a step ahead of the pack: Dana Bright. That one you can give my room key to, he tells Sonny, adding, When this bullshit's over, let's call her editor, see if we can arrange an interview.

And then there's Sarah. During a lull in the investigation, when Johnny and Walt have returned to the sheriff's office, she shows up to excitedly tell Walt that she's been offered a job with the Stillson campaign. Although he's not a Stillson supporter himself — he backs Fisher, the incumbent who heads his party's ticket — Walt's happy for her and guesses that his own much smaller campaign can spare her for a few days a week. Johnny, however, is silent. Sarah didn't expect to find him here and the tension between these two is palpable. Walt steps away to tend to some business, but because he's still within earshot Johnny can't ask her point blank why she's been ducking him, nor can Sarah explain why she wishes the whole thing never happened. Instead, Johnny tries to warn her off Stillson. Without getting into Armageddon, he notes the rumors about dirty dealings. But that just pisses Sarah off. She would've thought mudslinging was beneath Johnny. The argument starts to escalate, and it's not really about Stillson at all, it's about everything they *can't* say. Walt hears the argument and comes over. Politics, Johnny

says, covering for both of them. Walt senses there's something else going on here, but now Dana returns with new information on the kidnapper. She gives Johnny *and* Sarah sharp looks as she tells Walt that her record search has led her to a possible current address.

Cut to a ramshackle trailer on the outskirts of town as a SWAT team busts in the door. Only no one's home. The place is a sty, but what catches Johnny's eyes are the corkboard-lined walls covered with photographs and newspaper clippings. Clippings about Johnny, surveillance shots of the Kirby home, pages torn from kids' magazines, and religious iconography. To Walt, it's clear the guy is some sort of psycho pedophile, but Johnny has an even more visceral reaction. He picks up a brightly colored plastic push pin from a box, identical to the ones he uses for his basement Stillson/Armageddon board, and can't help but see a disturbing parallel between this man's obsessions and his own. Then he touches some other items and has flashes of the man's lonely, troubled life and his growing anger and irrationality. He comes out of it convinced that while this crime may be the man's first, if they don't stop him it won't be his last. And then he sees it: a Polaroid photo of an empty vault. He touches it, and comes away knowing the location. The phone rings. It's the kidnapper, one step ahead of them as always, telling Johnny that if he now knows where to go, then he better get there soon. And come alone too, or else the boy will be dead even *before* his air runs out.

Cut to an abandoned bank building as Johnny enters, alone but wired by Walt, who listens in from a command post a block away. Johnny makes his way through the dark and creepy building until he finds the vault. He taps on the door, hears someone tapping back on the other side, then touches the lock — and has a vision of a bank manager opening it years ago. The vision gives him the correct combination, and he opens the door and hears the sound of a little boy crying coming from the shadows at the back of the vault. He moves cautiously inside, calling Billy's name. Suddenly, the door slams shut and Johnny turns to see the kidnapper pointing a gun at him. There's no Billy; the sobs were just a tape recording.

Where is he? Johnny demands. Is he all right? But the kidnapper isn't about to tell him. Instead, he says, I know you, but do you know me? Johnny's seen the kidnapper's past, thinks he knows what the man's asking. You've had a terrible life, you've been hurt, and you

need help, Johnny says. I'll make sure you get it. Just tell me where he is, because I don't think you want to hurt him.

Oh, but I do, the man says. And he explains that for a long time now he's felt powerful urges: urges to do harm to other children, the way harm was done to him.

Did you hurt Billy? Johnny asks him carefully. Again, the kidnapper doesn't answer directly. Instead he says: We do what we have to do. *Become* what we have to become. We don't have a choice. He looks at Johnny almost imploringly, but Johnny doesn't understand what the man wants from him. Don't you? the man asks. He's followed every bit of news about Johnny since he woke from his coma. He had his doubts, but he also had his hopes, and now they've been fulfilled. If Johnny wasn't the genuine article, he could never have found him. And now that he has, the man knows for sure who Johnny is. The one he's been waiting for since he was a child. The one in whose presence he can finally find release. *The One*.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, the man quotes again, gun still pointed at Johnny; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. And now Johnny begins to understand: This man doesn't want to be helped; he wants to be *saved*. Saved by Johnny. The kidnapping was merely a lure, and a test. All along, he's been challenging Johnny to save *his* soul from the damnation his unholy urges would otherwise condemn it to. And now that the kidnapper sees that Johnny understands, he smiles, a smile of weary relief. It's up to you, he says. Save *all* of us. And before Johnny can react, he presses the gun to his own chest and fires! Johnny's stunned, but as the man dies, he presses something into Johnny's hand: the little boy's pocket knife. Johnny touches it — and we don't have to see this vision as Walt and the police burst in, having heard the shot, and Johnny turns to them and says he knows where to find Billy.

Cut to Johnny and Walt taking the boy out of a locked van hidden in a shed; he's scared but unhurt. The boy's parents are there too, along with Purdy, who congratulates Johnny on his latest miracle. But Johnny just eyes him dully, his thoughts far away. He realizes now that his gift never abandoned him. If anything, he abandoned it, perhaps because he was subconsciously afraid of accepting the heavy burden it had thrust upon him. And why not? Who *wouldn't* be

afraid of having to save the world? Strangely, it took a desperate, tortured man to remind Johnny that there s no hiding from destiny. Not when so many lives hang in the balance. And in that moment, Johnny feels very, very alone

Time cut to: Dana drinking at the same bar from the Teaser, a news piece about Johnny and the kidnapping on the TV again, complete with a final statement provided by the Alliance. A man sets his drink down on the bar beside Dana. A woman as attractive as you are shouldn t be drinking alone. She turns to see Stillson, his eyes frankly appraising her while Sonny Elliman watches from a table in the background. A few weeks ago, Dana wouldn t have responded to the overture. But right now she s still smarting from being shut out by Johnny. She takes out her notebook. Tell you what, she says. You can buy me a drink, if I can ask you some questions. And they won t be softballs.

Stillson smiles, unfazed, and indicates her empty glass. What ll you have with your interview? And as they begin to talk

Cut to Johnny, alone in his basement, staring at his bulletin board. Looking at the spread of clips and photos, wondering whether he has indeed turned a corner into obsession, wondering too whether he can afford to stop himself. Right now, the answer is he can t. He picks up a brightly colored push pin and tacks another article to the board