

Soulmates

Sci-fi

by
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CHARACTER NAME	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	AGE	GENDER
JANESH/JAMES	N/A	30-40	Male
THE CONTROLLER	N/A	N/A	Male
ELISE	N/A	30-40	Female
STEPHANIE/DR STEPHENS	N/A	30-40	Female

JANESH lies centre stage on a table, eyes closed. He appears to be in a hospital bed. He has wires attached to his arms which connect to machines behind, out of sight. Beside him sits STEPHANIE, she's holding his hand and gently crying.

STEPHANIE

I can't believe you're gone.

She presses his hand to her face then rests it across his body.

STEPHANIE

Goodbye, James.

She kisses his forehead and leaves. The lights flicker. JANESH sits bolt upright and inhales sharply. THE CONTROLLER, wearing a white coat and carrying a clipboard, appears from the shadows.

THE CONTROLLER

How was it, Janesh?

JANESH

What? No, it's James. Who are you? Are you God?

THE CONTROLLER

(laughing)

Not quite. How was 20th Century Earth?

JANESH

(looking around scared)

What are you talking about?

THE CONTROLLER

(to self) Every time. (to JANESH) SimLife. You can't have immortality but you can have many lives.

JANESH

What?

THE CONTROLLER

SimLife. And you chose late 20th Century Earth. It's a bit of a classic. I'm sorry you didn't get the full seventy-five years. I'm afraid cancer got the better of you but that's the risk with fullscope reality sims.

JANESH

Reality sims?

THE CONTROLLER

Simulations.

JANESH

It was a game?

THE CONTROLLER

Slightly more sophisticated than that but that's idea, yes. It's an advanced life simulator. You choose when and where you'd like to go, and, as long as we have historical records, you can go there. And, this time you chose Earth, either side of 2000. You said you liked the music. I've never been a fan myself.

JANESH

I've done this before?

THE CONTROLLER

Yes, let me see...

(THE CONTROLLER looks at his notes)

You've done Confederate soldier, Elizabethan aristocrat, Andromedan pop star, ooh, I bet that was a good one, and now this.

JANESH

I don't remember...

THE CONTROLLER

Give it a few minutes. Your true self will come back to the fore and you'll remember it all.

JANESH

What about Stephanie?

THE CONTROLLER

Who?

JANESH

My wife.

THE CONTROLLER

Part of the simulation, I'm afraid.

JANESH

Stephanie? No... please...

THE CONTROLLER

I hope you didn't get too attached.

JANESH

I love her... she loves me. Are you saying she isn't... wasn't... real?

THE CONTROLLER

We use codified DNA to populate the simulations so, in a sense, she was real. At least, she's been real at some time. Just not for you. But, the emotions were real. That's got to be worth something.

THE CONTROLLER removes the wires from
JANESH'S arms.

JANESH

I can't believe this is happening.

THE CONTROLLER

Better than being dead, though, eh?

JANESH

I... I don't know.

JANESH checks his body to see if that's real.

JANESH

How long have I been in here... there?

THE CONTROLLER

Just over a month.

JANESH

It was a life... my life.

THE CONTROLLER

Er, that's kind of the point.

JANESH

How?

THE CONTROLLER

Hibernative cognitive stimulation. Think of it as the longest dream you'll ever have.

THE CONTROLLER checks his chart.

THE CONTROLLER

OK, I'll be back in a minute. Prepare for your true self returning. It can be quite overwhelming.

JANESH

More than this?

THE CONTROLLER

Yes. You can try and hurry it along, if you like. There's a mirror on the wall just there.

(THE CONTROLLER points to the wall at
the side of the stage)

Seeing your real face can kickstart the process. But, like I said, it can be quite overwhelming. So brace yourself.

THE CONTROLLER leaves and Janesh walks tentatively to the mirror. He spends some time examining his face before leaning in closer.

JANESH

Who are you?

THE CONTROLLER returns accompanied by ELISE. She approaches JANESH.

ELISE

Janesh, how was it? I missed you.

JANESH backs away from her.

JANESH

(to THE CONTROLLER)

Who is this?

ELISE

I'm your wife. Don't you remember?

JANESH

No, you're not. Stephanie is... what's happening? Who are you people?

ELISE

(to THE CONTROLLER)

What's the matter with him?

THE CONTROLLER

This happens sometimes. It can take a while for the true self to surface.

ELISE moves closer to JANESH and puts her hand to his face.

ELISE

Janesh, it's me.

JANESH

Don't touch me! I don't want any of this. Stephanie. Where are you?

ELISE

Who the hell is Stephanie?

THE CONTROLLER

I think you'd better wait outside until Janesh returns. Don't worry. We'll soon have him back.

JANESH

There is no Janesh. I'm James.

ELISE

(to THE CONTROLLER)

Please bring him back to me.

THE CONTROLLER

I will. Like I said, it can take a while. He's just had a very intense experience. Please, wait outside.

ELISE worriedly leaves the stage from the direction she entered. THE CONTROLLER approaches JANESH who is now leaning against the table, clearly very distressed.

THE CONTROLLER

Let's try the mirror again.

He guides JANESH across the stage to the mirror.

THE CONTROLLER

Look. It's Janesh.

JANESH

I don't know who that is. *I* am James and I'm meant to be with Stephanie.

THE CONTROLLER

I'm afraid that's just not possible.

JANESH

Wait, you said she was generated from codified DNA. Where does that come from?

THE CONTROLLER

The universal database. Why?

JANESH

Might she be alive now?

THE CONTROLLER

Possibly. But statistically? Very unlikely.

JANESH

So I might be able to find her.

THE CONTROLLER

Even if she were alive, she could be on any one of over a thousand planets. Listen, let me get you a glass of water and we'll ride this out together. You'll be back soon, Janesh.

THE CONTROLLER leaves whilst JANESH continues to look into the mirror with disbelief.

JANESH

(to mirror)

I don't want to be you.

JANESH jolts suddenly. He holds the sides of his head.

JANESH

No. I won't let you.

He closes his eyes and begins breathing, quick and shallow. He grits his teeth.

JANESH

No!

He staggers to the chair and sits down.

JANESH

I don't want this. I don't want to be you. Stephanie... Stephanie...

THE CONTROLLER returns with a glass of water. He sees JANESH and his look changes to one of worry. He puts down the water and rushes over.

THE CONTROLLER

Listen to me, Janesh. Stop fighting it. You've got to come back. You have to be you.

JANESH

I am me. I'm James. James is me.

THE CONTROLLER

It isn't. I know it feels that way now but it was just a simulation. A powerful simulation. You are Janesh.

JANESH

I am James!

JANESH pushes THE CONTROLLER away.

JANESH

James!

JANESH begins to weep into his hands.

JANESH

James. I'm James. And Stephanie. James and Stephanie. Until the end. Until death do us part.

THE CONTROLLER pulls over another chair and sits beside JANESH. He puts his arm around him.

THE CONTROLLER

Just let yourself come back.

JANESH shrugs him off.

JANESH

Get off me. Did I die? Is this hell?

THE CONTROLLER

Far from it. It's somewhere you can have everything you ever wanted, if you allow your self to return.

JANESH

I want Stephanie.

THE CONTROLLER

Except that.

JANESH looks up.

JANESH

Can I go back?

THE CONTROLLER

Where?

JANESH

To Earth. To SimLife. To Stephanie.

THE CONTROLLER

It doesn't work like that. Even with the same settings there are so many different interactions, permutations, interdependencies... Living the same life again in there would be next to impossible.

JANESH

But not entirely impossible? Just send me back. I'll find her. We're destined to be together. I know it.

THE CONTROLLER

Let me get Doctor Stephens. She'll be able to help.

JANESH

No.

THE CONTROLLER walks to the side of the room and presses the intercom.

THE CONTROLLER

Doctor Stephens to suite 3172, please.

JANESH

I said, no. I want to go back.

THE CONTROLLER

Just speak to Doctor Stephens first.

JANESH rushes to THE CONTROLLER and grabs him by the front of his coat.

JANESH

Send me back. Now!

THE CONTROLLER

Please, try and calm down. First see the doctor, then decide.

JANESH

Just send me back. I miss her so much. If there's even the slightest chance of me being with her again, I'll take it. I'm begging you. Send me back.

THE CONTROLLER

OK, OK. If you're certain.

JANESH

I am.

THE CONTROLLER

You don't want to wait for Doctor Stephens?

JANESH

No.

THE CONTROLLER sighs.

THE CONTROLLER

Then get back in the bed. This is slightly against protocol but not entirely unheard of. Just bear in mind that you'll be back out again in a month and might have to go through all this again.

JANESH

(climbing back into bed)

I don't care. I need to be with her.

THE CONTROLLER begins re-attaching the wires to JANESH.

THE CONTROLLER

It was really that good?

JANESH

You can't imagine. I could never love anyone again. Not after her.

THE CONTROLLER

You're sure.

JANESH

I'm sure.

THE CONTROLLER moves to the back of the room and begins pressing buttons.

THE CONTROLLER

Initiating hibernative cognition in 5, 4, 3...

JANESH closes his eyes.

JANESH

I'm coming Stephanie.

THE CONTROLLER

...2....1.

JANESH lies with his eyes closed. Once again still.
Doctor Stephens enters.

DR STEPHENS

Is everything OK?

THE CONTROLLER

He found his soulmate.

Dr Stephens walks to Janesh and looks at him curiously.
She smiles.

DR STEPHENS

I don't believe in soulmates.

FADE TO BLACK.