

The Space Between

Written By

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Revision 4
Revision 5

P.O.V. BLACK

Open on black. Credits appear on the screen as snippets of people's conversations play in the background.

- I don't have time right now -
- get your head in the game! -
- turn that off -
- I was watching that! -
- Go outside and play, why don't you -
- Computers are the future -
- What was that? -
- What did you say? -
- Pay attention -
- This isn't working out -
- I don't see the benefit in that -
- Your brain's turning to mush -
- Not another gadget -
- He's been glued to that screen all day -

FADE IN

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

The screen starts fading in to an unfocused shot of text on a page.

"The human soul has still greater need of the ideal than of the real. It is by the real that we exist; it is by the ideal that we live." - William Shakespeare, by Victor Hugo

After a beat, the page turns, and the camera pulls up to the face of the reader. ROGER is a young college-aged man who is reading at a library desk. He's dressed nicely - on the verge of being dressed a bit too nicely, in fact. Books on science, politics, history, technology, and philosophy are stacked around him, forming a little wall between him and his fellow library patrons.

Cut to a CU shot of scrolling web links on a computer screen. Cut to a CU shot of fingers tapping on a glass tablet screen. Cut to an ECU of a portable music player scrolling through podcasts. Cut to CU shot of computer console and code. Cut to a CU of a computer rendering of a scene. Cut to a CU of JANE'S eyes - they are constantly flickering around. Jane is a young college-aged woman. Her hair is in a ponytail, and her clothes are casual.

Cut to split screen of Roger (left) and Jane (right) standing up. Roger takes his book with him and Jane brings her smartphone/music player.

Cut to MS of Roger entering a library row from the left. Cut to MS of Jane entering the library row from the right. CU of hand flipping page. CU of fingers scrolling through songs.

Quick cut to CU of Roger's hand reaching out. Quick cut to CU of Jane's hand reaching out. Cut to and hold on a MS of one hand on top of the other, both reaching for the same book on the history of computing. They linger for a beat, and then the owner of each hand quickly withdraws it.

ROGER
(flustered)
Oh, excuse me.

JANE
(taking her earbuds out)
No, don't worry about it. Did you need that book too?

ROGER
Yes, but I have plenty back there.
(gesturing in the
direction of the table)
I can write my column without that one.

JANE
(realizing)
I thought you looked familiar. I see your picture in the student paper all the time.

ROGER
(slightly proud)
Oh, only twice a month, really.

JANE
Your article on wearable computing interfaces presented some...interesting...views.

ROGER
You - you actually read it? Wow, that's the first time someone's noticed. Wait - interesting? How so?

JANE
(smiling)
Well, I disagreed with most of it, to be honest.

ROGER
Really?

JANE
(grabs the book off the

shelf)
I happen to be one of those
"techworms" you mentioned.

ROGER
(looks interested, and
wants to say more)
Oh -

JANE
(briskly)
Well, good luck with your column.

They turn to go their own separate ways, but before either
one has taken more than two steps, Roger turns around.

ROGER
(hastily)
My name's Roger. Roger Madison.

JANE
(laughing)
I know, I read your article,
remember?

ROGER
(abashed)
Oh yes, that's right.

JANE
I'm Jane. Jane Fischer.

ROGER
Pleased to make your acquaintance.

JANE
So am I.

WS of Roger sitting down at his desk again, but this time,
as he's sitting down, he's looking around. After a few
seconds, he returns to his book. Jane glances over at him
from across the library and smiles. Time passes by.

JANE
Hey.

MS of Roger looking up as Jane sits down across from him. He
hastily clears some of the books away.

JANE (CONT'D)
I've decided that "techworm" is a
flattering term after all.

They both laugh.

ROGER

Oh good, I didn't mean it in a bad way. So, what do you think about holographic interfaces?

JANE

Well, for starters....

FADE OUT

INT. CAFETERIA - NIGHT

MS of Roger and Jane eating dinner together and talking animatedly.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAWN - DAY

MS from above of Roger and Jane lying down on the grass and pointing at the sky. Jane pulls some grass out and throws it at Roger.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST - DAY

MS of Roger and Jane taking a walk together in the forest, hand in hand.

INT. JANE'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Dolly MS of Roger and Jane sitting on the floor. Jane's head is propped on Roger's stomach, and she's lying perpendicular to Roger, who's reading a book held in his right hand. Jane's listening to music - we can see her headphones. Roger is absent-mindedly running his fingers through her hair.

FADE TO BLACK.

TITLE SCREEN

"The Space Between"

FADE OUT

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

WS of Jane and Roger eating breakfast together, but each paying attention to a smartphone, or a newspaper, respectively.

CUT TO:

INT. LOUNGE - AFTERNOON

MS of Roger watching TV with rapt attention. He scribbles in a notepad every so often. Cut to MS of Jane beside him, flinching at every loud noise. She looks at Roger and tries to hold his hand between scribbling, but he pulls his hand away just as they're about to touch and Jane flinches back. CU of her hand, flexing in empty air. MS of her reaching into her purse and pulling out her Spec-Tors. She puts them on and stares off to the side.

CUT TO:

EXT. PATH - DAY

WS of Roger and Jane walking between buildings together. Jane's wearing her Spec-Tors, while Roger's pointing at something in the newspaper he's holding, but she doesn't react.

FADE IN

INT. LOUNGE - AFTERNOON

Roger walks into a lounge, where several other people are hanging out.

JONATHAN

Yeah, I actually ran three miles today with the goblin simulation.

ROSE

I know, I never thought that skydiving could be so fun!

Roger walks through the lounge and into a hallway.

INT. HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

WS of Roger walking up to a door. He knocks and waits for a while, but no one answers.

ROGER

Jane?

Still no answer. MS of his hand turning the door handle.

INT. JANE'S DORM ROOM

WS from inside the room. Jane is standing in the middle of the room, facing the camera. Her hair is up in a loose ponytail, and she's wearing comfortable jeans and a t-shirt.

We see a pair of the same glasses on her face. She's turning her head from side to side and making delighted noises.

JANE
 (to herself)
 The new graphics driver really does
 makes a difference in the
 resolution.

ROGER
 (Touching her shoulder)
 Jane?

Jane whirls around, catching Roger in the shoulder with her elbow. He is thrown off-balance and grabs on to her bed for support.

ROGER
 (surprised)
 Whoa!

Jane quickly whips off her sunglasses.

JANE
 (concerned)
 Roger! I'm so sorry, did I hurt
 you?

ROGER
 (straightening at once)
 No, of course not.

JANE
 Did you knock?

ROGER
 (hastily)
 Yes, I did. Definitely.

JANE
 (teasingly)
 You know, people might start
 talking if they see strange men
 entering my room at -
 (sneaking a look at the
 clock)
 - 3:15 in the afternoon.

ROGER
 (indignant)
 I'm hardly a stranger!

JANE
(soothingly)
I know, I know. So, what's going on?

ROGER
I just wanted to stop by and ask if you would like to attend this debate with me tonight at the town hall? I've asked around, but everyone's busy tonight with a Spec-Tor release party.

JANE
(shrugging helplessly)
Oh - I'm going to that too.

ROGER
(sighing)
I should have expected as much.

JANE
Beta testers have to be there. You could come along, you know.

ROGER
No, the candidates are talking about the national debt tonight.

JANE
I could plug you into a Spec-Tor broadcast of the event!

ROGER
(slightly superior)
No, it wouldn't be the same. Forget about it.

He turns towards the door.

JANE
(under her breath)
You've never even tried it!
(louder)
I haven't seen you much lately.

ROGER
(laughing)
You haven't seen anything beyond those glasses lately.

He exits the room.

JANE
 (calling after him)
 They're not glasses.

WS of her sitting down at her computer and plugging the Spec-Tors in.

JANE
 So, V.R.E.N., what did you think of
 the demo just now?

MS of a small, blimp-like robot with saucer-like eyes flying into her computer screen from the Spec-Tor icon on the desktop.

V.R.E.N.
 It looks very nice, Jane. You're
 really pushing the bounds of
 augmented reality.

JANE
 You're not just saying that because
 I configured you to be nice, are
 you?

V.R.E.N.
 Programming only goes so far, Jane.
 Everyone's going to love it.

JANE
 (muttering)
 Everyone but Roger.
 (louder)
 Hey, V.R.E.N., did you place my
 order for the Spec-Tors Unlimited
 yet?

V.R.E.N.
 Yes...and I believe the order's
 shipping tomorrow.

JANE
 (inspired)
 Wait - can you order me two pairs,
 express-mailed? Our anniversary's
 coming up.

V.R.E.N.
 Sure. Is that new Spec-Tor code
 you've been working on for the past
 two months for him?

JANE
 (smiling)
 Maybe.

EXT. PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON NEXT DAY

Roger parks his car in a methodical fashion, and gets out. MS of the flowers in his hands. He walks to the back of his car and pauses to lock the car. When he continues on his path, he comes upon two people arguing with each other across it, blocking the path.

PLAYER 1
 We said free moves only! That's totally a paid feature.

PLAYER 2
 No, I leveled up!

PLAYER 1
 You don't have the time to level up that much.

PLAYER 2
 How stupid do you think I am? Cosmic Concussion's not on the upgrade path.

ROGER
 (inching forward)
 Excuse me?

The players continue arguing with each other, and Roger inches between them until he's standing between them. They continue arguing as he's not even there. He continues on his path, shaking his head, and shoving his free hand into his pocket.

EXT. DORM BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Roger heads for the door to the dorms, then has an idea. MS of him silently counting the windows of one building. CU of his hands picking up some pebbles from the ground. MS of him from the side as he pulls back his arm and throws one of the pebbles at a window.

INT. JANE'S DORM ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jane is boxing with an imaginary opponent. She's wearing comfortable exercise clothes, and her hair is up. She ducks and weaves in the center of her dorm room, panting for breath. CU of the glasses on her face. CU of first one pebble hitting the window, then another. Jane doesn't hear

them.

EXT. DORM BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Roger pulls his hand back to throw another pebble, but turns that motion into a stretch as some people walk by. MS of him turning to look back at the window. CU of the empty window frame.

WS of Roger as he pulls out his phone and dials a number.

INT. JANE'S DORM ROOM - CONTINUOUS

CU of Jane's phone ringing. MS of Jane continuing to shadow-box.

EXT. DORM BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Roger gives up and puts the phone back into his pocket.

EXT. JANE'S DORM ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

WS as Roger knocks on the door again. CU of him putting his head up next to the door. He hears the sound of Jane boxing, and his mouth twists. WS of him stooping to place the flowers on the floor. WS of him going back down the hall.

INT. CAFETERIA - NIGHT

MS of Roger sitting at a table reading a newspaper. Zoom out to WS to reveal other people sitting and eating at the same time. The people closest to Roger are turned away from him. Roger seems to be in his own little bubble. The people around him are talking and laughing easily, while Roger maintains steady focus on his newspaper. After a while, he hears something that he wants to pay attention to, so he lowers his paper slightly and focuses in on the people to his left.

DINER 1

The campaign seems to be going well.

DINER 2

I don't know - there's some pretty stiff competition on the other side.

DINER 1

Okay, maybe the broadcast wasn't the highest quality, but you have to admit, the challenger had some major physical limitations.

CU of Roger looking extremely interested.

DINER 2

True, but he used his space well.
Man, I can't wait to see what Epic
Fantasy's going to look like in the
Spec-Tors Unlimited!

CU of Roger's face falling. MS of Roger turning his
attention back to his newspaper.

DINER 1

Yeah, I can't wait. No more running
into walls, or tripping over curbs-

DINER 3

(joining in)
-or smacking professors in the
face.

DINER 1

Actually, I'll miss that part!

The three diners laugh and look expectantly at Roger, but
his newspaper's already up, and he's studiously ignoring
them.

JANE

Hey, stranger.

She's standing there with her purse slung over her shoulder
and a plate of food in her hand. She's wearing a nice blazer
over a casual t-shirt and jeans. She slings the purse over
her chair and sits down at the table across from him.

JANE (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

I don't suppose you saw the guy who
left flowers outside my door?

Roger slowly puts down his newspaper, looking at her.

JANE (CONT'D)

I didn't think it was you, since
you usually get me flowers on my
birthday or our anniversary-

ROGER

(slowly)
Right.

JANE

- and since my birthday was last
month, and our anniversary's
tomorrow...

ROGER
 (to himself)
 Damn it.
 (realizing)
 Uh, sorry.

JANE
 (teasingly)
 For the swearing or for the
 flowers?

ROGER
 Both

JANE
 Well, you shouldn't be sorry for
 either one. Though it's very
 gallant of you.

ROGER
 (half-listening)
 Yes, but - tomorrow?

JANE
 (nodding)
 I really enjoyed the flowers, but I
 wish I'd seen you too. Why didn't
 you come in?

ROGER
 You were busy.

JANE
 (scoffing)
 Like that's stopped you before.

ROGER
 Hey...

JANE
 Nothing can get in your way if you
 need anything at all. I really
 admired that about you.

ROGER
 Admired?

JANE
 Sorry, it was a slip of the tongue.

She picks at the food on her plate for a bit. Roger starts to raise his newspaper again. Jane, seeing this, hastily interjects.

JANE

Hey, since we're already talking about it, why don't I give you my gift early too?

She turns in her chair and starts rummaging around in her purse.

ROGER

(leaning forward)

Did you really -

JANE

-get you exactly what every aspiring journalist needs? You bet!

She hands him a small box tied with a bow, which he takes eagerly.

JANE

Happy Anniversary, Roger.

He unties the bow and opens the box.

ROGER

Wow, Jane, I can't believe you remembered! I always wanted a -
(his face falls slightly)
Pair of Spec-Tors?

JANE

(pretending not to notice)

Not just any pair of Spec-Tors. These are the unreleased Spec-Tors Unlimited, the ones where you upload your mind into the virtual world. No boundaries. No physical limitations. The software's not even ready yet - but I was able to get two advance pairs!

ROGER

(searching for the right word)

That sounds...risky.
(placing the glasses back into the box)

JANE

Yes, I'll finally be able to run some larger simulations. We might

(MORE)

JANE (CONT'D)

even be able to attend some of those political conventions that you're always talking about!

ROGER

(muttering under his breath)

Or we could attend them in person.

JANE

(sensing his mood)

How about I come over tonight and we can try them out together?

ROGER

Sure - oh, darn, I, um, just remembered - I have a meeting to get to right now.

Roger stands up and starts collecting his things. CU of Jane's face falling.

JANE

(half-rising)

On our anniversary?

ROGER

(calling over his shoulder)

I'll see you later.

Jane slowly sits back down, dejected.

CUT TO:

INT. ROGER'S DORM ROOM - EVENING

WS of Roger sitting at his desk with a piece of paper in front of him. CU of the title scrawled across the top - "A Dangerous Lack of Reality." He's tapping his pencil on his desk. Change focus from him to the bookshelf behind him, where the gift box containing the Spec-Tors is. Re-focus on Roger. He reaches across his abnormally organized desk and turns on the radio. The sound of a broadcast fills the room. He closes his eyes and listens.

EXT. ROGER'S DORM ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jane is standing outside, her hand poised to knock. She stands there with her hand raised for five seconds, listening to the filtered strains of the broadcast through the door before she finally knocks.

ROGER

Come in!

Jane enters the room hesitantly. Roger turns off the radio, swivels in his chair to face her, and then, seeing who it is, instantly stands up.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Hello, Jane.

JANE

Hey. How did your meeting go?

ROGER

Great.

JANE

That's good.

(struggles with herself
for a moment)

Listen - I think we should have some fun together for our anniversary. There's an exhibit at the museum of history on the birth of the Internet. Wanna head over tomorrow night?

ROGER

(surprised)

Really? An actual, physical exhibit? You really want to go?

JANE

Yeah, I think it would be fun, and afterwards, maybe I could come over to your place?

ROGER

(realizing)

Oh! Uh, that sounds great.

JANE

(beaming)

I'll pick you up tomorrow night then!

Jane waves goodbye and dashes out the door. Roger is left staring after her, a bit dazed, as if thinking "What have I gotten myself into?." He returns to his desk, sees his article, and pushes it aside.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. JANE'S DORM ROOM - MID-MORNING

MS of Jane sitting at her computer. Again, her hair is up in a ponytail, and she's wearing a t-shirt and jeans. CU of her hands turning over the Spec-Tor Unlimited.

V.R.E.N.

Is something bothering you, Jane?

JANE

I was just thinking - is this really a good idea? Uploading our minds into computer simulations?

V.R.E.N.

Is that a rhetorical question? I don't do so well with those.

JANE

I mean, I'm really excited for it, but at the same time, I can't remember the last time I took a walk in the woods.

V.R.E.N.

Your Spec-Tor usage indicates a 13.7 minute excursion at GPS coordinates corresponding to Waverly Park - six months ago.

JANE

Smart-ass. I meant a real walk. Without the Spec-Tors on. I never leave you behind anywhere.

V.R.E.N.

(deadpan)

My feelings won't be hurt if you ever do decide to leave me behind.

(serious)

If you no longer need the calming effects of the Spec-Tor, then disconnection is strongly advised. At least, that's what my README says.

JANE

(backtracking)

Disconnection's a little drastic!

An electronic beep sounds.

V.R.E.N.

You have a message from the
company, Jane.

JANE

Hmmm..Looks like the Beta for the
Unlimited version is out now.

V.R.E.N.

(somewhat reluctant)

I am prompted to ask you if you
would like to download it now.

Jane's cell phone begins to ring somewhere in the room. MS
of her getting up and starting to look for it.

V.R.E.N.

(forced)

Would you like to download it?

JANE

(distracted)

Hm? Oh, sure, go ahead, I'll look
through the SDK tonight.

(finding her phone)

Hello? Hello, Doctor Grisham. Yes,
I've been following the schedule
you set out for me...Yes, I'm
downloading the update now.

She starts rummaging through her room for her purse. Then,
finding it, she mouths, "Goodbye" to V.R.E.N. and heads out
the door.

JANE

Reduce my usage? Why would I need
to do that?

INT. ROGER'S DORM ROOM - EVENING

Roger's standing at his bathroom mirror, nervously fiddling
with his shirt collar. He wets his fingers and tries to
smooth down his hair, but it's quite stubborn. He
straightens his posture as much as possible, then smiles
self-deprecatingly at his reflection in the mirror. A knock
sounds on his door and he dashes to open it. Jane stands
just outside, with her hands behind her back.

ROGER

Jane! Hi!

Jane doesn't look much different from her earlier
appearance, aside from her hair being down. Roger realizes

that he's standing ram-rod straight and makes himself slouch a bit more.

JANE
(shyly)
Are you ready?

ROGER
Yes - shall we go?

JANE
(tilting her head)
Follow me.

ROGER
(following her out)
Coming!

INT. HALLWAY

MS of Roger and Jane walking down the hallway, side-by-side.

JANE
I'm really excited for this exhibit! It's been a while since I've been to a museum.

ROGER
(offhand)
Or anywhere, really.

JANE
They have an awesome Spec-Tor museum assistant, too. V.R.E.N.'s so jealous!

ROGER
(glancing at her purse)
Did you bring those with you?

JANE
Of course. I never go anywhere without them.

ROGER
(coldly)
I see. Well, can you wait one minute for me?

He turns to go.

JANE
Why? What are you doing?

ROGER

I need something to take notes with for my next article.

JANE

It's an exhibit, you know. Nothing too exciting going on there.

ROGER

Obviously, if you're bringing your Spec-Tors. Everyone's going to be plugged in, aren't they?

JANE

Well, not everyone, but it does enhance the experience. I have an extra pair for you, too.

ROGER

I'll stick to observing the spectacle, thanks.

JANE

(realizing)

Wait - is your next article about Spec-Tors?

ROGER

If I won't have the pleasure of your company tonight, at least I'll get a good article out of it.

JANE

(recoiling)

That's disgusting.

ROGER

No, what's disgusting is watching you and all those other lunatics run around in your own fantasy worlds.

JANE

It's not like I enjoy your condescension or judgment either. Guess what? Reading about politics doesn't make you a politician! At least I'm in love with my own life, and what it could be. There are two people in this relationship, Roger, but around you, it feels like one.

ROGER

(coldly)

Then why don't I just leave?
That'll leave you with plenty of
space for another person. Maybe
V.R.E.N. can help you out.

He turns around and takes a step, but can't resist having
the last word.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Come back when you can handle
something real.

He leaves and Jane's shoulders crumble.

INT. JANE'S DORM ROOM - EVENING

CU of Jane sitting at her desk, hands in her hair. It's
obvious she's been crying. She hits a button on her keyboard
and the monitor springs to life. V.R.E.N. appears on screen.

V.R.E.N.

You're back early - I wasn't
expecting you until tomorrow.

JANE

(scrubbing at her eyes)
Plans changed.

V.R.E.N.

I'm sorry, Jane. And with all that
work you were putting into the
partner adventure, too.

JANE

Don't be. I should have seen it
coming.

(changing the subject)

Is the Beta ready?

V.R.E.N.

I have downloaded all the software.
Here's the manual-

JANE

No need for that. Let's fire it up.

V.R.E.N.

Are you sure? It doesn't look ready
yet-

JANE

Looks ready to me. Shouldn't be too

(MORE)

JANE (CONT'D)

difficult to use.

CU of her placing the new Spec-Tors on her head. MS from side of her body going rigid, then falling back in her chair.

V.R.E.N.

Jane? Jane!

EXT. SKY - SUNRISE

Jane's floating in midair with her eyes closed. CU of her eyes opening - we can see the reflection of a beautiful sunrise in her eyes. CU of her face - a smile is beginning to form.

JANE

Now THIS is amazing. Really amazing.

(raising her voice)

V.R.E.N.? I'm gonna need you to cancel my appointments for tomorrow.

V.R.E.N.

(voice faint)

Are....sure? ...classes....worth it?

Jane's not paying attention. She's raised her hands to two touch screens which have appeared, and is busying typing and swiping on their faces. Around her, the world is changing at a rapid pace. Mountains come and go. Seas rise and fall. Forests advance and retreat.

V.R.E.N.

Jane?

JANE

Leave me alone, V.R.E.N. I've got some exploring to do.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. ROGER'S DORM ROOM - MORNING

Roger's staring at his unfinished article on "A Dangerous Lack of Reality." It still only has the title printed across the top. He pushes it away to turn on the radio - but instead of the news broadcast he's expecting, he hears an unfamiliar voice.

V.R.E.N.

Ugh, finally! Roger Madison, right?

(MORE)

V.R.E.N. (CONT'D)

Jane's Roger?

Roger looks around his room, thinking someone's playing a trick on him.

V.R.E.N.

Do you know how long I've been trying to get hold of you? What's with turning off your cell phone? And leaving your computer off? I haven't interfaced with a radio in, well, ever!

Roger reaches for the power button on the radio.

V.R.E.N.

Don't you dare. Listen, Jane needs you. She really needs you right now. So get yourself over to her room right now, and bring your Spec-Tors with you. Got it? All right, over and out - I always wanted to say that.

Roger slowly stands up, looking confused.

V.R.E.N.

Now! She's not moving!

Roger leaps into action, grabbing the Spec-Tors out of the box on his shelf. He quickly exits his room, looking over his shoulder.

EXT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Roger knocks on the door, then, hearing no response, opens it. MS from over-the-shoulder of his back in the foreground, and Jane sitting on the chair in the background.

INT. JANE'S DORM ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Roger rushes to her side and grabs her by the shoulders.

ROGER

Jane? Can you hear me, Jane?

He tries to take the Spec-Tors off her face, when a voice from behind makes him jump.

V.R.E.N.

That would not be wise. You don't want to break the neural connection.

Roger peers at the computer screen, surprised.

V.R.E.N.

V.R.E.N., Virtual Reality Enabled Nexus. I called you here because Jane's been under for approximately 11 hours now. The longest she's ever been in before is two hours. I couldn't follow her in, so I don't know what's happening.

ROGER

Don't tell me you want ME to -

V.R.E.N.

I'm glad you understand.

ROGER

But I've never -

V.R.E.N.

All you need to know is that the world will change to fit your reality.

ROGER

My what?

V.R.E.N.

Now, Jane's computer won't have enough RAM to continue operation for both of you for very long. So, you'll have to get in, find her, and get her out before it crashes.

ROGER

(nervously)

Why, what does that mean?

V.R.E.N.

(grimly)

Your minds could fragment, and they may not be recoverable.

(cheerfully)

Come on, put them on now.

Roger sits down and hesitantly slides the glasses on. His body goes rigid and then slumps back.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLAINS - DAY

CU of Roger opening his eyes. He finds himself standing on grassy plains without a tree in sight, in the same clothes as what he was wearing in the real world. He shuts his eyes again.

ROGER
Surely my reality's a bit more
interesting than this!

When he opens his eyes again, the plains are studded with boulders and the sky has turned dark. Roger rolls his eyes and slowly turns around, surveying the plains.

ROGER (CONT'D)
(calling)
Jane? Where are you?

Silence. Nothing stirs. He kicks at one of the rocks, then hops back on one foot, hissing in pain and surprise. He looks at the world with new eyes.

ROGER (CONT'D)
This is MY reality.

He looks at the rock again, positions himself, and then kicks it. This time, the rock goes flying into the distance.

ROGER (CONT'D)
Whoa.

He walks over to another rock and gives it a light shove. The rock tumbles into the air and floats there. He punches it and it rockets into the sky.

ROGER (CONT'D)
Amazing. I wonder -

His eyes take on a faraway look as he thinks of something else. His surroundings begin to stretch and blend into something else. We catch a glimpse of a stage and two podiums, before his gaze flickers, and he's back to the plains.

ROGER (CONT'D)
No wonder Jane loves this thing.
That was quick!
(He sits down on the
ground)
Jane, how do I find you?

He closes his eyes and concentrates.

CUT TO:

INT. LIBRARY

CU of their hands closing over the same book.

CUT TO:

INT. JANE'S DORM ROOM

CU of Jane lying on his stomach, listening to music.

CUT TO:

INT. CAFETERIA

CU of Jane's face, lit up when talking about the Spec-Tors

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE - DAY

CU of Roger opening his eyes. He's sitting on a hard rock surface. He looks around some more and finds himself standing on a rough rock cliff overlooking a ruined, bombed-out city. The sky is covered in a yellow haze. Roger instinctively covers his nose with his hand, then, realizing, lowers it, feeling silly.

JANE
(from right)
Roger?

Roger turns his head and sees Jane standing there, looking incredulous. Her hair is down from the usual ponytail, and she's wearing a black trench coat.

JANE
What are you doing here?

ROGER
Your robot spoke to me through my radio and told me to come save you. I swear that's what happened.

JANE
You actually tried the Spec-Tors?

ROGER
...Yes. And I have to say, it's amazing. I can't believe it.

JANE
(shaking her head,
looking disgusted)
Oh, only now? Why are you really here?

ROGER
To...rescue you?

JANE
I don't need rescuing. Typical male egos, always thinking -

ROGER
You're kind of standing in a nuclear strike zone.

JANE
I created it. What - is this-
(making a sweeping gesture with her arm)
-too real for you?

ROGER
We don't have time for this, Jane -

JANE
You never do.

ROGER
Fine!

He takes a deep breath and reaches for her hand. A strange feeling appears on his face when their hands touch, as if he feels nothing there. He takes a deep breath.

ROGER
Jane. I'm sorry, sorry for everything. I was unforgivably rude, and I haven't been a good friend to you at all lately.

Jane stares at him, nonplussed.

JANE
(uncertainly)
Roger, I haven't -

ROGER (CONT'D)
(interrupting, with an uncomfortable glance at the city)
Can we leave now?

JANE
(withdrawing her hand)
Why? Are you creeped out?

ROGER
It's just, the RAM -

JANE

Wow, Roger, I'm impressed. Isn't
RAM a new concept for you?

She turns to face the city.

JANE (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

I haven't even shown you what this
can do yet.

She raises a hand, and the world in front of them instantly
changes to an idyllic green mountain pasture.

JANE (CONT'D)

Oh, I forgot, this isn't real
enough for you. How about some
fire?

The grass instantly is set on fire, and the sky takes on a
reddish tinge.

JANE (CONT'D)

Let's not forget the smoke now.

The air instantly fills with thick, black, choking smoke.

ROGER

Jane, we have to get out of here!

JANE

I'm not going back! Why would I?

ROGER

(voice breaking up)

Jane -

MS of Roger's body beginning to fragment.

JANE

I don't care about what your stupid
rules are anymore!

(waits for a moment)

Roger?

She turns around and sees that Roger isn't moving. He's
standing with his hand held out to her, frozen in time and
space. Even as she watches, he begins to flicker in and out
of her sight. She lunges for him, hand outstretched.

JANE (CONT'D)

ABORT!!!

CUT TO:

INT. JANE'S DORM ROOM - AFTERNOON

MS of Jane moving in her chair, startled awake. She tears off her glasses and sees Roger sitting on the floor.

JANE

Roger!

V.R.E.N.

Jane! Thank goodness you're all right!

JANE

Roger's crashing, V.R.E.N. Help me close all other programs and clear some RAM! Lower the resolution if you have to.

MS as she kneels down on the floor next to Roger and takes his hand.

V.R.E.N.

Program operation has stabilized.

JANE

Oh, thank goodness.

MS as she sits back on her heels, still holding Roger's hand. She waits for a while, then frowns.

JANE

What's happening in there?

V.R.E.N.

I detect increased graphics usage and file access consistent with Epic Fantasy patterns.

JANE

(confused)

Is he - playing a game?

EXT. BALCONY - DAY

Roger is standing on a balcony high above a crowd. Behind him is a stately manor in the style of the White House, or Parliament.

ROGER

(pounding his fist on the balcony railing)

We shall not let these injustices go unavenged!

The crowd roars its approval as he looks nobly into the distance.

INT. JANE'S DORM ROOM - CONTINUOUS

JANE

I don't understand - this isn't like him.

V.R.E.N.

It could have something to do with the crash. On top of that - I think he found the adventure you made.

Jane rises and seats herself at the computer

JANE

The one for our anniversary?
(thinking for a moment)
He'll never come out of that one by himself.

V.R.E.N.

You can't go in there again, Jane. The program could crash again, especially while running the partner adventure.

JANE

(typing)
Yes, this Beta's pretty unstable, too. But this was designed for two people, so...I've got it!

EXT. BALCONY - CONTINUOUS

Roger's beaming as he stands on the balcony, basking in the glow of the crowd's praise.

JANE #2

(flatly)
It feels wonderful, doesn't it?

Roger turns. It looks as if Jane is standing there in front of him, but her face is empty. She is dressed conservatively, like a politician's aide, in a suit jacket and skirt.

JANE #2

I know it feels real - but it isn't.

ROGER

Jane?

JANE #2

Not really. Just a model she's
controlling from the outside.

ROGER

Oh - glad she made it out.
(turning to the crowd)
Can you believe this? They like my
ideas - they like me!

JANE #2

Roger, you just came out of a
crash. You need to abort the
program. Crashing - especially
during your first use of the
Spec-Tor - is not good.

ROGER

I feel fine, though. Look at this
place! Look at me! This is what
I've always wanted to be. Smart.
Respected. Admired.

JANE #2

But you are.

ROGER

No one sees me, Jane. And why would
they? The Spec-Tors can fix
everything.

JANE #2

I see you that way, Roger!
(softer)
I've always seen you that way. Even
when you're being an idiot.

She reaches over and takes his hand.

ROGER

(shaking his head slowly
and blinking)
...Jane?

JANE #2

(gently)
Yeah, it's me.

ROGER

(bewildered)
(MORE)

ROGER (CONT'D)

Is this - am I -

JANE #2

You're still in the Spec-Tors,
Roger, You need to come out.

ROGER

(suddenly)

Jane! I get it. I understand why
you love this so much. It's
amazing. But at the same time -

JANE #2

It's not as real as what we have -
or had.

Roger looks down at their clasped hands.

ROGER

(clearly)

I don't want this.

InT. JANE'S DORM ROOM - CONTINUOUS

MS of Roger suddenly moving to take off his glasses. Jane
almost falls off her chair in her haste to get to his side.
CU of his hand grabbing hers again.

ROGER

(weakly)

I want you. The real you.

MS of Jane lunging at him and buries her face in his shirt.
He folds his arms around her. CU of V.R.E.N. quietly putting
himself to sleep.

JANE

(muffled)

I'm sorry.

ROGER

I am too.

JANE

(pulling away)

I'll put the Spec-Tors away - I'll
give up beta testing -

ROGER

No - I don't want you to. Not for
me. I get it. I understand the

(MORE)

ROGER (CONT'D)

power that the Spec-Tors have over people.

(resolved)

Jane, I take it back. All of it. I didn't understand before, and I won't ever write about you, or the Spec-Tors, or -

JANE

(considering)

No, I want you to.

ROGER

(shocked)

Really?

JANE

Yeah. I want you to write about us, and how we met, and fell apart.

ROGER

(cautiously)

And did we come together again?

JANE

(unsure)

I don't know.

She looks away, uncomfortable.

ROGER

Let's talk about it. Over dinner.

JANE

(smiling slowly)

Okay.

She gets up and goes to the mirror over the sink to freshen up. Roger slowly gets to his feet and draws his left hand out from behind his back. He looks down at his hand, which holds the Spec-Tor. CU from bottom of his face.

MS as he puts it in his jacket pocket.

JANE

C'mon! I'm starving.

Roger goes over to her and reaches for her hand. They smile at each other for a beat before heading out the door.

FADE TO BLACK.

END.