

Virtual, Together

20-DE08-W43

A recent widow is given the opportunity to reunite with his wife through an advanced VR experiment.

EXT. PARK - MORNING - (VIDEO INFORMERCIAL)

A MAN (early 40s,) walking alone down a path in a park. Various shots containing cross dissolves show the man painstakingly alone on a beautiful summery day.

WOMAN NARRATOR

Have you recently lost what was most precious to you (BEAT) but didn't realize until it was too late?

Various angles of the same lonely man trying too hard to look depressed and lonely continue.

WOMAN NARRATOR

Or perhaps there was something that was never said.

Shots of the same man looking at himself in the mirror.

WOMAN NARRATOR

Do you wish to see your loved one, one last time?

INT. CAFE - MORNING

THOMAS, man (early 30s) and his best friend NATHAN (early 30s) sit at a table in a restaurant. Thomas has Nathan's phone in his hand.

THOMAS

What is this?

NATHAN

Just keep watching.

ANGLE ON: VIDEO STREAMING ON NATHAN'S PHONE.

The same man standing in front of a well-lit white background looks directly above wearing futuristic sunglasses. His face is bloated with emotion while standing strangely still. A tear falls down his cheek.

WOMAN NARRATOR

Well now you can.

The woman goes onto narrate the video in the background.

THOMAS

What is this? This isn't funny.

NATHAN

It's not meant to be. It's real.

And it's paid for-- by Nancy and I.

Nathan pulls out a BROCHURE and hands it to Thomas.

NATHAN

Just read this first.

An attractive young waitress (late 20s) walks by their table. Nathan eyes the waitress. Thomas is clearly not interested.

But a very child-like smile sits on Nathan's face.

NATHAN

Man she's beautiful, huh?

THOMAS

Yeah, so what.

NATHAN

I'm not anyone to tell you how long to grieve, I'm just saying sometimes there's opportunities that aren't going to be available forever.

THOMAS

Yeah, well I'll take my chances.

Nathan folds his hands apologetically.

INT. BEDROOM - EVENING

Thomas lays on his side of the king sized bed with a GLASS of whisky on ice. He holds the BROCHURE in hand as he scrolls through the extremely outdated website on his LAPTOP. It's almost as if this corporation is stuck in a 90s time capsule.

The top of the site states the name of the corporation: Virtual, Together - The only VR experience you need.

He closes the laptop. He places his empty glass on a table by the bed.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

CU ANGLE ON: THOMAS' FACE.

Thomas wakes up. The room is spinning. He closes his eyes.

WIDE ANGLE FROM ABOVE ON: THOMAS LAYING ON HIS STOMACH IN THE CENTER OF THE ROOM.

Overdue laundry, an empty bottle of whisky, and trash from a fast food restaurant surround the floor he fell asleep on.

His phone SOUNDS a ringtone. Thomas declines the call. Another moment later the phone rings again from the same number. He ignores it again and switches the phone to vibrate.

He tosses the phone a few feet away from him. BEAT. The SOUND of the cell phone vibrating. It's not going to stop.

Thomas nearly crawls to get his phone.

THOMAS
(mumbling)
Hello?

RECEPTIONIST
(clears throat)
Please forgive the consistency. We just find it best to not waste any time.

THOMAS
I'm sorry who is this?

RECEPTIONIST
My name is Rachel and I'm calling from Virtual, Together Incorporated.

Thomas sees the brochure laying on the floor by the bed.

THOMAS
I never called you guys.

RECEPTIONIST
Our records indicate that you called early this morning at 2:30 am.

Pauses and tries to recall. He eyes the same empty glass by the bed, and then eyes the empty bottle on the floor.

THOMAS
I don't think I can do this. It's still too soon --

RECEPTIONIST
No worries, why don't I give you some

time to ponder and I'll call back in
ten minutes --

THOMAS
(surrendering)
No, no. Please. No need for all that.
I'll do it. Just please let me sleep
now.

RECEPTIONIST
Thank you for choosing Virtual,
Together.

The receptionist hangs up before he can have a chance to say
goodbye.

INT. OFFICE OF VIRTUAL, TOGETHER - MORNING

The reception office looks like a hospital waiting room.
White walls. A tubed TV sitting on a shelf. Light yellow and
orange couches.

Thomas carries a big bag full of items and approaches the
receptionist.

THOMAS
Thomas Mayfield, m'am.

RECEPTIONIST LADY
Agent Brion will be right with you.

THOMAS
(surprised how organized this is)
Okay, thanks.

An office door swings open. A man (late 60s,) wearing an
oversized toupee stands across from Thomas. This is AGENT
BRION. He walks towards Thomas and stands at close proximity
to his face. He gives a warm smile, then gently cups Thomas'
cheeks with his hands. Much like a beloved grandmother
reassuring a grandson.

AGENT BRION
I'm glad you came.

Thomas receives his kindness.

AGENT BRION (CONT'D)
Let's start, shall we.

INT. SMALL INTERVIEW ROOM

They enter a bare room with only two chairs sitting across from each other and one small squared wooden table.

AGENT BRION

So let me grab that bag from you and go ahead and have a seat.

Thomas sits down. Agent Brion proceeds to search through the items Thomas brought. He is head deep in the bag. His face cannot be seen but only his comments can be heard as he shuffles through each item.

AGENT BRION (CONT'D)

Oh. Very good. This will work. Maybe not this. Very, very good.

Thomas remains quietly seated on his chair.

AGENT BRION (CONT'D)

Okay, Thomas. These items you brought are perfect. Especially the journal. It'll really help us figure out the nuances of your wife to bring out the most natural experience possible.

THOMAS

(under his breath)

Natural?

AGENT BRION

Yes, Thomas I realize all this is unnatural. But death itself seems like that at times, doesn't it? Unnatural.

THOMAS

I suppose.

AGENT BRION

So now Thomas our agents will quickly swift through these items in detail. We just need your authorization to search through your wife's personal items including her text messaging history, videos, and such. All of which such information will help us give you an accurate experience.

Agent Brion slams down a large pile of paper, thicker than new house documents.

Just as he takes his pen to sign it a WOMAN (70s) enters the room carrying a DEVICE resembling a minimalistic pair of futuristic sunglasses.

THOMAS

What's this?

AGENT BRION

This is Bertha. She's going to place these glasses on your face for the advanced interview.

Bertha proceeds to place the glasses on his face.

THOMAS

Advanced?

AGENT BRION

Yes, it'll save us hundreds, perhaps even thousands of hours from verbally communicating your answers to us.

THOMAS

What kind of answers.

AGENT BRION

The device will scan your brain to discover a wide spectrum of memories you have of her: the sad ones, the good ones,
(winks, jabbing Thomas' shoulder)
the intimate ones. Also, how she saw the world. It's all quite a simple procedure which we shall begin, now.

Thomas sits calmly on the chair as the procedure begins.

AGENT BRION

I shall be back in two minutes and then we'll get started with your experiment. (corrects himself)
EXPERIENCE.

He proceeds to walk out the room and shuts the door.

Bertha stands patiently beside Thomas waiting for the device to signal it's completion.

The process of downloading data from his brain now begins. A moment into the process he hears multiple VOICES of himself all at once. It's discombobulating.

It is followed by a cacophony of voices of his wife. It's all too much for him and begins to realize the severity of what he's having to face.

In all this Thomas continues to sit quietly. A beat later he gives out a sharp yell. His yell is immediately followed by a short BEEP from the device that resembles a dial-up internet connection.

BERTHA

Ok, Mr. Thomas, this procedure is now complete. Please remain seated and --

Agent Brion enters the room before she could finish her sentence.

AGENT BRION

All set, Mr. Thomas. Follow me.

Thomas follows Agent Brion's lead. Bertha follows closely behind Thomas.

INT. HALLWAY

The three walk down a hallway and arrive at a door with the number fourteen labeled on it.

Bertha pulls out a SIM CARD from the glasses and hands it to an ASSISTANT (60s) in a disposable surgical gown.

Thomas stands in nervousness. This procedure is moving too fast.

AGENT BRION

(standing in close proximity to Thomas)

I know this all seems like it's going really quickly but I assure you our technicians are great at what they do. They don't ever really miss a beat.

Bertha unintentionally drops the SIM card and has to make a few attempts to reach for it due to her weight and size.

Agent Brion opens the door and gestures Thomas to go inside. Thomas apprehensively walks into the room.

INT. ROOM 14

Another vacant room similar to the one before only this one seems smaller and no furniture occupies the space.

Thomas stands in the middle of the room awaiting anxiously. He looks around, unsure of what to anticipate. This is a mistake.

A moment later the floor begins to shift and elevate towards the ceiling. It seems for a second that he will be crushed to death but gradually realizes the ceiling is just an illusion.

The light in the room gradually transitions into an abyss of darkness. A moment later he now stands in pitch black.

Gentle sounds of water lapping can be heard from a distance.

EXT. LAKE SHORE - NIGHT (VIRTUAL REALITY)

He follows a path that is now gently lit by the moonlight. He follows it and sees that it leads to a shore.

A small empty boat floats a few feet away from him. He stands on the shore, taking a moment to decide if he should proceed.

After a beat he proceeds cautiously and walks the boat out towards the open water.

EXT. OPEN LAKE

Thomas finds himself in the middle of the lake with no trace of land anywhere in sight.

A moment later a blurry figure stands in the far distance.

THOMAS
(shouting)
HELLO?

There is no response but the figure only seems to be getting closer as the boat moves forward. As the figure approaches winds begin to kindle. Thomas tries to make out the figure but by now it looks human.

THOMAS
JOANNE?

The figure stands about 25 feet from him. The face of a WOMAN (late 20s) is finally recognizable. She is JOANNE, Thomas' wife. She is as beautiful as he remembers her when they first got married. Her countenance appears at peace and her stance is well-centered.

Thomas is overwhelmed with emotion but has a difficult time using his words to speak.

She now stands 10 feet away from him. Though despite the stirring wind, they both are now at a standstill.

THOMAS

This, (corrects himself), you look so real.

JOANNE

I am real.

THOMAS

(slightly bashful)

You know what I mean. (beat) Is this the closest we can get to each other?

He attempts with all his might to paddle closer to her but to no avail.

JOANNE

Thomas,
(off Thomas' now fixed attention)
just step out.

THOMAS

You crazy? I'm not Jesus.

JOANNE

He wasn't the only one who walked on water.

Thomas pauses to ponder about who else she's referring to.

THOMAS

You want me to step out on the water like Peter?

She gives no verbal response but only shares a look of affirmation.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

There's just no way.

JOANNE

You've come all this far to not try?

Thomas looks around hoping to find another way. There is no other way.

After a moment he gathers all his courage to take a step out of the boat. Thomas lifts his right leg out of the boat.

THOMAS
 (laughing to himself)
 This is crazy.

After one last moment of contemplation, he places his right foot onto the water. To his amazement his foot is held up by the water. He then lifts his left leg slowly onto the water.

He now stands on two feet over an uncertain depth of water.

He locks eyes with his wife.

JOANNE
 Now walk to me.

He gains strength through her eyes and continues to take small steps towards her.

The winds begin to pick up. Thomas looks around trying not to lose footing--or focus.

JOANNE
 Stay with me, Thomas.

A sharp cracking SOUND of thunder startles Thomas and begins to panic.

JOANNE
 Keep moving forward, Tom.

The winds begin to rouse the waves.

THOMAS
 I CAN'T.

He looks down to realize his body is knee deep in the water.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
 This was a MISTAKE. I can't do this.

JOANNE
 (pleading)
 Thomas, find your strength, and keep going.

The waves crash violently against him.

THOMAS
 I can't. I can't.

The water is now up to his chest right below his neck.

THOMAS
Just come back to me. Come back.

Thomas looks elsewhere for help.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
GET ME OUT OF THIS.

No one hears Thomas in this vast body of water.

Thomas is now neck deep in the ocean.

THOMAS' P.O.V. - JOANNE

A SERIES OF SHOTS - MEMORIES BETWEEN JOANNE AND THOMAS

They are speaking intimately in a cafe. On their wedding day. Laying on a bed laughing. Holding each other in the bathroom as they grieve.

EXT. LAKE SHORE

Thomas' body is submerged under water now.

The ocean has calmed to a mere silence. Only the boat remains floating on the waters in the moonlight.

Joanne is no where in sight.

INT. VIRTUAL, TOGETHER'S CONTROL ROOM

Agent Brion, Bertha, and the control engineer view the observation screens.

AGENT BRION
Oh ye, of little faith.

INT. SMALL ROOM 14

Thomas stands, eyes wide opened, in the center of the room standing in front of a well-lit white background looking endlessly above.

ANGLE ON: His hands which are tight. Always tight, always in a fist. His posture remains the same. As if almost frozen.

JOANNE (V.O.)
Let go. I can't hold you anymore. Let go, and trust the process.

EXT. LAKE SHORE

Thomas' head is almost nearly out of the water.

THOMAS

I can't, the waves are getting too high. I'm sinking. I'm drowning.

Joanne is now an arms length away.

JOANNE

You're not drowning...

Joanne crouches down and locks eyes with him.

JOANNE (CONT'D)

You're letting go.

Thomas hears something in this -

After a long moment we see Thomas beginning to rise out of the water.

INT. ROOM 14

Thomas remains in the same posture.

ANGLE ON: His hands opening up slowly.

His body lightly loosens up. He smiles slightly.

FADE OUT.