

Chapter 1: The Janus Programme

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This is the first chapter for the novel ' Janus programme. A man comes to learn that his memories are not his, nothing is as it seems. He does not know about which memory is true and which is fiction.....

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1: The Janus Programme Chapter 1

Chapter 1: The Janus Programme : Chapter 1

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THE JANUS PROGRAMME

By Tahir Hamid

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CHAPTER ONE

Four years after losing his wife, Jim was still a broken man. The loss of his lovely wife due to cancer had been hard for him to get over. He would often dream of her. The wall of his room was still plastered with photos of him and his departed wife. Her clothes still hung in the cupboards as they did before. He would often sit in front of the television and watch movies made using his candy cam; movies celebrating her birthdays and their wedding anniversaries. His wife Annie had been a beautiful creature. Her beautiful face, those deep blue eyes, the flow of golden hair falling on her slender shoulders and the sweet smile that she carried were still planted deep into his memory.

He was sitting in a reclining leather chair when the front door bell rang. An unknown young woman stood outside. He slowly unlocked the door and opened it. The woman had her face turned towards him. However when she turned around, Jim's face turned extremely white; white as if he had seen a ghost. The young woman introduced herself as Mary. She was apparently responding to an ad placed by him in the newspaper; an ad for a nurse to take care of him.

Depression and anxiety had wrecked his life. He was no longer the strong man that he once used to be. Was it a lack of faith in God that had torn his life apart? He was not of anything in life anymore. He had been to several shrinks in the past few years. Finally he was recovering and feeling much better under the treatment of Dr. Steinback. These Jews were talented no matter how much he despised them. The medicine TEGRAL and SEROXAT had helped stabilize his life. The melancholy that he had felt, that restlessness within his soul, that terrible anxiety, the inability to relax, those tremors, panic attacks and paranoia had all been nearly cured. He had opted for the nurse for he felt lonely and needed someone to care for him.

Due to his mental illness, a lot of people whom he knew distanced themselves from him when he needed their support the most. This was how humans were.

He invited the nurse into his house. She sat on the sofa placed in front of his reclining leather chair. And she handed him her resume and copies of academic transcripts and letters of recommendation. She was quite experienced and highly recommended. She had introduced herself as Kate. What had really shocked Jim was how closely she resembled to his beloved and departed wife. That pouted face, her features and her mannerisms all seemed to remind him of his dead wife. Her eyes fell upon the numerous pictures of Jim with his wife. When she saw how close she resembled Jim's wife, she herself was amazed.

Chapter 1: The Janus Programme

She asked Jim where his wife was and when she heard about his loss she felt sad herself. So many young men and women were losing their lives to cancer.

Jim looked at her and kindly told her that she was hired. She would report to his house at 8 am in the morning and leave by 7 pm. She could have her breakfast, lunch and dinner at his house or go out for it. He would be paying her about four thousand dollars per month.

When she left, he sat down dumbfounded and bewildered. He felt bewitched and $\frac{1}{2}$ yet ecstatic. His heart raced in excitement. And then his mood swung quite suddenly.

Jim was the son of a rich businessman who had made his millions working as an actuarial consultant for a Fortune 500 company. Unfortunately Jim's dad and mom had passed away about three years ago in a road accident. Jim had been their only child. According to his father's will, the millions that he had made were now his. Jim himself had gone on to complete his Master's in Business Administration at Harvard Business School. He had put in a few years with Citicorp till the death of his wife. His wife had bore him no children.

Jim had married rather late. He was thirty six when married. At forty, he was not old but his loss of his beloved wife had robbed him of any joy. The grief had turned him old. His long black hair had turned white. There were dark pockets under his eyes. The forehead had become creased and lined with wrinkles. Constant melancholy and the lack of desire to live had made him weak. However treatment under his Jewish shrink had helped him recover quite a lot. He had also taken up yoga under a Hindu Yogi and was going regularly for a walk. Occasionally he would visit a friend or two from the days when he was studying at Harvard. They would often sit together at a local bar and consume much alcohol whilst they heartily reflected over their childhood, their romantic flings and marriages.

Next morning, Kate showed up on time. His heart skipped a beat when he caught a glimpse of her. In fact he smiled for the first time in many years. There was something about her which reminded him so much of his wife. It was as if his wife had returned from the dead. He could for some reason not keep his eyes off her. It was as if he was in a dream but this was real. Kate could not keep herself from blushing. To her, Jim was quite a rich and attractive gentleman. However she had to remind Jim that she did not enjoy being stared at. Jim apologized to her and made for the study where he sat and immersed himself reading timeless classics such as '*A tale of two Cities*' and '*War and Peace*'. A half hour later, Kate stepped into the study and asked him if he would like to go for a walk.

The walk was a part of the recommendations that Jim's shrink had emphasized and so Jim happily assented. New York was warm during the summers. A walk would be excellent. As they strolled down the lane a van suddenly came to a sudden stop near them. Two huge men dressed in black and armed with pistols shoved him into the back of the van. A piece of cloth was put about his eyes and his hands were handcuffed. They even force a piece of cloth into Jim's mouth. What was happening and why was it so? He feared what had happened to Kate and was fearful of what was about to happen. Time seemed to pass slowly and he was sweating and shaking with fear. It was about half an hour later that the van came to an abrupt stop. He was roughly pushed out of the van. A piece of cold metal which in reality was a pistol was placed at his back. He had been pushed about for about five minutes till they came to a stop.

The cloth about his eyes was pulled back and he was shoved into a chair. He was in a dimly lit room. He was surprised to find Dr. Steinberg sitting there. Kate seemed to know him very well. Jim looked at Steinberg who sat in front of him behind a wooden desk that had a lamp placed on it. In the light of the lamp, Jim saw Steinberg staring at him. It was not the same man that had treated him for depression and anxiety. He looked to be someone entirely different. His face was contorted in anger and his voice was loud and harsh. 'Jim', he exclaimed, 'you were our best agent once but you have become useless to us. We had programmed you to possess multiple personalities; we even planted false memories into your mind. You used to respond to

Chapter 1: The Janus Programme

different trigger words; words that would correspond with the memories and thoughts that we had planted in your mind and you would act them out.

However you have lately found a way of blocking those words and triggers that we used to access your multiple personalities. Look at Kate here, she is your beloved wife Annie who we programmed you to believe has passed away a long time back. But she too is a 'program' just like you. We use you for covert operations and assassinating individuals. Under the programme code named 'Janus', hundreds of young babies and children have been kidnapped slowly across the United States of America. Experts in psychology and in hypnosis have been programming and training them for various purposes and plans.

Jim did not know what to think. For a while he was too stupefied to react. Infact he thought of all of it to be baloney and bullshit. The only memory he had was of Annie or Kate. Kate looked at him. It was a cold stare at the best.

'Steinberg' barked at the armed and menacing looking men and commanded them to take Jim to the 'Program Termination' room. The sound of termination did not inspire much confidence within him. He was led to an empty room and locked inside. The room was bare save a small chair placed in a corner. A small light bulb hung from the center of the small cell in which Jim was confined. It was hot and stuffy inside. About an hour passed by before a man dressed in a white coat identified himself as Doctor Albert Maxwell. 'Follow me quickly' he said.

Jim did as he was told. They made their way through a dark and dimly lit corridor. On their right there was a small room which served as a store room for various files and stationary equipment. The doctor hurriedly moved a large free standing wooden shelf aside revealing a small trapdoor. On opening the trapdoor, there were stairs that led down into a musty passage way. The person who had identified himself as 'Doctor Albert Maxwell' spoke to Jim in a low voice and told him that he was in reality Agent Will Roberts who worked for the CIA.

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They had known about the programme '**JANUS**' for some time now. The masterminds of this programme included rogue agents within the **CIA** and **FBI**. Babies were often kidnapped and some of them were being sacrificed to the Devil and others were raised up and programmed with multiple personalities by people skilled in hypnosis, psychology and mind suggestion. They were educated and raised as doctors, engineers, priests, nuns, assassins, clerks, politicians, actors, musicians, scientists, inventors, historians, etc. Many of them had been programmed to respond to various words and triggers that could inspire them to perform actions and deeds that the higher council wanted off them.

It was hard for **Jim** to absorb all this information. Agent Will Roberts advised Jim to disappear somewhere. "It would be best for your safety that you leave this country and head for the Bahamas or some God forsaken country where they cannot find you. This dingy passageway will take you into the sewers that run beneath the city of New York. Now go!"

Jim slowly made his way through the dark and dimly lit passageway. He knew that his life was in danger but it was hard for him to swallow all the Janus bullshit. His world had come apart and he knew not much about his past. The passage soon became darker and damp. He saw mice scurrying about here and there. Soon the foul smell of raw sewerage filled his nostrils. His heart was beating fast. He could hear the sound of running water in the near distance. What danger lurked near him or about him he knew not about. Who was he and what had been his past. He was unsure about himself.

Chapter 1: The Janus Programme

Where could he go and whom could he turn to for answers? Which place was safe and which unsafe? What was real and what was his imagination? Jim nearly stumbled on a stone and fell. He saw some form of light a few yards from him. He slowly made his way forward towards it.

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Was it sunlight? Evidently it was and there was a rusty ladder made of iron attached to the cement wall. He slowly made his way up using it. It was a back alley of a large building where he slowly emerged. It was a run-down place. A lot of rough looking men walked nearby.

Seeing Jim covered all in mud and grime, with rotten odor and stench emanating from him, they made it a point to avoid him. Jim soon spotted a taxi cab parked about a hundred yards from him. He slowly made his way towards it. The taxi driver looked at him and thought that he was some bum. Luckily Jim had his wallet with him and he had money as well. The taxi driver reluctantly let him in. Once he was seated, Jim asked the cab driver to take him down to a friend's place that he remembered. It was a 20 minute ride to the outskirts of New York City where his friend Carey lived. They had been at Harvard together. It was about six in the evening. Alighting at his destination, he made his way to the apartment and rang the bell. It was perhaps a minute later that he stood face to face with Carey. Seeing Jim covered in mud, grime and shit wasn't what he had expected. He exclaimed 'What the hell happened to you?'. ½ 'Can I come in and I will tell you everything in detail? Jim answered. ½ As Jim stepped into the apartment, he asked Carey if he could lend him some fresh clothes.

Carey showed him a few shirts and trousers to choose from. Luckily both men were nearly of the same physique and height. ½ Jim chose a pair of faded LEVI jeans and a white POLO T shirt. He was about to take a bath when Jenny, the second half of Carey showed up. He knew her well from those days at Harvard. She was also curious as to what had happened to Jim. Jim grinned at her and said 'later'. He was desperate to have a quick shower. The dirt, the grime and the smell was driving him nuts.

As he was having a shower, he had an intuition that he was not safe at this house.

Outside Carey was busy talking to 'Steinberg'. 'I thought you had taken care of him' said Carey to Steinberg quietly. You know that he knows too much. I thought I had told you that this program has to be terminated. What is he doing here at my door-step? ½ Clean this mess but discreetly. Don't make a mess of it'.

Carey had not noticed, the bathroom door open a wee little bit. The sound of the shower turned on made Carey believe that Jim was busy having a shower. What Jim overheard during whilst eavesdropping made him shudder in fear. His memories were all jumbled up. It was as if he knew not who was friend and who was enemy.

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Chapter 1: The Janus Programme

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