

GLITCH

Written by

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**EXT. DARK ALLEYWAY - NIGHT**

GEORGE, late 20s, super thin and tall with it, steps from behind a pair of commercial bins, he's wrapped in a large coat and mostly hidden by a woollen hat.

He glances up and down the alley.

GEORGE  
Hey, are you there?

Further down the alley another, smaller, figure detaches from the shadows. He's WEASEL, nestled inside an oversized hoodie, flash of blonde hair poking out.

WEASEL  
Sshh.

The two meet in the middle of the alley, a whispered conversation ensues. Hands gesticulate as an accompaniment.

George breaks from the conflagration.

GEORGE  
No chance, fuck ya.

George doubles up in pain, holding his side.

WEASEL  
Whoa, big fella, keep it calm, Now  
what about --

They huddle again, whispering, hands in motion again.

After a moment they break, nod and shake hands.

George hands over a wad of cash.

Weasel retrieves something small from his jacket and hands it over.

They both scuttle off out of the alley, separate directions and suspiciously checking each other out as they leave.

**EXT. INNER CITY STREETS - NIGHT**

George pulls his overcoat around himself, a shield from the cold.

The streets are bereft of life, only litter and rats move in the darkness.

His path is strewn with rubble, the buildings around him derelict, some missing entirely.

Above the decay a Police vehicle flies by, spotlight flickering though the gloom.

He moves hurriedly through the squalor.

**INT. SMALL KITCHEN - NIGHT**

George stretches up towards the low ceiling and changes a light bulb in the bare fitting.

AMBER, mid 20s, watches him, her freckled brow furrowed, nibbling on her fingernails.

AMBER

Do we need to swap all the bulbs?

GEORGE

Yeah babe, need better lighting.

He moves round the cheap kitchen table and over to another light. He swaps the bulbs over, grimaces as he stretches,

The light in the room increases again.

AMBER

And it's gonna work?

GEORGE

Yeah, no worries.

George replaces the bulb in the last fitting, grimaces in agony as he stretches.

AMBER

Okay?

GEORGE

No, but will be.

The kitchen is bathed in bright light, exposing the grungy, squalid state of everything.

AMBER

We need to paint in here.

GEORGE

You need to clean in here.

She slaps his behind.

AMBER  
Cheeky.

                  GEORGE  
Sorry...

George stares into his wife's eyes.

She takes his hand and gives it a gentle squeeze.

                  AMBER  
It'll be okay.

He squeezes the back of her hand and pulls it slowly to his cheek.

                  GEORGE  
I wish there were another way...

                  AMBER  
The cost...

                  GEORGE  
Yeah, I know, we can't afford it.

He lets her hands go as the pain wracks his body again.

                  AMBER  
Now?

                  GEORGE  
Yep.

George takes a plastic sheet from one of the kitchen chairs and unfurls it onto the table.

Amber adjusts the sheet until it's neat and squared away.

She holds her hand out.

George takes a small game cartridge from his pocket, the one from the alleyway, and places it her hand.

                  AMBER  
Okay, ready?

George climbs onto the table, lies down, legs dangling over the end.

                  GEORGE  
Not really.

                  AMBER  
I know, sorry.

GEORGE

Are you sure we can't do this  
another way?

AMBER

We tried everywhere, we can't even  
afford the back street option.

GEORGE

God...

AMBER

Sorry.

She goes to the sink.

On the drainer sits a large pan, next to it a medicinal  
looking bottle and some rags.

She takes the bottle and the rags, unscrews the cap and pours  
some of the liquid onto the rag.

GEORGE

Remember, just like a game, quick  
and confident.

She places the rag over his mouth.

AMBER

Breath deep.

His eyes light up in panic, briefly, fades, eyelids flutter  
shut.

George exhales deeply as she takes the rag away.

He's out.

She leaves the room briefly, returns with an Assisted Virtual  
Reality helmet.

The unit is bulky, old and a bit battered, the microphone is  
taped in place and the visor has a small chip in it. She  
pushes the cartridge into a side slot and flicks a switch on  
the side.

The helmet activates, side lights emit a dull glow and it  
starts to hum.

She slips it on.

KITCHEN - AVR AUGMENTED VIEW - NIGHT

AVR

Please select your program.

A carousel of folders appears in front of her face.

Amber scrolls through the folders with a flick of her hand.

- Final Fantasy 15

- Gears of War 12

- GTA 11

At the bottom of the list.

- Student Surgeon, Basic Operations Training

She opens the file by grasping it in mid air.

More files are displayed, she flicks through more.

- Operations A - D

- Operations E - J

- Operations K - R

- Operations S - Z

She grasps the first one in mid air.

Flicks through another stream of folders.

- Appendectomy

Selects it and selects TRAINING MODE.

The AVR kicks in.

AVR

You may skip sections of the training by saying 'Next'.

AMBER

Next.

AVR

Make sure your patient is shaved and cleaned as per training module Preparation.

A folder appears 'Preparation' and flashes for a few moments.

Amber carefully wiggles George's jogging pants down a little and his T-shirt all the way up to his chin.

He's already shaved the approximate area.

AMBER

Next.

The 'Preparation' folder disappears.

AVR

Please select 'Open' or  
'Laparoscopic'.

AMBER

What?

AVR

Please say 'Open' or --

AMBER

Yes, I heard.

Amber looks scared.

AMBER

Fuck, which one?

She looks down at her husbands exposed skin.

AMBER

Open... I guess.

A grid appears on George's stomach, to the right of his belly button and adjusts itself slightly before stabilising. Locking on.

A perforated red line appears on his skin.

AVR

Make an incision along the red  
line, pressing gently but firmly  
with the scalpel.

Amber slips on blue latex gloves and takes the scalpel from the pan.

AMBER

Fuck.

The red line pulses slightly.

Her hand shakes uncontrollably as she brings it down.

AMBER

Arrgh.

She puts the scalpel down and massages her hand.

Breaths come quick and short from her mouth, calming down.

Amber picks the scalpel up again, holds it out, hands now steady.

She presses down on the scalpel, slices through tissue, blood seeps upwards.

AVR

Blood loss from the incision should be swabbed until the opening is clear.

Amber grabs sterile cotton wool from the pan and wipes the blood away, it seeps back slowly, she swabs again.

AVR

When the blood flow has slowed, repeat the incision to cut through the first layer of the abdominal wall.

AMBER

What, more cutting?

AVR

The red line will continue to guide you through the layers.

AMBER

Layers, shit, how many?

AVR

There are five layers.

Amber groans.

AVR

Please follow the line.

Amber wipes her brow with a sleeve, steels herself, and slices.

AVR

Good technique student. Next layer.

She cuts, again.

AVR  
The next incision will require  
additional pressure.

AMBER  
Oh, goody.

She cuts deeper.

AVR  
Finally, through the Peritoneum.

AMBER  
What? You said five layers.

The AVR doesn't respond.

The grid and red incision line flicker, wink out.

AMBER  
No!

She taps against the headset, where the memory carts protrude  
slightly.

AVR  
Restoring.

The grid and red line re-appear.

AMBER  
Thank Christ.

AVR  
Calibrating from failure point.

AMBER  
What?

AVR  
Now slice through the deep fascia  
layer.

AMBER  
What the peritoni thing?

AVR  
The Peritoneum is the last layer,  
after the fascia layer.

AMBER  
God.

She cuts through more tissue.

AVR

For the Peritoneum, apply light pressure to avoid intestinal damage.

She wipes her forehead again, accidentally getting blood on her cheek.

The Peritoneum parts easily, exposing the lower intestines.

AMBER

Okay, now what?

AVR

Locate the Liver from the intestine.

A picture of an enlarged organ flashes up, looks like a Liver. Flashes off.

AMBER

Liver... Appendix, this is an Appendix operation.

AVR

Appendix, correct, locate the organ.

Amber peers into the hole, blood and flesh peer back.

AMBER

I can't see it.

She moves some of the innards around.

Still no obvious match to the picture.

AMBER

Show me the picture again.

An image flashes up, different to the previous one.

AMBER

That's different, which one is it?

The grid disappears again.

AVR

This is the Appendix, please locate it for removal.

She renews her search, locates it with the new information.

AMBER

Next.

The AVR doesn't respond.

AMBER

Next, goddam it.

AVR

Tie off the base of the Appendix  
with a clamp.

Amber retrieves a small zip lock from the pan.

She attaches it to the base of the organ, pulls it tight.

AMBER

Done.

AVR

Now move onto the removal of the  
Appendix.

AMBER

Ok.

Nothing.

AMBER

Ok, next, help... now what?

The AVR whirs, not a healthy noise.

She smacks the side of the helmet again.

AMBER

C'mon, you fucking stupid robot,  
work.

AVR

Carefully slice it off with a  
scalpel, below the clamp.

Amber sighs with relief.

She reaches in with the scalpel and carefully follows the  
instruction.

Blood and ichor immediately seep from the cut.

AMBER

Fuck, now what.

Silence.

AMBER

That's not right, what have I done wrong?

AVR

You have cut below the first clamp, not the second. Warning, Warning, Warning.

AMBER

Warning... what second clamp?

AVR

Attach a second clamp immediately, onto the incision on the lower intestine segment.

AMBER

Shit.

She attaches a second clamp from the pan.

AVR

Correct.

AMBER

I'll give you 'correct', you little fucker.

AVR

Now place the Appendix in a receptacle for disposal.

Amber reaches back in and retrieves the excised flesh, throws it towards the sink... misses.

AVR

Now we must suture the wounds closed again.

A folder flashes up, Sutures.

AMBER

Is that stitching?

The AVR remains silent.

She grasps the 'Sutures' folder.

Nothing happens.

AMBER

Fuck.

She tries again, still nothing.

AVR  
Yes, stitches.

AMBER  
Finally. Right, stitch it.

AVR  
Starting with the appendix removal  
site, then each layer of the  
stomach wall.

AMBER  
What, one after the other?

AVR  
In sequence.

Amber sews, stitch after stitch, beads of sweat pooling on  
her brow.

Montage

- Sewing.
- Stitching.
- Amber wiping her brow.
- More sewing.

BACK TO SCENE

She puts down the needle and thread.

Slumps into a chair, exhausted.

She takes off the helmet and puts it on the table.

AVR  
Congratulations, you have completed  
the Appendix training module.

AMBER  
(sarcastically)  
Thanks.

AVR  
Your pass rate was a low C, you  
need to do better next time.

AMBER  
Oh, fuck off!

Amber grabs the AVR helmet and hurls it across the room.  
It slams into the sink.

George wakes, glances at his blood smeared wife

GEORGE  
(groggily)  
Hey, how'd it go?

Amber holds up the fleshy stump.

GEORGE  
What's that?

Amber looks confused.

The AVR gurgles from the sink.

AVR  
(drunken)  
That is a duodenum.

AMBER  
God, no...

AVR  
Would you like to take the  
Appendectomy training module again?

Amber collapses to the floor and screams, a thoroughly unpleasant sound.

THE END

FADE OUT.