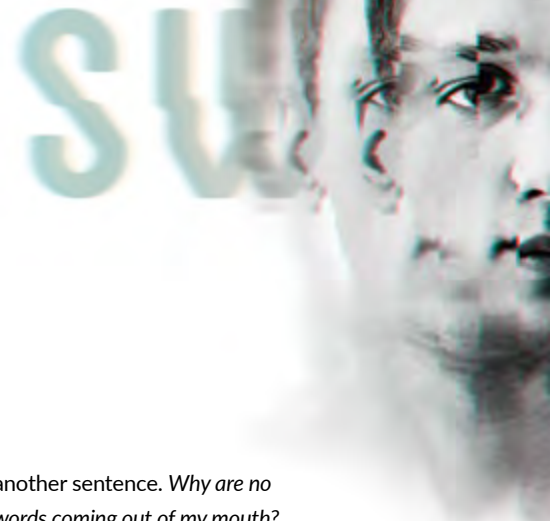


FICTION

SWITCH

Written by
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Blood.
'What was that?'
'Blood.'
'What do you mean?'
'Blood.'

'You have to give me more than that.
Why do you see blood, Jacob?'

'Splatter.'

'Again, I need more than that.'

'Blood go splatter!'

'Hmm okay... At least we're on to
phrases now.'

Jacob shifts and holds on to
the edges of his chair as he sees
the next card, eerily illuminated
by the sterile white light present
all around them.

'What do you see now, Jacob?'

A powerful force wells up inside
him, uncomfortable in its intensity,
washing over him like the waves
of a tsunami. Temperature rising.
Blood boiling. Head throbbing.
Sweating profusely as his body
attempts to lower its temperature.

'Jacob, what's happening?'

The powerful force leaves as a
blood-curdling scream, forcing him
to bang his head on the table.

'Make it stop! Please make it stop!'

He attempts to free his hands from
the binding cuffs. 'My hands! I need
my hands!'

Shaken, the interviewer calls for
security. Jacob sinks his teeth into his
arms, ripping his skin and swallowing
the pieces.

'BLOOD... GO.... SPLATTERRRRRR.'

His screams turn to laughter;
his eyes dart around, their gaze
landing on the interviewer,
'YOUR TUUUUUUUUUUUUUUURN!'

Security enters the room and
attempts to contain Jacob with shocks
and restraints, ensuring he can hurt
neither himself nor anyone else.
As they are moving him out of the
room, Jacob looks at a corner. His
mouth opens, but no sound comes out.

Darkness.

INITIALIZATION: 25%

'Blood.'

'What was that?'

'I said, weren't we here already?'

'What do you mean?'

'What do you mean? We've already
been through this.'

'You have to give me more than that.
Why do you see blood, Jacob?'

'I didn't even say "blood" once! What
the hell are you on?'

'Again, I need more than that.'

He rolls his eyes. 'Wait... wasn't that
light white before? Why is it blue now?'

'Hmm okay... At least we're on to
phrases now.'

'What do you see now, Jacob?'

Enraged, he slams his hands on
the table. 'Are you even listening
to me?! What's with you not fucking
answering me?!'

As the room fills with the loud sound
of skin against metal, he attempts to
speak but is only successful in mouthing
a sentence... *What the actual shit?*

The sound gets louder as he mouths

another sentence. *Why are no
words coming out of my mouth?*

'Jacob, what's happening?'

'What do you mean what's
happening?! I can't speak for some
reason!' He covers his mouth.
'Why the hell can I speak now when
I couldn't before?!'

With rage-filled eyes, he walks
towards the interviewer, opening
his mouth to speak. He halts in his
tracks. *What?! Again?! What the
hell is going on?!*

Shaken, the interviewer calls for
security. While attempting to speak,
he reaches for the interviewer's arm
and grabs it. 'What is happening?!
Tell me!'

Suddenly, droplets of blood appear
on their clothes and on the table.
Perplexed, he lets go of their arm.
'Why is there blood all of a sudden?!'

Security enters the room and shocks
and restrains Jacob. *OW! JESUS CHRIST,
TAKE IT EASY! I'M NOT EVEN PUTTING
UP A FIGHT!*

As they are walking towards the door,
he looks at the corner and opens his
mouth. No sound comes out.

Blinding light.

INITIALIZATION: 50%

'What's going on?'

'What was that?'

'Oh God, not this again!'

'What do you mean?'

'Listen to me! This has already
happened twice!'

'You have to give me more than that.'



Why do you see blood, Jacob?

'Fucking hell! Why am I the only one that's aware?'

'Again, I need more than that.'

'Stop repeating the same shit!'

'Hmm okay... At least we're on to phrases now.'

'What do you see now, Jacob?'

Tears well in his eyes as he groans in disbelief. *I need to find a way out of this hell... Maybe this'll work.* Shaking, he grabs the pen and clicks it on. Tears run down his cheeks and he closes his eyes.

'Jacob, what's happening?'

'Let me do this, please!' His hand goes red. The red-stained pen escapes from his hand, falling onto the floor.

'Shit! That hurts!' A red geyser squirts out from his wrist, painting wherever it touches red. Suddenly, the throbbing stops. *What? Why did it stop already?*

'Security!'

'No! Stop! Not again, please!'

More bright red spots decorate the polka-dotted table.

'Please! Stop this! I can't handle this anymore!'

NO! NO! PLEASE! NOT THE DOOR AGAIN! WHAT DID I DO TO DESERVE THIS?! PLEASE NO! NONONONONONONONONO!

His gaze turns to the corner and he mouths a phrase.

Static.

INITIALIZATION: 75%

Erica presses the pause button on the video player and instantly sanitises her hands after.

'Hey... So... ummm, can I go get a glass of water please?'

The guard looks at her with a smile.

'Sure, go ahead! How's the tape going?'

'Ummm... I don't know. It's very... weird?'

'How so?'

'Well ummm... it feels like I've been watching it for longer than I actually have. Like I've been in there for an hour or so.'

The guard looks at her inquisitively. 'That is weird. The tape replayed every ten minutes or so, so you've been in there for half an hour... Give or take.'

'Yeah...exactly. It just feels strange.'

There's also a... how do I put this?

A peculiar "initialization" message that comes up. It's been increasing by 25% each time.'

'So that means it's now at 75%, right? Any clue what happens when it hits a 100?'

'No idea. One way to find out, right?'

She chuckles. 'Anyway... I'm going to grab my water and wash my hands, thank you.'

'Okay, time to continue. Oh no, why can't I hear anything? Thank God it's the same thing as always,' sighed Erica.

A yawn escapes her lips as she witnesses the same scene for the fourth time in a row. The white numbers on her phone tell her that nine minutes have passed.

'IT'S TIME!'

'What?!' Her eyelids grow heavy as fatigue envelops her body. 'No... I have to... see... what... happens...'

INITIALIZATION COMPLETE

She opens her eyes and feels confused.

'Hey! I'm coming in!'

Looking up, she sees a uniformed man in front of her whom she has never met before.

'Are you okay? I heard you scream.'

Her eyes open and close a few times; she attempts to expel the fatigue by rubbing them. 'Where am I?'

The guard laughs. 'Wish I had such a good nap that I forget where I am. You're in an asylum researching a case, remember?'

Laughing, she puts her hand on her chest, 'Nah come on! Oh shit you're serious?'

He nods, worry replacing the smile on his face. 'Yeah, 'course I am. You've been in here for the past forty minutes, watching the same scene on this tape.'

Sighing, she looks at the TV screen, seeing in front of her the reflection of two people; she lowers her arm. The reflection does the same. 'Oh that's right! I can't believe I forgot...'

The guard chuckles and stands up. 'Want me to get you another glass of water?'

She nods.

'I'll be right back, Erica'

Erica, huh? I don't know what happened, but I don't really care. The important thing is that I'm finally fucking free.

The guard looks at her in awe. 'Wow, you were parched.'

'Ha! Yeah, no kidding.' Erica puts her glass on the table.

'Anything new on the tape?'

'Oh, uh not really. Didn't help with the case at all.'

'Damn, well, that's normal in a case. Right?' He chuckles.

'Oh yeah, very normal. You can put it back where it was.'

She slaps her hands against her thighs and gets up. 'Can you clean up here? I'm gonna head home.' *Wherever that fucking is.*

'Yeah sure!'

'Hell yeah! Bye!'

'Bye... That was weird. Anyway, what was this about?'

'Blood!'

'What was that?'

'Blood!'

'What do you mean?'

'Blood!'

'You have to give me more than that.'

Why do you see blood, Erica?'

Blood dripped from her hands, but her usual urge to cleanse them was strangely absent.