

an extract from

ELSE: WAKE()

Written by

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The question of whether machines can think is about as relevant as the question of whether submarines can swim.

- Edsger W. Dijkstra

In this day before sonar, a submarine traveled utterly blind, trusting entirely in the accuracy of sea charts.

- Erik Larson

Crushing darkness.

A pulsing beep. Measured and monotoned, like a heart monitor.

Clicking, whirring. The sound of waking machinery.

ELECTRONIC VOICE
Restoring lighting systems.

INT. CRANE TECHNOLOGIES SAFETY POD

Buttons and panels start to light up, flashing hungrily, just barely hinting at the shape of a hunched figure.

The lights kick in with a hum. The cabin is bathed in a sterile blue, and we see the figure clearly.

An ASTRONAUT. White jumpsuit and helmet. She sits slumped in a plush chair, held in place by fastened straps. WIRES and HOSES snake from her suit into the wall behind her.

ELECTRONIC VOICE
Restoring oxygen systems.

There's a *whoosh* as air fills the room.

--and the astronaut jolts to life. Her head twists, searching the cabin, totally disoriented.

She realises she's strapped down. Tugs on her bindings.

No dice.

She yanks again, and the straps fly free, until--

She's jerked back. The wires and hoses that anchor her suit to the wall are holding strong.

ELECTRONIC VOICE
Good morning, passenger.

The voice is pleasant but stiff – and clearly synthesised.

ELECTRONIC VOICE
It is now safe to remove your assisted breathing apparatus. Please take care not to make sudden movements.

The astronaut pries away one hose, and twists off another.

ELECTRONIC VOICE
Your musculoskeletal system has likely weakened. You may find your body has lost weight, or that your eyesight has worsened.

She pushes off from the seat, only to find herself FLOATING through the cabin, totally weightless.

ELECTRONIC VOICE

These symptoms are considered normal, and due to their temporary nature, should not cause distress.

The astronaut reaches out and grabs onto a handhold on the cabin's ceiling. She wobbles slightly before settling.

ASTRONAUT

(muffled)

God.

(then)

Fuck this.

She twists her helmet, yanking it from her head--

And we see her face. This is DARCY SARUHASHI, early thirties. Once thin, now gaunt. Too stubborn to let the vertigo win.

Darcy holds up an arm, shielding her eyes from the light. Around her, the room swims.

The cabin is cramped - barely three meters across. The walls have been divided into six distinct segments.

Three of these are fitted with high-tech CONTROL PANELS. Two others each hold a row of plush CHAIRS. The final wall contains a large glass window. A PORTHOLE.

This is the cabin. It's tiny, almost claustrophobic.

And it's where we're going to spend the rest of the movie.

Darcy pushes herself away from the ceiling. She steadies herself on the armrest of a chair.

DARCY

Computer...?

Is that its name? She plows on anyway.

DARCY

Where-- Where am I?

ELECTRONIC VOICE

Several major features - including complex speech recognition, two-way communications, and advanced vocal synthesis - have been disabled to maximise available processing power. These functions may be re-activated by an approved technician.

A beat.

DARCY
 You don't know where we are?
 Or... you just--

ELECTRONIC VOICE
 Several major features -
 including complex speech
 recognition, two-way
 communications--

DARCY
 Yeah, okay.

Another beat. The computer drones on.

DARCY
 Fuck this.

She pushes herself towards the central control panel--

When something catches her eye. Movement.

Darcy twists awkwardly, and kicks off the approaching control panel, letting momentum do the work, reaching out for the HAND-HOLD by the porthole, when--

Her eyes adjust, just enough to see through.

Beyond -

A field of stars.
 A brilliant nebula.
 A glistening comet.

All SPINNING VIOLENTLY, as the ship *hurtles* through space.

Darcy stares. It sinks in. Slowly.

She recoils.

DARCY
 --jesus christ jesus christ jesus
 christ jesus oh jesus *Christ*--

ELECTRONIC VOICE
 Please refrain from looking
 through the Safety Pod viewing
 window while the Safety Pod is
 still in motion. Doing so may
 cause undue distress, consuming
 more oxygen than the simula--

DARCY
FUCK YOU.

ELECTRONIC VOICE
 --tions have deemed necessary,
 and subsequently accounted for.

Twisting, Darcy kicks frantically off a wall, launching herself towards the blinking lights and monitors.

The main control panel looks like a cockpit by way of Fisher-Price. Lights and huge buttons flash angrily, and monitors print out messages faster than the eye can read.

Choosing a button at random, Darcy lashes out at it.

Nothing happens.

She starts flicking switches indiscriminately, dragging her finger from one button to the next like a classical pianist.

DARCY

C'mon, c'mon, c'mon.

ELECTRONIC VOICE

Excessive interaction detected.
Please do not persist with--

Darcy ignores it. Just keeps pressing buttons.

DARCY

Come on.

ELECTRONIC VOICE

A sustained level of elevated distress has been observed in passenger Darcy Hashimoto--

DARCY

Shut up.

ELECTRONIC VOICE

--would you like to re-enable advanced features such as non-basic speech recognition, two-way communications, and--

DARCY

NO. SHUT UP.

(beat)

WAIT-- WAIT HOLYSHITYES.

The voice twists and cuts off.

Silence. The control panel blinks accusatorially.

And the sound of static bursts through the speakers.