



GLITCH IN THE MATRIX (SHORT VERSION) V2

A play by Stephen Salah

Setting

A Wetherspoons pub, 20 minutes before closing

4 CHARACTERS (mixed genders):

Josh, male, early 30's

Dave, male, early 30's

Ellie, female, late 20's

Julia, female

JOSH and DAVE at a table, several empty glasses. Dave taps on his phone

JOSH *(Looks at his watch)* Twenty minutes to go and it's three deep at the bar. Get in there quick mate.

DAVE I'm trying! Same again?

JOSH Yeah, but get two.

DAVE Two?

JOSH Yeah, two each or we won't get another one in.

DAVE Okay, four pints of Stella.

JOSH Don't forget to use that discount code I got sent.

DAVE What was it?

JOSH WhiteRabbit, one word. Wait! Get crisps.

DAVE Aren't we getting chips on the way home?

JOSH Of course.

DAVE What do you want crisps for then?

JOSH What are you, my Mum?

DAVE *(Dave taps on his phone)* OK order's in. All done!

JOSH Nice. Where the hell is Julia? She's leaving it late.

DAVE Hey, don't look, but there's two girls behind you, and they're looking this way.

Josh yawns, stretches and turns around.

JOSH Nice, but out of our league. Face it mate, we're going home alone. Again.

DAVE Maybe we should drink somewhere else for a change.

JOSH Don't be ridiculous. *(They finish their pints)*
So, 9- 11, Building Seven.

DAVE Not this again!

JOSH Building Seven is the smoking gun. BBC reported it had collapsed twenty minutes before it actually did.

DAVE Okay. And what's that got to do with Princess Diana?

JOSH That's a different story entirely! Keep up. Diana is the descendant of the illegitimate son of Queen Elizabeth the first.

DAVE Wasn't she the Virgin Queen?

JOSH Allegedly.

DAVE So how's that possible then?

JOSH That's the whole bloody point! Diana's wedding to Prince Charles was organised to get the bloodline back on track. William will be the first legitimate King we've had for 400 years.

DAVE Is that true?

JOSH That's why she was killed off. She was going public.

DAVE Where's our drinks? I'm spitting feathers here.

Waitress ELLIE arrives with four pints.

ELLIE Here you go gents.

DAVE You life saver. Where's the crisps?

ELLIE Did you order any? *(Dave shows her his phone.)*
Fair enough, I'll get them now. Red or blue?

DAVE Blue please.

ELLIE You know the red ones are the spicy ones right?

DAVE Yeah. I don't like spicy.

ELLIE *(To Josh)* And you?

JOSH Also blue please.

Ellie hesitates before leaving.

JOSH So, I'm working on something really big with Julia.

DAVE They're definitely looking over. I just caught them.

JOSH Concentrate mate, this is important. Julia has been investigating why Wetherspoons are so cheap.

Dave is still distracted by the girls.

Am I talking to myself?

Josh shuffles over to block Dave's view.

DAVE Sorry mate. What?

JOSH Why are Wetherspoons so cheap?

DAVE What are you on about?

JOSH Consider this. What if it's a way for the government to spy on all these people that come here?

DAVE Eh?

JOSH That's what Julia thinks.

Dave looks at him blankly.

DAVE Have you got any evidence?

JOSH Mainly anecdotal, but there is one thing.

DAVE What?

JOSH *(Checks over his shoulders.)* Wetherspoons...is anagram.. for We r the snoops.

Ellie returns with two blue bags of crisps. She is now wearing her coat.

DAVE Thanks. Are you finished for the night?

ELLIE Yes, thankfully. Is it alright if I sit with you guys for a bit. My bus isn't for 20 minutes.

DAVE Sure, take a seat.

JOSH Dave, give her your spare pint.

Dave gives Ellie one of his pints.

ELLIE Cheers, I'm Ellie.

DAVE Cheers Ellie. I see you in here very night.

ELLIE Same.

DAVE You're normally like a vision, a mirage on the other side of the bar. But tonight, you've crossed the Rubicon, you've stepped into our reality.

ELLIE *(To Josh)* Is he okay?

JOSH That's Dave, and I'm Josh.

Josh leans in close to Ellie.

JOSH Ellie, how is it that Wetherspoons are so cheap?

ELLIE Huh, no idea.

JOSH A steak dinner and a pint for seven quid. You couldn't make it at home any cheaper.

DAVE You haven't seen our friend Julia around have you Ellie?

ELLIE What does she look like?

DAVE Our age, shoulder length blond hair, sits here all night drinking white wine and working on her laptop.

ELLIE Doesn't ring a bell.

The last orders bell rings loudly.

JOSH Do you want to know what Julia told me?

DAVE Go on.

JOSH You don't repeat a word, Okay?

DAVE Sure.

JOSH Promise.

DAVE For fucks sake. Shall we shake pinkies?

JOSH I'm serious.

DAVE Okay! I promise.

JOSH It's the phone app.

ELLIE What are you on about?

DAVE Josh believes he's uncovered a government conspiracy.

ELLIE Riiight. How many pints have you lads had?

JOSH Mock us, but you could unwittingly be a part of it.

Ellie laughs.

JOSH Ellie, you must get to know the locals pretty well.

ELLIE Some. It's the same old crowd every night.

JOSH Do any of them ever just..disappear?

ELLIE What do you mean?

JOSH Well, like someone comes in here for a drink, and then you never see them again.

ELLIE Huh, yeah, every day. That's how pubs work. You don't have to be a member or anything.

JOSH Have you ever been asked to sign the official secrets act?

Ellie bursts out laughing.

ELLIE You're joking right?

JOSH Ellie, can I trust you?

ELLIE Of course!

JOSH I'm going to tell you something that might sound a little strange.

ELLIE You don't say.

JOSH Why do Wetherspoons want people to order on the app?

ELLIE Because it's convenient and easy?

JOSH Well, Julia and I think the app spies on the users through the camera and mike in the phone. Imagine the intelligence they could gather in one Saturday night.

Ellie looks stunned.
Tell me. Why don't they ever play music in here?

ELLIE Don't know, but I've a feeling I'm going to find out.

JOSH Because the noise would stop them listening in.
Josh taps on his phone and as he types he speaks out loud.
Wetherspoons. App. Spies. On. Customers.

Momentary silence.
Boom! Just as I thought.

DAVE What?

JOSH Absolutely nothing! Not a thing. They're really keeping this under wraps.

DAVE Actually, think about it. Just now it asked me if I wanted to order the same thing as last time. They know what we last had to drink.

ELLIE Isn't that a good thing? Makes it easier to order another round.

JOSH That's what they want you to think.

ELLIE Who's 'they'?

JOSH The government, the New World Order, the Illuminati.

ELLIE Are you actually being serious? I can't tell.

Ellie downs half a pint. Josh refills it.

DAVE Josh you should write a book. "An Evening in Wetherspoons". About all the characters and stuff that goes on. It could be a good film, or play.

ELLIE Are you a writer Josh?

JOSH Kind of.

DAVE I'm in IT Ellie. I basically design and maintain the council's network, the whole thing. If you ever need any help with your computer, some coding, stationery supplies, anything, just give me a call, or message, Whatsapp, fax even. Shall I give you my number?

ELLIE Uh, maybe later. Who do you write for Josh?

JOSH For anyone who'll pay.

ELLIE What do you write about?

JOSH I just write for companies social media and blogs. Bollocks that nobody reads. I want to be a journalist, bringing the truth to the masses.

Ellie removes her coat revealing a red dress.

DAVE Wow! Are you working tomorrow Ellie?

ELLIE Why?

Dave passes her his phone.

DAVE Can you do me a favour?

ELLIE Sure.

DAVE Can you put your number in there please?

Ellie makes a doofus face, passes it back

ELLIE You know, there is one strange thing I've seen in here.

JOSH What's that?

ELLIE That mirror on the wall.
(Ellie points at the audience)
I think it's actually a 2 way mirror. Behind it there's a room,
always locked.

*Dave walks to the edge of the stage and peers into the audience.
He first raps on, and then gives the doubled handed finger to an
imaginary mirror.*

DAVE Definitely somebody there watching us. I can feel it.

ELLIE *(Looks across the room)*
One second gents, my colleague is calling me over.

Ellie walks to bar.

DAVE She's gorgeous. Do you think I've got a chance?

JOSH I would say the outlook looks poor mate.

DAVE I'll take poor.

Ellie returns with 2 red packs of crisps.

ELLIE Glad to see you changed your mind.

DAVE Who ordered them?

ELLIE Didn't you?

JOSH No.

ELLIE Well someone ordered them on the app for you.

JOSH Show me the receipt.

Ellie gives him the receipt.

DAVE It must have been those two girls.

Dave stands trying to see them.

JOSH Weird. It just says Eat Me.

DAVE It was definitely them. I just caught them looking.

ELLIE So Josh, when did you become so...cynical?

JOSH Hey, trust me. I used to be a civil servant. I've seen how the sausage is made, and it's disgusting.

ELLIE What was so terrible?

JOSH I saw enough to realise that the government as we know them aren't the ones in charge.

ELLIE Who is then?

JOSH I'm working on an article about it with Julia. The Great Reset.

ELLIE And Wetherspoons cheap beer is part of it?

JOSH A perfect example of it.

ELLIE The thing is..I kind of get where you're coming from.

JOSH What do you mean?

ELLIE Well what if you're right? It's not that far fetched.
The question is, what are you going to do about it?

JOSH We'll expose it.

ELLIE We?

JOSH Julia knows people. She was going to tell me about them tonight.

(Checks watch)

Where the hell is she?

ELLIE Josh, do you think people will take their heads out of their phones for even a second to pay attention to you?...
How far would you be willing to go Josh?

Ellie opens the red bag of crisps and holds it out.

ELLIE Have a crisp.

JOSH I don't like the red ones.

ELLIE Try one.

JOSH No thanks.

ELLIE Go on, take it.

JOSH No.

ELLIE *(Menacing)* Take a crisp Josh.

Josh reaches out, and then pulls back. Ellie shakes the bag.

ELLIE The truth will set you free.

*Josh reluctantly takes one and eats it.
Momentary silence, they watch each other.*

DAVE Doesn't look like Julia's coming. We should get over to the chippy before the closing time rush.

JOSH Good idea.

Josh stands, smiles and leaves. Dave scribbles on a scrap of paper.

DAVE Here's my number in case you want to give me a call.

He drops the paper and leaves. A woman at the bar comes and sits with Ellie, removing a wig and sunglasses.

ELLIE Hi Julia. Did you hear it all?

JULIA Yes. He's definitely the one.
Time to take him down the rabbit hole.

END