

"VIR EX MACHINA"

INT. ULTRALIFE LABORATORIES - VARIOUS ROOMS - DAY

MONTAGE as various processes go into the construction of JULIUS EISENSTEIN'S robot body.

A band saw cuts through an aluminum bar, sending metal shavings curling off.

DOCTOR ECKHART (V.O.)

You were designed to fit in.

A gloved hand holds a dremel tool, shaping the aluminum into a limb.

DOCTOR ECKHART (V.O.) (CONT.)

You look human.

A vacuum former lowers over a robot torso, and the plastic sheet molds to its shape.

DOCTOR ECKHART (V.O.) (CONT.)

You act human.

A gloved hand solders connections on a circuit board.

DOCTOR ECKHART (V.O.) (CONT.)

Most importantly, you learn to become more human.

Julius lies face up on an operating table. A pointed device moves in a precise pattern above his eyeball via some mechanical system. He does not blink.

END MONTAGE

INT. ULTRALIFE LABORATORIES BRIEFING ROOM - DAY

Julius and DOCTOR ECKHART sit across from each other at a metal table. Julius sits up straight in his chair, while Eckhart sits

more naturally. Julius is in a simple cotton jumpsuit and Eckhart wears a short sleeve buttoned shirt and tie.

ECKHART (CONT.)

You will live among them. You will learn to be like them. Your mission is of utmost importance to national security.

JULIUS

Are there others like me?

ECKHART

There are others. But each of you is... essential. Irreplaceable.

INT. JULIUS'S HOUSE - MORNING

The sun shines through the window of a cookie-cutter 1950s suburban home. It seems like a family home, but not very lived-in. A newspaper and a hot cup of coffee sit at table. The newspaper is folded back like someone has walked away from it.

Julius enters the room wearing a shirt and tie. He has non-prescription eyeglasses. He sits down to read the paper and takes a sip of his coffee. His eyes do not move across the page; he can take it in just by looking at it. He turns the page and takes another drink of coffee.

After a pause, he puts the paper down, stands up, pours the rest of the coffee down the sink, and walks to the other side of the room, grabbing the TV remote from the arm of the couch on the way.

Julius opens a small closet, something that looks like an ironing board cabinet. A small table drops out, and attached to it is electronic equipment with a long spool of magnetic tape attached. It is otherwise nondescript, a grey boxy shape with a few indicator lights and a wire wrapped around two prongs.

He unwraps the wire and brushes aside his hair to plug it into the back of his head. The machine activates and begins to hum as the spool starts to spin.

The hum grows louder as the machine warms up. Julius clicks the TV on and raises the volume to drown out the hum of the machine. Respected News Anchor GILBERT REESE appears on the morning news.

REESE (ON TV)

...unfortunately, the victim passed away, a tragic, but unsurprising conclusion in these troubling times. Or rather it would have been...

Julius checks a few of the status lights on the box. He's mainly using the TV for noise.

REESE (ON TV) (CONT.)

...if not for the unusual findings of the Cook County Coroner. Upon examining the victim, the coroner found that he was not human, but instead a very lifelike machine. A robot, if you will.

Now he is paying attention. His head snaps up and he stares at the TV.

REESE (ON TV) (CONT.)

We here at American News Network want to urge caution and prudence. Despite fears, there is nothing to suggest that this robot is Russian. There were no identifying markings, and the Central Intelligence Agency has refused to comment.

One of the indicators lights up and the data reel stops. Julius turns off the TV. He pauses, worried, then makes a beeline to the door, grabbing his coat on the way out.

EXT. JULIUS'S YARD - MORNING

Julius walks to his car parked in his driveway. His neighbor BILL waves to him from his driveway across the low hedge that separates them.

BILL

Heya, Julius.

Julius stops by the door of his car. He continues the perfunctory conversation.

JULIUS

Hello, Bill.

BILL

Did you hear the news this morning?
Robots, how about that?

JULIUS

Yes, I saw it. I am...
(trying to find the right word)
Concerned.

Bill's wife Daisy joins Bill, wearing a dress and apron. Bill ignores her. She smiles at Julius.

BILL

You know it's the Russians, right? That
newsman said it wasn't but I've always
said he was a bit of a pinko, didn't I
honey?

Daisy seems surprised to be addressed directly.

DAISY

Yes, of course dear.

BILL

I don't think there's just the one either. If I find one, I think we oughta do our civic duty, if you know what I mean.

Daisy senses Julius's discomfort and steps in.

DAISY

Oh, Julius, I just remembered we're making meatloaf tonight. You should come over; You probably don't get to eat home cooking very often.

JULIUS

(relieved)

Thank you, I'll have to take you up on that.

(to Bill)

I'll see you at work.

Julius gets into his car and drives away.