

Scene 4

Julian now has an armless torso. Claire consults an electronic tablet as she speaks.

Begin—

CLAIRE. Which event is regarded as the start of the Thirty Years' War?

JULIAN. The Defenestration of Prague in 1618. *(His voice has acquired a noticeable measure of modulation and expressiveness.)*

CLAIRE. Which countries were the primary participants?

JULIAN. Germany, Spain, Denmark, Sweden, and France.

CLAIRE. And what brought the war to an end?

JULIAN. The Peace of Westphalia in 1648.

CLAIRE. Very good, Julian. *(Lowers the tablet.)*

JULIAN. Would you like me to list the proximate causes of the war?

CLAIRE. That isn't necessary.

JULIAN. Do I know as much about the Thirty Years' War as the average person?

CLAIRE. Well, I'd say the fact that you recognize the phrase "Thirty Years' War" puts you miles ahead of the average person.

JULIAN. "Miles ahead" . . . ?

CLAIRE. An idiomatic usage. *(Smiles.)* Your data parameters are fine, Julian. And I'm very glad *that's* done.

(Claire stands and places the tablet on her desk. As Julian watches, she shrugs her shoulders a few times, then rolls her neck.)

JULIAN. Why are you doing that?

CLAIRE. To relieve the muscular tension.

(A moment, then Julian shrugs his shoulders and rolls his neck.

Claire smiles.)

Feel better?

(Pause.)

JULIAN. If I should, then I do.

CLAIRE. *(Laughs.)* We haven't given you the totality of human knowledge, of course. But you're the equivalent of a highly educated person. And your knowledge will expand through experience and

interactions with people. In other words . . . you'll learn. Very quickly.

JULIAN. I've noticed that my voice sounds different.

CLAIRE. Your speech algorithms allow you to recognize and incorporate the qualities of human speech — pitch, tone, inflection, individual patterns and pronunciations. We'll respond more naturally to you, which your algorithms will incorporate, and so on.

JULIAN. A recursive process.

CLAIRE. Exactly.

(Pause.)

Would you like to see yourself?

JULIAN. Yes.

(Claire moves behind the desk, opens a drawer, and takes out a small mirror. She comes back to the chair, leans on the back of it, and holds the mirror before Julian.)

Julian gazes at his reflection "curiously." He turns his head to one side, then the other. He opens his mouth wide, then raises his eyebrows.)

JULIAN. My eyes are brown.

(Blinks.)

Why do I blink?

CLAIRE. Because we do.

JULIAN. You need to keep your eyeballs moistened. But my lenses don't dry out.

CLAIRE. If you didn't blink, people would register it. Not consciously, and not right away, but we'd be aware that something about you was . . . unsettling. So you've been programmed to blink as frequently as we do, an average of five times a minute. But not *precisely* — not every twelve seconds. Some of us would find that unsettling too.

JULIAN. Do many things unsettle you?

CLAIRE. *(Smiles.)* We're a skittish species. It's why we've lasted this long. *(As she places the mirror back on the desk:)* There's a phenomenon known as the uncanny valley. People are fascinated by an artificial being with a humanlike appearance. The nearer you come to being truly convincing, though, our fascination turns into . . . an instinctive, inexpressible sensation of eeriness. *Wrongness.* So the engineers and programmers are constantly devising what they call modes of verisimilitude.

JULIAN. My blinking. My voice. Yes, I understand.

CLAIRE. *(Smiles.)* It turns out poets and artists aren't the definers of humanity. The techies are.

JULIAN. Do you experience this feeling with me, Claire?

CLAIRE. I don't, no. Actually, I never have.

(Pause.)

Nevertheless, programming and engineering can only accomplish so much. My role is — I suppose you could say, to teach you how to be as human as possible.

JULIAN. May I look at myself again?

CLAIRE. Of course, it's possible to be *too* human.

— **End** *holds the mirror in front of Julian again. He inspects his reflection. After a moment.)*

JULIAN. Why do I have this face, Claire?

CLAIRE. The human face has certain ideal proportions. It's about one and a half times longer than it is wide. The length of the ear should be the same as the length of the nose. The width of an eye should equal the distance between the eyes.

JULIAN. My proportions are not ideal.

CLAIRE. *(Smiles.)* Neither are mine. Our particularities are what make us individual.

JULIAN. Why are *my* eyes brown — not blue or green? Why *this* nose, *this* chin? Out of the trillions of possibilities, why this particular combination of features?

CLAIRE. Well ... *(Shrugs. Lightly.)* you have to look like *something*.

Scene 5

An arm is now attached to Julian's downstage shoulder.

Claire, leaning against the desk, watches as Julian extends, rotates, and bends the arm, exploring the range of its movement. He holds his hand in front of his face, opening and closing it, moving the fingers.

Claire extends her hand. A moment, then Julian takes it.

CLAIRE. Measure the amount of pressure I'm using, and use the same. Yes, good.

(Claire and Julian shake hands. Claire smiles.)

Pleased to meet you, Julian.

JULIAN. Pleased to meet you, Claire. *(Pause.)* Your skin is warm.

CLAIRE. Yours is the same temperature.

(Claire removes her hand and takes a pen from her pocket.)

Hold this. Feel its texture.

(Claire offers the pen. Julian takes it. He manipulates the pen with his fingers.)

Now this.

(Claire takes a rubber ball from the desk, removes the pen from Julian's fingers, and holds the ball out. Julian takes the ball, manipulates it with his fingers, and squeezes it.)

And this.

(Claire takes the ball and puts it back on the desk. She takes a small beanbag from the desk and offers it. Julian takes it and manipulates it with his fingers. He offers the beanbag to Claire, who takes it.)

Julian places his fingers on the surface of the table, feeling its texture, then knocks on it.)

JULIAN. This wood is fine-grained and heavy. Is it oak?