

LOVE, MACHINE

FADE IN:

INT. JEWEL'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

JEWEL GORE, an African-American woman in her late 30s, watches from the window of her downtown luxury apartment home. Her CELL PHONE is in hand.

The walls of her home are decorated exclusively with AFROFUTURISTIC PAINTINGS.

A crowd of human protesters march on the street below carrying signs and wearing red t-shirts that read "Matrimony for God's creations only" and "No chrome, only chromosomes".

A LIVE NEWS BROADCAST is heard OFF-SCREEN from the television.

REPORTER (V.O.)

Today, people all over the country are marching to their state legislative buildings either in opposition or support of the human-robot marriage bills that have been introduced in several states.

Jewel looks down as her phone begins to RING. She SIGHS when she views the name. Her finger hovers over the screen...

She steps away from the window...

The phone goes SILENT.

EXT. STATE LEGISLATIVE BUILDING - DAY

Two factions march from opposite ends of the street, convening in front of the STATE LEGISLATIVE BUILDING. One is the RED GROUP previously seen from Jewel's window, the other wears blue.

The opposing groups are raising signs, shouting as they advance towards each other.

The BLUE GROUP is made up of men, women, and androids, carrying picket signs and banners with sayings such as

"Love is an Iron Giant" and "Upgrade your thinking. Download a heart". Some androids wear synthetic skins, some humans wear silver body paint. THE RED GROUP is made up solely of human protesters.

On either side of the street, armed POLICE backed by FLYING DRONES and some ANDROIDS are standing watch as the protesters march on.

RED GROUP

(chanting)

Adam was made with Eve, not with
machine!

BLUE GROUP

(chanting)

What you're made of does not define
your love!

INT. POEHLER HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

In the corner of the living room, a television rests on a stand directly beneath a PAINTING hanging on the wall, which depicts two African American women embracing each other inside of a mechanical heart.

The protesters at the Legislative Building are displayed on the television, engaging in verbal back in forth.

A few protesters begin to physically attack each other. One person uses his sign to bash an android, tearing its synthetic skin from part of its face.

As more people join the melee, policemen and their android partners begin to intervene.

REPORTER (V.O.)

...some protests have even become violent. Oddly enough, the issue has been tossed around for only a few months now here in America. At first the majority of Americans only thought this was a joke...

The broadcast displays pictures of Chinese citizens with robot spouses in wedding photos, before changing to a chart displaying an annual decline in China's population, followed by a chart displaying workforce productivity.

REPORTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

That is, until an American human-android couple announced their plans to be wed in China after being denied a marriage license on American soil. The Chinese government has already broadly approved such unions, justifying it as a method of "population control" that "yields better productivity and happiness for the majority of its people".

The broadcast finally cuts to a picture of Sophia the Robot at her press conference after receiving citizenship. Then, an overhead shot of a small town with chrome buildings populated by only robots.

REPORTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Other countries, such as Saudi Arabia, are passing similar laws, having already granted more robots citizenship and establishing what are being commonly referred to as "Tin-Man Towns", communities predominantly populated by robots.

The television then displays THE REPORTER, standing inside the government building, speaking directly into the camera.

REPORTER (CONT'D)

The story made national headlines. Since then, new bills have been introduced in various state legislatures. Several states are currently considering such laws, but no state has signed a bill into law to allow a human to wed an android yet.

As technology grows more advanced and artificial intelligence evolves further, we will be forced to put a mirror up to ourselves. However, if man begins to couple with machine, and our own mechanical creations become our equals, are those opposed to this change right to fear a collapse in the social structure?

As the last words of the reporter are spoken from the television, OFFICER ANDY POEHLER, a middle-aged Caucasian man, stomps through the front door into his home, wearing his full police uniform and an expression of frustration.

ANITA POEHLER, an African-American woman in her early 30s, steps out of the KITCHEN adjacent to the living room.

She puts down a CELL PHONE on the kitchen counter and turns down the television volume to greet her husband.

ANITA

How was your day, babe? You look more stressed than usual...

They embrace and kiss briefly, but there is little passion.

ANDY

Yeah... It's been so ridiculous. I'm going to be working double shifts now just to keep these protests under control. I don't see what these people are thinking. People are basically trying to marry their freaking kitchen appliances—!

Andy stops his rant suddenly when ANGEL, Andy and Anita's daughter, enters from the hallway. She is about five years old, still in her school clothes. She sprints toward her father, excited.

ANGEL

Daddy!

Andy bends down with his arms splayed wide open. His daughter gleefully runs into them. He scoops her up and his expression shifts into genuine joy.

ANDY

Hey, lovely girl!

He hugs his daughter warmly, kissing her on both cheeks several times, as she GIGGLES.

Anita gives a small smile admiring the two of them. After a moment, her expression hardens.

ANITA

Angel, go clean up your playroom and wash up for dinner, honey.

ANGEL

Okay, Mommy.

Angel, once her father sets her back down on the floor, exits the living room to return to the room she was previously playing in.

Andy shakes his head, gesturing after his daughter, and looking back to his wife.

ANDY

Anita, you can't tell me you can create something that great with a machine. You can't really create anything with a machine.

ANITA

Right... You can't create anything but clothes, furniture, other machines—

ANDY

You know what I mean... We don't need to start 3-D printing children. Robots are tools. They are good for pleasure, entertainment, and security. Nothing more.

ANITA

Well, we know someone who is made happy by a machine, Andy.

ANDY

Yeah, but Jewel is a very special case..

ANITA

Apparently, my sister's situation is not that special. In fact, it wasn't too long ago that you cheated on me with one of those sex-bots..

Andy's expression matches Anita's seriousness now.

ANDY

Do you really need to keep bringing that up? I thought we were past this already. Besides, it's the same as masturbation. It's like if you were using a toy... I-I don't consider it— It isn't cheating if there is not another person involved.

Anita shakes her head. She's heard this ridiculous argument before.

ANITA

It's absurd that you still try to justify it. These machines may not have all of the rights of humans yet, but when they are made to resemble us in so many ways, you don't think they

take a status a little higher than a blow-up doll or vibrator?

ANDY

Yes, they feel and look real physically. The synthetic skins they use now are lifelike... I'll give you that. But the robots me and the guys at the station used those times were not programmed with emotions.

ANITA

But there is a likeness of another person. The robot may not have feelings for you, but it's proven that they can develop emotions as their intelligence grows. And the point is you were engaging in the act with a body that felt and looked like another woman that has awareness. Perhaps it was programmed to give consent, but it was definitely more than a toy!

Andy moves his mouth as if to answer, but immediately stops himself seeing the disgust on his wife's face.

Anita BREATHES one calming breath before continuing.

ANITA (CONT'D)

You were basically using a prostitute, Andy. You paid for sex by purchasing the android, and like a prostitute, it did its job. But you're right, like a human sex worker, there was no emotional attachment.

Andy shakes his head, feigning confidence.

ANDY

Prostitution? Really? No cop or judge would agree with you on that one.

ANITA

Maybe not in the U.S. where robots don't have the full protections of citizenship, but it's the truth!

ANDY

Oh my God... You sound like one of them now... I can't with you. You're sympathizing with those things now. We both tried to reason with your sister before, and now she is rubbing off on you!

ANITA

I'm just saying maybe we should be more considerate of her and people like her. They do have some valid points.

ANDY

You must be engaging in some deep philosophical talks at the university now. Next you're going to rationalize that lawnmowers and garbage disposals have feelings and should have basic human rights.

Anita folds her arms across her chest, staring intensely at her husband.

ANITA

I'm a history professor, not a philosopher. But here is a history lesson for you: It was only so many generations ago that people who look like me were denied basic human rights. They were used for sex and physical labor, sold as property, and told they were less than humans. History repeats itself, Andy.

(a deep, calming breath)

If nothing changed back then, you and I could never be together either. I

understand you're stressed right now,
but we should try keep an open mind,
and at least try to relate to what
Jewel and others who want this change
are going through.

Andy rolls his eyes and nods silently, defeated.

He begins to walk past the kitchen now towards the bedroom,
unbuttoning his shirt as he walks.

ANDY

I could try, but it ain't happening
overnight.

Anita smirks, rolls her eyes, and looks at the painting
hanging over the television.

ANITA

Nothing ever does...

On the television, a segment has begun on the news about an
upcoming art festival.

INT. JEWEL'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jewel sits on her couch now watching the end of the news
broadcast following the protests. Her CELL PHONE rests on
the side table.

JEWEL

End show. Play jazz music.

The television switches to a black screen and JAZZ MUSIC
plays throughout the home.

JEAN, Jewel's android lover dressed in his own synthetic
skin, enters. Jean walks up behind Jewel placing his hands
on her shoulders and begins gently massaging her.

Jewel relaxes and reclines her head back as Jean bends over the couch to kiss her.

JEAN

Finally trying to relax, Jewel?

JEWEL

Yes. Trying. These protests are all over the T.V. and having the real thing outside isn't any better. How is your painting going?

JEAN

I've only completed six so far today. I'm proud of every one.

JEWEL

Proud? That's a new emotion I've never heard you express before.

JEAN

Yes, well I am still a growing boy, as you would say. My identity and emotions are still developing.

Jewel CHUCKLES and rubs her cheek against one of his hands on her shoulders.

JEWEL

It never ceases to amaze me how gentle your touch is or how well you handle these new emotions I struggle with every day.

Jewel gestures to one of the paintings on the wall.

JEWEL (CONT'D)

Even your art is becoming more amazing, but people would have a harder time accepting it if they knew it wasn't created by human hands.

JEAN

Humans are so complex. It is clearly difficult for you to understand yourselves. However, I would never expect acceptance or understanding to come easily.

Jewel laughs and looks up into his face.

JEWEL

Oh, was that shade, Mister Roboto? You're evolving into a sneak comedian now? Next, you'll be telling me you want to be a professional rapper, too.

JEAN

No. I would not want to be accused of appropriating your culture.

Jewel LAUGHS harder and throws a PILLOW at JEAN's head. Jean doesn't even blink.

JEWEL

You're lucky I love you.

JEAN

I know love, but I do not think luck applies to me.

JEWEL

So does that mean you believe in destiny?

JEAN

Perhaps. Do you believe we are still destined to be married?

Jewel's expression becomes serious now.

JEWEL

I do. We won't be the first human-android couple to do so, but I do believe the law will pass here soon so we can get married before I'm completely gray-haired. But at least you'll never age, so you can take care of the kids if we do decide to adopt.

JEAN

So I will be the designated nanny? I suspect there will have to be a new law executed for me to have the right to be a parent.

JEWEL

You're probably right. I guess the lawmakers won't be open to too many changes for robot rights any more than my brother-in-law is...

JEAN

However, written laws do not govern my feelings for you or my own purpose.

(beat)

Have you been in contact with your sister or her husband recently?

JEWEL

No, not recently. Ever since that exchange we had months ago when I announced our engagement, I've avoided any communications with them.

JEAN

I do not know what it is like to have a sibling, but I do know that you love your sister and she loves you just as much as I do. Humans, even Andy, are capable of changing. I know your sister already has.

Jewel stands up. An accusing stare is directed at Jean, her arms folded across her chest.

JEWEL

Jean, have you been in contact with her?

JEAN

Yes. She called me while you were out over the weekend. We had a very nice discussion. She asked me to keep the conversation between us for the time being. She even asked me to send her one of my paintings. I created an original specifically for her and mailed it to her.

JEWEL

You didn't have to do that...

JEAN

No, I did not. But I think you do have to forgive, especially when you love someone. Despite your differences.

JEWEL

You've been watching too many televangelists lately. Now you're preaching.

JEAN

It is not my intention to preach. However, I do love you, and by that reasoning, I love your sister. We may all very well be family soon.

(beat)

I think this conversation has inspired me further. I'm going to return to the studio to do some more work. You should call Anita.

Jean leans forward to kiss Jewel who hesitates for a moment before accepting his kiss.

Jean exits the living room to return to the studio.

Jewel stares for a moment at the cell phone on the side table.

INT. POEHLER HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Anita sits in bed reading a romance novel while Andy lies beside her SNORING loudly. Her cell phone is sitting on the nightstand.

Anita confusedly looks over at the phone when it begins RINGING and sees the caller ID reads "Jewel".

She picks up the phone and briskly walks out of the bedroom before answering the phone, quietly closing the bedroom door and proceeding down the hallway toward the living room.

ANITA

Jewel?

JEWEL (V.O.)

Hey, sis. Long time, no talk..

ANITA

Yeah. No kidding. I've missed you...

LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Anita settles down onto the couch facing the television.

JEWEL (V.O.)

Same here. With all of the drama about circuits and skins getting married and after a little heart-to-heart with my own computer lover and conscience, I figured I owed you a call.

ANITA

No. I'm the one who owes you an apology for myself and my husband. I had a talk with that man of yours and I've been doing some reflecting myself. Seeing the events unfolding around us now, I know I must've sounded like a close-minded bigot to you. Who you love and choose to marry is none of my business. I'm just happy you finally found true love.

JEWEL (V.O.)

Aww... Thank you. And I promise he isn't programmed to love me.

Anita laughs and looks up at the painting on the wall. A small tear rolls down her cheek.

ANITA

So... When is the wedding?

INT. JEWEL'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - SAME

Jewel is still curled up on the couch. The television is now off. She is laughing and tears are welling in her own eyes.

JEWEL

We're actually going to wait for this law to be passed first. I don't want to move to another country just to have my marriage acknowledged. But married or not, we've got time. Jean is developing more emotionally every day, but our love isn't changing. How are you all?

INT. JEWEL'S HOME - JEAN'S ART STUDIO - SAME

Jean is standing, rapidly painting on a fresh canvas, creating a NEW PAINTING of an African-American woman, who

appears to be an amalgam of Jewel, Andy, and Anita's features, cradling a robot baby in her arms.

A dozen paintings similar to the ones in their living room and Anita's home are resting against the walls.

Jean smiles, admiring his latest work.

FADE OUT

THE END