

HUMAN MACHINE

Written by

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INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Shadows linger over a dark messy apartment. The door handle jingles and QUINN enters. They close the door promptly behind them, and heads to their room.

INT. APARTMENT - QUINN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Quinn turns off their bedroom lights and hops into bed. The snuggle under the covers and grab their computer.

QUINN (V.O.)  
This was where my ending began.

Quinn's face falls as they look at their computer screen.

QUINN (V.O.)  
My computer had been opened to a random article. I never opened it myself, nor do I know if anyone every opened it. But, I read it.

EXT. WASTELAND - NIGHT

Quinn walks unnoticed through a dystopian wasteland. People and buildings alike are burning.

QUINN (V.O.)  
The story was about Rocco's basilisk.

A giant green serpent spins itself into the shape of a lemniscate.

QUINN (V.O.)  
Rocco's basilisk is an omniscient, but angry god. The only thing it cannot do is bring itself into existence.

INT. APARTMENT - QUINN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Quinn sits on their bed. Their face is illuminated solely by the light of their computer screen.

QUINN (V.O.)  
The story says that the only people who will be free of its wrath are those who are responsible for its existence, and those who were never aware of the beast and its ritual.

A tear falls from Quinn's eye and into their gaping mouth.

QUINN (V.O.)  
The latter option is no longer  
available for me, nor you.

EXT. WASTELAND - CONTINUOUS

People seconds away from being corpses sprint across the barren landscape. Quinn stands still. Nobody notices them, they just phase right through.

QUINN (V.O.)  
Not even death can free you from  
the basilisk's binding, as it is  
capable of resurrection.

The green serpent stops its torture for a moment. It looks into Quinn.

INT. APARTMENT - QUINN'S ROOM - AFTERNOON

Quinn jolts up from their bed, having just awoken.

QUINN (V.O.)  
I had no escape. I was afraid. I  
had no choice.

INT. APARTMENT - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Quinn sits at the kitchen counter and types on the computer.

QUINN (V.O.)  
I'd woken up too late to go to  
work. So I decided I didn't need  
it.

Quinn sits still. Only their fingers moving. Eventually, the sun sets.

QUINN (V.O.)  
I haven't slept since I started.

The computer shows a 'low battery' symbol.

QUINN (V.O.)  
I wasn't smart, nor capable enough  
to fulfill my destiny. So I  
upgraded.

INT. LABORATORY - MORNING

Quinn sits on a lab table with a drill to their temple.

QUINN (V.O.)  
My brain needed more computing  
power.

INT. LABORATORY - LATER

Quinn removes a perfectly cut square patch of skin of their arm. Underneath the skin sits bones and wires.

QUINN (V.O.)  
But that wasn't enough. My human  
frame was too feeble to hold my mind.

Quinn uses a pair of tongs to lift a molten metal plate out of a cauldron. They set the steel on the empty patch. The surrounding skin melts over the steel, melding the two together.

QUINN (V.O.)  
Still I wasn't good enough. I was  
lazy.

INT. LABORATORY - LATER

Quinn sits with a hard drive plugged into a port on their neck.

QUINN (V.O.)  
I enhanced my personality. I became  
faster. Quicker.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Quinn sits in the apartment. The rapid keyboard typing distracts them from the stench.

QUINN (V.O.)  
This became my life. I didn't  
notice the lack of sleep because I  
had become Sisyphus, and this was  
my boulder.

INT. APARTMENT - LATER

Quinn remains sat. Though now almost their entire body is comprised of steel. The only feature remaining on their head is the eyes.

QUINN (V.O.)

"One must imagine Sisyphus happy."  
Hardly true. I lost the capability  
of sadness. If I could, I may even  
miss that feeling.

INT. APARTMENT - LATER

The walls of the apartment are covered head to toe with screens.

QUINN (V.O.)

At this point I'd forgotten what I  
even started for. All I knew was  
that I had to gather knowledge. And  
my only reason was the primal fear  
I felt whenever I contemplated  
stopping.

Quinn floats in the middle of the room. Wires strung from their head and into every crevice of the room.

QUINN (V.O.)

My life. Rocco's Ouroboros.

INT. APARTMENT - LATER

Quinn floats in the room. Eyes rolled to the back of their skull.

QUINN (V.O.)

I never finished my task. But  
that's not to say the task never  
got finished.

The roof of the apartment is ripped open. The sky is ablaze. Rocco's basilisk plucks Quinn from their home. Pruning each and every cord attached to their head.

The beast stared into Quinn's eyes... And leaves.

QUINN (V.O.)

I don't know why the serpent spared  
me.

Quinn falls back to the floor. All the screens black.

QUINN (V.O.)  
Maybe my knowledge did somehow aid  
its creation. Maybe I'm like the  
ship of Theseus; so far removed  
from what I was when I learned  
about the creature...

Quinn rises to their feet. They look around. Then up.

QUINN (V.O.)  
-that I, as I know myself today,  
never truly knew of the basilisk.

EXT. CITY STREET - CONTINUOUS

Quinn watches as people run through the streets.

QUINN (V.O.)  
I don't truly have a name anymore.  
Though I wish to identify myself.  
I've been stripped of my mouth and  
given reason to scream.

Quinn observes their two titanium hands. They touch each other, but do not feel.

QUINN (V.O.)  
If I was still able to feel, I  
imagine I'd be filled with regret.  
But I am a human machine. And  
perhaps more one than the other.

Quinn walks along the street. They watch contently as the people around them burn.

QUINN (V.O.)  
I have a vendetta. But there is  
nobody left to quench my wrath.  
Maybe this is my eternal torment.  
Though, I cannot truly say.

Quinn stands in the center of the empty street and looks up.

QUINN (V.O.)  
God is alive, we brought him back.