

# MACHINAL

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## CHARACTERS:

HER

An ensemble of at least 6 other performers play all other roles. The way those roles are divided and doubled can make room for a diverse ensemble in terms of visible identities.

## SCENES:

1. Awake
2. Work
3. Home
4. Honeymoon
5. Birth
6. Prohibited
7. Intimate
8. Domestic
9. Law
10. Machine
11. Alone

## SCENE 1

AWAKE.

The stage is in the round, with the audience pushed up against the action. She is asleep in a rumped, comfortable bed. Her alarm sounds, and immediately there is an overwhelming hum of a hundred web servers. An intermittent but unending buzz of notifications. She dresses and gets her work bag. She hushes the noise by putting in earbuds, and we hear the lyrical/acoustic music she is listening to.

The stage is an early morning city street. She walks along as people pass her, they're all using some kind of phone or device.

The stage is a commuter train, packed full of people using devices. They press in on her, and she begins to panic. She rushes to get off the train.

SCENE 2

WORK.

The stage is an office, crowded with the functioning of a digital, virtual life: work terminals, screens, etc. The office workers speak and move like a single, living organism.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Hi, welcome! You're connected to customer service. How may I help you?

FINANCE

The month-end reporting is due to corporate.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

We genuinely appreciate your effort in bringing this to our attention.

IT

Are you running that query in the application database?

MARKETING

If we can leverage some existing content, we won't have to reinvent the wheel.

IT

Close the batch first.

FINANCE

I don't have the bandwidth to do that right now.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

In order to serve you better, we would need you to share more information.

FINANCE

I said I don't have the bandwidth.

MARKETING

Paid social media is important for top of the funnel marketing.

IT

Check your parameters - which ones did you use there?

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Sorry, you seem to have connected to the wrong department, let me connect you to the right team.

IT

You're using the wrong data cube.

FINANCE

How is our profitability looking?

IT

You're using the wrong data cube.

MARKETING

Well a lot of people don't understand the difference between SEO and SEM.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Can I connect you to a senior representative?

MARKETING

If we can prove the ROI on direct mail then we can do more of it.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Could I please place you on a brief hold?

IT

Build it in test.

FINANCE

We need to develop a baseline and do frequent check-in's to ensure we are hitting our targets.

IT

Run it in test.

FINANCE

I need to see budget vs actuals. Can you please run those reports for me so we can update the forecast?

CUSTOMER SERVICE

I understand that you're frustrated -

MARKETING

I'd like more data on our lead attribution.

FINANCE

Please ensure you get all of your expense reports in before quarter close.

MARKETING

Is it possible to close the loop on email marketing?

IT

Do you need the summary or the detail?

CUSTOMER SERVICE

At this point in time, we're unable to meet your request.

IT

What widget are you using?

MARKETING

Social media reach is better if it's reaching our specific demographic.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Thank you for getting in touch, can I assist you with anything else today?

FINANCE

How is our profitability looking? The P&L is showing some challenges.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Hi, welcome! You're connected to customer service. How may I help you?

IT

Well that wouldn't appear in either the payment gateway or the bank.

FINANCE

Let's unpack that.

MARKETING

Let's plan a campaign across multiple marketing channels.

IT

Go to the transactions tab on the constituent account and click on the charge.

FINANCE

Let's address that at our next strategic planning.

IT

Have you checked the analytics?

FINANCE

We should really go after the low-hanging fruit.

MARKETING

Obviously the subject line wasn't compelling because the open rate was very low.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

At this point in time, we're unable to meet your request. The Boss is on his way in, he wants to know if she's here yet.

(typing)

Not yet, will tell her you want to see her -

(finishes typing message)

She's probably late because she was on a date last night.

FINANCE

I don't think she's seeing anyone.

IT  
Or she's seeing a ton of people. She's late all the time.

MARKETING  
She's inefficient.

FINANCE  
I know!

IT  
I'm efficient.

FINANCE  
But I don't think she's seeing anyone.

CUSTOMER SERVICE  
No?

FINANCE  
She lives alone with her mother.

MARKETING  
Then she should be more efficient.

FINANCE  
She doesn't belong in this office.

MARKETING  
Totally.

The Boss enters, casual and expensive. His entrance causes a ripple of productivity.

BOSS  
Morning, folks.

Various overlapping versions of good morning.

BOSS  
(pointing to an empty desk)  
Isn't she in yet?

CUSTOMER SERVICE  
Not yet -

FINANCE  
She's late.

BOSS  
I need her to prep a memo.

IT  
I can prep a memo.

BOSS  
No, you focus on your deliverable. Better to do one thing well, right?

FINANCE  
Right, totally.

IT  
I can finish that editing later.

BOSS  
Stick to the task at hand.

FINANCE  
That's so true.

IT  
I'll hurry and finish it and then -

BOSS  
That's a recipe for mistakes.

FINANCE  
Mistakes -

IT  
But if you're in a hurry -

BOSS  
I'm never in a hurry - that's how I stay ahead of the game! First you pick the right path, then you go down it. No need to hurry.

FINANCE  
No need.

BOSS  
(to Customer Service)  
When she gets in tell her I want her to draft a memo.  
(As he's exiting )

Mark that urgent.

CUSTOMER SERVICE  
(typing)  
Memo...urgent.

BOSS  
And don't bug me otherwise.

CUSTOMER SERVICE  
Are you in a conference?

BOSS  
Yes. Unless she gets here, of course.

CUSTOMER SERVICE  
Totally.

BOSS  
Maybe remind her that being early is on time and being on time is late.

He exits.

CUSTOMER SERVICE  
It's so obvious.

FINANCE  
He's obsessed.

CUSTOMER SERVICE  
Totally obsessed.

FINANCE  
Basically in love.

MARKETING  
Cute!

IT  
Twenty bucks says they announce by the end of the fiscal year.



She enters, distracted.

|                                       |           |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|
| Why are you late?                     | IT        |
| Legitimately late.                    | MARKETING |
| Early is on time and on time is late. | FINANCE   |
| Yesterday too.                        | IT        |
| And the day before.                   | MARKETING |
| And the day before.                   | FINANCE   |
| You're going to get fired.            | IT        |
| What? No -                            | HER       |
| You don't think so?                   | IT        |
| I can't lose my job.                  | HER       |
| Can't? Why are you always late then?  | IT        |
| Why?                                  | HER       |
| What's your excuse?                   | IT        |
| Yeah - what's your excuse?            | FINANCE   |

|   |                  |
|---|------------------|
| Ooooh yeah I want to know too.          | MARKETING        |
| It better be good.                      | CUSTOMER SERVICE |
| Yeah, spill.                            | IT               |
| The subway.                             | HER              |
| That's not an excuse.                   | CUSTOMER SERVICE |
| Everyone takes the subway.              | MARKETING        |
| Or I mean was there a delay?            | FINANCE          |
| Delay of what -                         | IT               |
| No -                                    | HER              |
| So then what?                           | IT               |
| I had to get off the train.             | HER              |
| What do you mean?                       | FINANCE          |
| I had to get out.                       | HER              |
| Out?                                    | FINANCE          |
| Wait, what? I spaced out. Out of where? | MARKETING        |

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| Yeah out of where?   | IT        |
| I needed air.  | HER       |
| Air?   | IT        |
| All those bodies pressing together.                            | HER       |
| Oooh, totally.   | MARKETING |
| I thought I was going to faint. I had to get out into the air. | HER       |
| Give her some air.   | MARKETING |
| Totally.   | FINANCE   |
| Plenty of it around.   | IT        |
| It's like I'm dying.   | HER       |
| But it was the same thing yesterday. And the day before.       | IT        |
| Yeah. But what am I supposed to do?                            | HER       |
| Call an Uber.  | FINANCE   |
| Get a police escort.   | MARKETING |

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | CUSTOMER SERVICE  |
|  | (remembering)   |
| Oh! He wants you.                          |   |
|  | (referencing the direction the boss exited)   |
|  | HER   |
| Me?  |   |
|  | CUSTOMER SERVICE  |
| You.                                       |   |
|  | HER   |
| Him?                                       |   |
|  | IT  |
| Him.                                       |   |
|  | CUSTOMER SERVICE  |
| He's messaging me now - you need to go in. |   |
|  | She nervously exits towards his office. The character work monologues start up again. |
|  | IT  |
| Don't screw it up!                         |   |
|  | MARKETING   |
| She's always messing with her hair.        |   |
|  | FINANCE   |
| She's totally that type.                   |   |
|  | IT  |
| Her type is inefficient.                   |   |
|  | MARKETING   |
| Completely inefficient.                    |   |
|  | IT  |
| And he knows that.                         |   |
|  | CUSTOMER SERVICE  |
| Do you think he's going to marry her?      |   |
|  | FINANCE   |
| I mean, if she'll have him.                |   |

If she'll have him!  
IT

Do you think she will?  
MARKETING

His salary is, like, profound.  
CUSTOMER SERVICE

Plus family money.  
IT

I still wouldn't want to wake up in his bed. If you know what I mean.  
CUSTOMER SERVICE  
(She reenters and goes to her chair. She sits and clasps her hands together.  
Customer Service has begun texting)

Damn - I'm going out with my boyfriend tonight but I can't find a date for his friend.

Hope you have fun.  
FINANCE

Oh, totally.  
CUSTOMER SERVICE

But maybe don't go overboard.  
IT

Everything in moderation.  
FINANCE

I'd ask you to go but he'd kill you. Maybe someday.  
CUSTOMER SERVICE  
(to Her)

Totally.  
IT

Cute!  
FINANCE

Totally cute.  
MARKETING

Unless you want to come?  
CUSTOMER SERVICE

I can't. HER

You have another date? CUSTOMER SERVICE

No, my mother. HER

She worries? IT

She nags? CUSTOMER SERVICE

She turns back to her desk and looks at her hands.

You should get some work done. IT

I can't. HER

What do you mean can't? IT

The software won't load. HER

Restart. IT

I need somebody to help. HER

Somebody? Somebody else? Fine. Do something else then. IT

Okay. HER  
(getting up)  
(She works on something else)

And hurry, you need to catch up. IT

|                                 |                  |
|---------------------------------|------------------|
| You're always late.             | MARKETING        |
| You're going to lose your job - | FINANCE          |
| Anyway - do what you want.      | CUSTOMER SERVICE |
| What?                           | HER              |
| So is everything set?           | CUSTOMER SERVICE |
| What?                           | HER              |
| With you and the Boss?          | CUSTOMER SERVICE |
| The two of you -                | IT               |
| Totally together -              | MARKETING        |
| You and the big Boss -          | FINANCE          |
| Did he say something to you?    | HER              |
| I told you!                     | CUSTOMER SERVICE |
| How amazing -                   | FINANCE          |
| I don't believe it!             | IT               |
| No that's not right -           | HER              |

No? IT

No. HER

Well not yet - CUSTOMER SERVICE

Any minute! FINANCE

Cute. MARKETING

The Boss enters. Everyone snaps into their work. They all watch as he crosses to Her and puts his hand on her shoulder.

Did you get that memo done? BOSS

No. HER  
(subtly pulling away)

What's wrong? BOSS

She hasn't even started. IT

No problem, I want to make some changes. BOSS

The software won't load. HER

You can use the one in my office. BOSS

I'm working on this - HER



Better to do one thing well! IT

Okay, yeah. When you're finished, then. BOSS

Focus on your deliverable. IT

No worries. BOSS

He exits. Another round of work monologues.

Focus! IT

Oh he's focusing - MARKETING

Why did you flinch? CUSTOMER SERVICE

Flinch? HER

Did he get grabby? CUSTOMER SERVICE

No! HER

Then what? CUSTOMER SERVICE

It was just his hand. HER

Oh - just his hand, huh? And you flinched? Huh. You should say no to him. CUSTOMER SERVICE

She might as well quit. IT

I bet he'd fire her. FINANCE

That feels - no way. MARKETING

So she has to say yes? What would happen then? CUSTOMER SERVICE

She could come in an Uber every day! On time! FINANCE

To work? CUSTOMER SERVICE

She wouldn't have to work. MARKETING

Amazing, not a care in the world. IT

Breakfast in bed? FINANCE

And someone to serve it? IT

Lunch in bed. MARKETING

A king size bed! CUSTOMER SERVICE

He wants you. (seeing a notification)

HER  
(torn between going and staying in her seat)

I can't - I'm not ready - I need a minute  
(she sits, lost in her thoughts, wringing her hands. When she begins to speak, the sounds of the office surge underneath her)

Marry me - wants to get married - my boss - his company - Mrs. and Mr. - wants me to be Mrs. - Dear Mrs. - marry - do you take this man to be your wedded husband - I do - to love, honor, obey - obey - no - I can't - him - he says how would you feel about marrying me - what do you say - sir - do need to call me sir - I - he took my hands - you have such delicate hands - he wants to hold my hands - his hands are big - clammy - don't touch me - they're strong and hold my hands - please don't - married - most people - most women - marry- have babies - a baby with little curls - his babies will be - don't touch me - please - no - I can't - no sleep - need to sleep - no sleep - need to sleep - no sleep - need to sleep - late today - yesterday - before - late - subway - air gone - pressies - bodies pressing - bodies - shaking - no air - late - job - no job - fired - no job - late - alarm - alarm - alarm - hurry - job - mom nagging - mom please - hurry - work - no work - fired - no paycheck - no money - payments due - no paycheck - payment overdue - Mrs. and Mr. - Mrs. - free to sleep - no payments overdue - sleep late - sleep late - bills paid - thank you - thank you? - don't touch me - I need to sleep- but I have to earn - yes - no - earn - all women - most women - mom - most women - I can't - must - maybe - somebody - something - should I, mom? Tell me - mom - something - somebody.