

SPROCKET

By

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INT. ACTAEA WAREHOUSE - START OF THE WORKDAY

A cavernous space houses machinery and conveyor belts. Workers, or COGS, march in wearing jumpsuits, grabbing HELMETS from a RACK.

A small woman (50s) stops to drink from a WATER FOUNTAIN before grabbing the helmet with her name on it, SPROCKET.

The rack slips a smidge off the wall, but Sprocket lifts it into place and pounds it with her fist. Good as new.

INT. ASSEMBLY LINE - CONTINUOUS

A vat of colorless MEAT is spun by an industrial mixer.

A lump of meat plops out of the mixing trough onto a conveyor belt where a cog molds the meat into a block.

The meat continues down the belt where more cogs fasten gelatinous tubes to its corners, and a sphere to its top.

A cog controls a robotic arm that uses a laser to add definition to meat's features, similar to a **HUMAN**.

A hook grabs the meat and whisks it down the line.

INT. ASSEMBLY LINE, SPROCKET'S WORK STATION - CONTINUOUS

Sprocket sits at a desk, listening to a RADIO. She hits a button and a meat on a hook flies towards her.

Using a PENLIGHT, Sprocket checks its eyes. Satisfied, she moves on to checking its teeth.

Sprocket puts a shirt onto the meat, and slaps a TAG on them with the Actaea logo and slogan: For the People.

Sprocket pulls a tiny card from her desk drawer, and scribbles on it: I am a river of compassion.

She seals the card in an envelope and slips it into the meat's breast pocket. Sprocket gives the meat a tender forehead kiss, before sending it off into the world so a new meat can come forward for inspection.

INT. CAFETERIA - CONSUMPTION BREAK

Bright lights and rows of long tables. There are far fewer cogs than places to sit.

Sprocket dines on gruel with other inspector cogs.

SPROCKET

Haven't seen Shoe in a while. Did she...?

A cog, POTATO, shakes his head.

POTATO

Afraid so.

MONITOR

She was a good cog.

BUTTON

Not good enough.

A COUNTDOWN begins over a PA system. The cogs quickly spoon gruel into their mouths as the countdown expires, and the plates lower into the table and disappear.

INT. ASSEMBLY LINE - MINUTES LATER

The cogs grab helmets from the rack. A noise from the PA.

BOSS (O.S.)

Sprocket, report to my office.

Sprocket lifts the sluggish rack and gives it a pound.

INT. BOSS'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

BOSS (slick, refined) points at fancy graphs and charts. Sprocket gazes out the window at the cogs working.

BOSS

AFH8 is crushing AFH11 and AFH72 on recalled meats. What're you doing different than the other cogs?

SPROCKET

I'm just careful.

BOSS

Almost too careful. These envelopes, "I am a force of hope." What are these?

SPROCKET

I like sending them out with confidence.

BOSS

That's not a cog's job. Pull back, okay?

Sprocket nods.

BOSS (CONT'D)
Now, how do we up your yield stats?

INT. ASSEMBLY LINE, SPROCKET'S WORK STATION - NEXT DAY

The desk radio has been replaced with a METRONOME.

The Metronome CLICKS as the first meat flies in.

Sprocket goes about her process. She stops to write an affirmation, hiding the action with her body, when...

CLACK!

The metronome reaches the other side.

BOSS (O.S.)
Keep up the pace, Sprocket!

INT. CAFETERIA - LATER THAT DAY

Sprocket, Potato, and Monitor eat in silence. Sprocket fixates on the empty seat Button once occupied.

INT. ASSEMBLY LINE - LATER

Sprocket grabs her helmet from a noticeably emptier rack. She sees more robotic arms installed on the line.

The rack falls, and Sprocket lifts and pops it back in.

INT. ASSEMBLY LINE, SPROCKET'S WORK STATION - LATER

Sprocket kisses a meat and sends it off right before a CLACK. She's getting the hang of this.

Sprocket starts on a new meat, but before she's at the teeth, CLICK. The metronome's pace has increased.

INT. CAFETERIA - LATER

It's just Potato and Sprocket now. She doesn't touch her food, electing to use her time writing out affirmations.

POTATO
You should eat.

Sprocket ignores Potato and stuffs envelopes.

INT. ASSEMBLY LINE, SPROCKET'S WORK STATION - LATER

Dripping in sweat, Sprocket moves at a break-neck speed.

She manages to slip the envelope into the meat's pockets, but doesn't have time for the kiss.

INT. CAFETERIA - LATER

The only cog left in the cafeteria, Sprocket struggles to keep her eyes open.

INT. ASSEMBLY LINE, SPROCKET'S WORK STATION - LATER

Sprocket works. It's all a blur. She's not even checking the eyes or teeth anymore.

CLICK... CLACK... CLICK... CLACK

BOSS (O.S.)

SPROCKET!!!

Sprocket snaps awake, unaware she was asleep, until she sees the pile of built up meat on the floor.

INT. BOSS'S OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

Sprocket, almost teary, looks out at the assembly line, all the cogs replaced with robots.

BOSS

We're getting recalls. Lots.

SPROCKET

I don't know why.

Boss dumps a bag of hundreds of envelopes on the desk.

EXT. BUS STOP - MINUTES LATER

With the Actaea factory behind her, Sprocket waits.

INT. ASSEMBLY LINE - SAME TIME

Boss takes Sprocket's helmet from the rack and leaves.

The rack falls off the wall, jamming the water fountain.

Water sprays into the mixer, and the meat in the trough comes out runny. The mold can't shape the meat, and it all sloshes down the belt, a wet, sticky mess.

The tubes have no place to adhere, so they join the growing mush pile as it hurdles towards the laser, which cuts the meat into grotesque slabs.

The meat is too heavy for the hook and it falls back onto the belt, where the next pile adds to its mass.

I/E. BUS - MINUTES LATER

At the back of the bus, Sprocket reaches into her breast pocket, revealing her own envelope. She reads the card: I am more than just a cog.

As the bus pulls away, Sprocket witnesses Boss sprinting out of the Actaea factory, followed by a wave of meat.

EXT. ACTAEA FACTORY - MOMENTS LATER

Boss squirms out the mush and looks at his ruined empire.

Sprocket appears and slips him an envelope. Boss takes out the card and reads it: I am a forest of redemption.

SPROCKET

Let's get to work.

Sprocket pushes through the slop, and Boss follows.

A TIME-LAPSE shows the cleanup and rebuilding of the factory into a new space with an updated Actaea slogan: By the People.

INT. CAFETERIA - SOME TIME LATER

A much cheerier scene full of employees and life.

Sprocket, Potato, Button, and Monitor all eat proper food, laugh, and enjoy their break from work.

FADE OUT.