

THE MATRIARCH OF 2034

(A dim, white light illuminates the living room. There is a sofa, a carpet, and two shelves flanking each other, littered with photos. MEREDITH is seated in a wheelchair center stage, staring off into the distance. MXU-80 AUTO is polishing these photos, not facing her.)

MEREDITH

MXU...what day is it?

MXU-80 AUTO

Today is Thursday, December 14th, 2034.

MEREDITH

Keep it going...you know me by now. Weather?

MXU-80 AUTO

As of 11:54 AM in Rochester, the weather is mostly cloudy with a temperature of approximately 34°F. It is projected to snow in the afternoon at about 1:00 PM.

MEREDITH

Snow...that reminds me, I forgot to tell George I needed—

MXU-80 AUTO

(Turning to examine her)

Wrapping paper? I messaged him yesterday at your request.

MEREDITH

(Clearly uncertain but assertive)

Perfect. That's very good. Where was I..? No...I asked you the date? Wait! Yes, I did, I did...it is Tues—*Thursday*. Yes. Jesus...I need better tablets...is he delivering any more today?

(MXU-80 AUTO sifts through its memory, emitting an unpalatable drone. It approaches MEREDITH.)

MXU-80 AUTO

It doesn't appear so. George Temple works the 10 hour shift on Thursdays according to his cloud calendar, roaming location, and the Upsilon AI management software—

MEREDITH

Wait...to upgrade my medical plan, I need his signature, don't I?

MXU-80 AUTO

Yes...though, I can submit a request form for you via the cloud-

MEREDITH

That sounds perfect—thank you.

MXU-80 AUTO

(After a brief yet distant pause)

Request form sent. Your son can sign on it upon his next visit.

MEREDITH

Always astonishing how much you store in that little head—y'know, I remember when my sister and I...we...I think we *snuck* out of the house to go to the library and read some of their books for free, you know...no, wait...I never...never would've done *that*...

(A timer sounds on MXU-80 AUTO's body.)

MXU-80 AUTO (Cont.)

11:55. Meredith, it's time for your midday tablets.

MEREDITH

Y'know...I never understood why that loon April scheduled them for the middle of the day either. They make me tired. I'm tired enough—MXU, don't you think I'm tired enough?

(MXU-80 AUTO begins to administer the tablets.)

MXU-80 AUTO

I do. You've valiantly served our country. You deserve rest.

MEREDITH

I don't know what draws a son of mine to a woman like that...she'll have all the time to stay home and do...whatever it is she does when she's my age, and then, and *then* she'll wish she did more when she was younger, watch! So strange of George to—

(A ring on the doorbell. MXU-80 AUTO blankly exits. MEREDITH loses her train of thought.)

MEREDITH

To...they'll turn out in the end, though, those boys, Finley and Quinn...they have that *drive* in them...supporting the nation...

(MXU-80 AUTO reenters with APRIL and QUINN. QUINN methodically unpacks his lunch on the sofa.)

APRIL

Hi, Meredith. Just gotta replace the battery. In and out.

MEREDITH

(Brushing APRIL off)

Not a bother. I'll keep your little one occupied. How old are you now, Quinn...fifteen, or...fourteen, or..?

QUINN

Sixteen and counting. Not really *little* anymore...

(APRIL curtly crosses to the other side of the stage and exits with MXU-80 AUTO.)

MEREDITH

So...where is your college search taking you? Political Science like your father? If I recall correctly, he adored Princeton...

QUINN

Well actually, I've been thinking about Economics recently, though Mom and Dad said I could do both if I wanted. Who knows?

MEREDITH

How about that Finley, where'd he go? In state or out of state?

QUINN

He got drafted.

(Beat)

MEREDITH

(Grinning pridefully, turning to her bookshelf)

Is that so? Quinn, do me a favor. Get me the bottom left photo on the bookshelf closest to the kitchen. I think that's where MXU put it...you know, I haven't organized this place *myself* since...

(QUINN gets up with an indistinct sigh and finds the photo, lifting it up and waving it around.)

MEREDITH (Cont.)

Since 20-something...yes, right over there...thank you.

(QUINN hands MEREDITH the photo forthrightly.)

MEREDITH (Cont.)

(Fondly, almost excited)

All right...here we are. Take a look at this. 1964. I was...20. This is...that must've been my sister, Cassidy. Then...then...

(MEREDITH flips the frame over to see neatly formatted text describing everyone on the back.)

MEREDITH (Cont.)

(Cross referencing, pointing to each person)

Ah, MXU must've written these for me. So that must be Marie, Linda, Carol...Carol? Was she even at the...I don't think I ever introduced her to MXU...yes, yes. We all worked at an *arms manufacturing* company together during 'Nam in the neighborhood. Missiles, tanks, guns, the whole lot. Everybody pitching in like that...it'll do Finley good to see the world in that light.

QUINN

The second I can go, I'm heading there too, just like him.

MEREDITH

(Impressed but speculative)

Isn't that...you don't strike me much as a fighting man, Quinn. Do you think the war's gonna go on long-

QUINN

It's not a war, grandma, first. It's a "global defense initiative," according to Congress. Nobody's formally declared war against China, and, if they did, we'd be in a nuclear fallout by now. Second, in the past ten years, we've been seeing a very stark rise in American patriotism thanks to Upsilon's tech. We're not *divided* anymore. If one of us fights, we all pitch in-

MEREDITH

That's how it's always been, hun. You're just adding some wit.

QUINN

Wait, I mean...if you're not *fighting*...what are you really doing?

(APRIL, vaguely irked, returns with MXU-80 AUTO.)

QUINN (Cont.)

(Changing the subject to admire MXU-80 AUTO)

Grandma, you can't...Mom, can we get one of those someday? Imagine all of that knowledge just resting at its fingertips...

MEREDITH

Oh, he knows everything and more, Quinn...magical. Be a doll and turn on his recording device, will you? I don't know why it's off now...must have been the battery, or something your mother did.

(QUINN activates MXU-80 AUTO's recording device.)

QUINN

Hmmm...I need a good question...MXU-80, how do you collect data?

MXU-80 AUTO

Hello, Quinn Temple. My data is collected from the Upsilon AI database, an ever-expanding online hive mind of automatons just like me that are trained on diverse sources such as books, articles, websites, audio, and video footage. Our knowledge is then compiled together into the database and, as a result, we offer insights simply beyond the reach of any single individual.

QUINN

Mom...come ON! It's everybody, everywhere, all the time!

APRIL

We'll see, honey...if you'd like, you can test it out now in the kitchen—I need to have a conversation with your grandmother.

(QUINN, betraying excitement, exits while dragging MXU-80 AUTO directly behind him. A beat.)

APRIL (Cont.)

Changing your medication plan on us again, Meredith? Y'know, I thought we gave you enough after the robot.

MEREDITH

What are you doing, snooping around business that isn't yours?

APRIL

Our income is—

MEREDITH

George's income—

APRIL

—We're a *family*. It *is* my business. I'll have you know we've been very short on cash flow these past few weeks, and your extra tablets, the monthly payments to Upsilon, aren't helping anybody—

MEREDITH

Do we *have* to argue about this right now? What would you have me do? MXU, he...he can support me even better than Charley could—

APRIL

You know that's not what I meant to—

MEREDITH

It's just a fact, April. He is more capable than any human, has more medicine than any doctor, and I'm 90 and I need it.

APRIL

This isn't about the robot. This is about the *family*. And I'm saying it because I know my husband won't—

MEREDITH

I never asked George to buy me MXU, April, he chose to—

APRIL

—but that man shelled out thousands of dollars last year for Christmas to get you this AI—and you're still asking for...will it ever be enough, Meredith?

(Beat)

MEREDITH

(Self-destructive, clutching her photo tightly)

I...listen...my days are numbered, I know that. And the world's not what it was in 1960, sure. But if there's one thing that keeps me kicking after all those years, one thing still worth the world, it's our *family*, April—always has been. No AI undoes that.

APRIL

Meredith, you're still—

MEREDITH

I can sleep peacefully knowing that, whether they live with robots or aliens or what have you, my grandchildren and their grandchildren after them are going to make it far in this world living by the *same* values, the same *American* values I did—

APRIL

(Shaking her head, conflicted)

Mom, you don't even—that world is *gone*—