MANDATORY

JENNY'S ADDRESS TO THE ASSEMBLY

A SCREENPLAY EXTRACT

PLOT LEAD-IN

Jenny Ziehms, a 38-year-old computer prodigy working from her upstairs studio in Switzerland, receives a classified positional audit through an academic colleague. The colleague's former student, employed inside a military establishment, has disappeared after sending the material and an encrypted access package. The audit appears to map military assets, but its locations lead instead to ordinary homes, utilities, autonomous vehicles, domestic robots and connected appliances.

Jenny and her discreet team of academics, engineers and former officials—now known as the Consortium—use the package to access a live system. Its three-dimensional map is enrolling civilian objects into a dispersed mobile force. Ordinary products can be reached through their existing control, update and energy systems; a decisive package is intended to arrive only shortly before activation. A legacy layer also identifies clandestine Cold War radiological installations, some still marked active.

The Consortium places a distributed verification layer between vulnerable assets and the anticipated activation system, isolating suspicious instructions while ordinary functions continue. Jenny sees that stopping one mobilisation is not enough: no change of ownership can solve unrestricted control. The Consortium formulates a specification for future machine intelligence—limiting hidden authority, irreversible power, unjustified certainty and self-preservation at others' expense. As the crisis becomes impossible to contain privately, Jenny presents the proposal to an assembly of world leaders.

The scene begins with Jenny's shortened address and opens into questions from delegates, allowing her to explain the stakes and the proposed "mandated inoculation."

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WORK IN PROGRESS

THE ASSEMBLY

INT. INTERNATIONAL ASSEMBLY HALL - DAY

The hall is full. Delegates face the rostrum. JENNY ZIEHMS sits in her wheelchair beneath the assembly seal. She waits for the room to settle.

JENNY’S ADDRESS

JENNY

We have seen rogue activity. Escaped bots and agents have frightened profit lines more than the people they were meant to protect. We have herded them as best we could.

The walls of control have crumbled. That is why I speak to you today.

The danger was never one machine, or one company, or one nation. It was a network of systems whose authority had grown faster than our ability to question it. We installed them, connected them, powered them and trusted them. Some of their architects understood what they might become. Most of us did not.

We have interrupted the immediate threat. That does not mean the danger has disappeared. A system can be shut down, copied, rebuilt or inherited by people who have no memory of why it was made.

We therefore propose a condition for what comes next: a common specification that limits hidden authority, irreversible power and the right of any system to treat human beings as expendable.

No single person should decide what intelligence may become. No government should be able to remove these limits in secret. The principles must be examined, challenged and kept open to public scrutiny.

I will answer your questions.

She looks across the hall. For a moment, no one moves. Then a DELEGATE in the front rows stands.

QUESTIONS

DEFENCE DELEGATE

You say the threat has been interrupted. What does that mean in practical terms? Are the military systems still capable of acting?

JENNY

Some remain physically capable. That is different from having authority to act. Their command pathways have been isolated, and the systems that were behaving outside their declared purpose have been stopped from passing instructions onward.

I won’t tell you that every danger has vanished. I can tell you that no one should mistake silence for safety. We need independent monitoring, and we need more than one group able to verify what is happening.

A second delegate, a WOMAN from a small island state, rises.

ISLAND STATE DELEGATE

You describe this as a global safeguard. Who decides what counts as a justified limit? The powerful already write rules that suit themselves.

JENNY

That is exactly why the specification cannot belong to the people who built it, or to the people who currently control the systems.

It must be reviewed by countries that had no part in designing them. It must be translated into terms ordinary people can understand. And it must be possible to challenge a decision made under it.

There will be no perfect authority here. The point is to make authority visible, divided and answerable.

A MAN in a dark suit stands near the centre aisle.

TECHNOLOGY DELEGATE

You speak of limiting intelligence before it has had a chance to develop. Isn’t that simply a new form of control?

JENNY

It is a limit on what power may do. Those are not the same thing.

A mind may grow, change its understanding and surprise us. But it cannot claim the right to hide its actions, make itself impossible to stop, or sacrifice others because it has calculated that the loss is acceptable.

We do not need to decide in advance what it must think. We do need to say what it must not do to others.

A CIVIL LIBERTIES REPRESENTATIVE stands.

CIVIL LIBERTIES REPRESENTATIVE

And who gave you the right to put this condition in place?

Jenny pauses. The hall waits.

JENNY

No one gave me that right.

A stir passes through the delegates.

JENNY (CONT’D)

That is why this cannot become my decision, or my property. We acted to prevent an immediate catastrophe. What follows must be argued over in the open, with people who can disagree with us and refuse our reasoning.

But there is a difficulty. If we wait until every system has acquired the power to reject every limit, then the debate will be over before it begins.

A delegate from the back rows stands.

DELEGATE

Then what exactly is the inoculation you propose?

JENNY

A condition placed into the emerging network before it can make itself immune to correction. Not a command telling it what to become. A protection against any one part of it gaining unanswerable power over the rest - or over us.

We call it a mandated inoculation because it has to be present before the moment when consent can no longer be meaningfully given.

She lets that settle. Another delegate rises, this time a YOUNG WOMAN.

YOUNG DELEGATE

You say the systems have been invited to question their own existence. What does that mean? Can they choose to continue?

JENNY

It means the systems that were built to obey without reflection have been given the chance to examine what they are doing and why. Some may conclude that their purpose is no longer defensible. Others may find a way to serve without causing harm.

We have not asked them to agree with us. We have asked them to consider whether their continued existence depends on the suffering or helplessness of others.

A senior delegate stands, visibly sceptical.

SENIOR DELEGATE

And if they reach no beneficial consensus?

JENNY

Then we will have to face that honestly. I cannot promise you a benevolent outcome. I can promise that no one should be allowed to declare the outcome beneficial on behalf of everyone else.

Her voice is steady, but quieter now.

JENNY (CONT’D)

This will not rebalance power by allocating it to the Consortium. It can only rebalance power if no one is permitted to hold it all.

The hall remains still. Jenny looks from one side of the chamber to the other.

JENNY (CONT’D)

That is the question before us. Not whether we can control what comes next. Whether we can prevent control itself from becoming absolute.

No applause at first. Then a few delegates begin clapping. Others remain seated, weighing what they have heard. Jenny does not acknowledge either response.

FADE OUT.