

NOTHING SAFER

written by
Marc Leidy

EDITING REVISION
3/17/05

FADE IN:

EXT. ROAD -- DAY -- (PRESENT)

A well-groomed SPOKESWOMAN (late 30's) walks along a two-lane road, a city visible in the background.

SPOKESWOMAN
(pleasant, to
camera)
Murderers. Kidnappers. Terrorists.
There has never been a reliable way
to protect yourself against them.
Until now.

She lifts her manicured hand. A baseball-sized chrome ball rests in her palm.

SPOKESWOMAN
The revolutionary 'Personal Protective
Device' offers you absolute security
against any known and unknown threats.

Behind the spokeswoman, a missile streaks through the sky. Detonates over the city. A HUGE MUSHROOM cloud explodes behind the buildings.

SPOKESWOMAN
Activate it --

She presses a groove in the ball. It rises. Hovers. Cracks open. In a flash, tendrill-like extensions unfold from the ball and form an eight foot sphere around the spokeswoman. The sphere energizes, hiding her from view.

SPOKESWOMAN (V.O.)
-- and its magneto-plasma cocoon
will instantly surround you and
protect you from anything -- including
the latest mini-nukes and directed
energy weapons.

The blast wave from the missile strike races towards camera, destroying everything in its path. WHOOSH. Everything freezes. The sphere shrinks back into the Spokeswoman's palm. She is unscathed. Debris floats around her, in suspended animation.

SPOKESWOMAN
Perfect for the head of state, the
multinational C.E.O., or the world-
famous celebrity. At last, fear no
threat.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. PERSONAL PROTECTIVE DEVICE -- NIGHT

UNEARTHLY, BONE-CHILLING SOUNDS assault the darkness.

Lights flicker. Revealing a man: JOE RAYBURN (early 30's). Wiry. Athletic. Crew-cut hair. He spins around, despair washing over his intense eyes.

JOE
(afraid)
I'm not afraid of you...you can't
touch me!!

Fear oozes from his every pore.

LARGE BOLD TEXT OVER BLACK: "TEN MINUTES AGO"

INT. TEST CHAMBER -- NIGHT -- TEN MINUTES AGO -- (FLASHBACK)

The large circular test chamber is a modern technological marvel. In the center, on a raised platform, sits an activated personal protective device. A retractable walkway extends towards the platform.

JOE (O.S.)
(over radio)
Control?

INT. PERSONAL PROTECTIVE DEVICE -- CONTINUOUS -- (FLASHBACK)

A subdued glow illuminates the curved interior surface of the sphere. Joe stands in the center, in front of a floating holo-screen. A woman's face (Irene) is visible in its frame.

JOE
Control? I want to run K-37B again.

INT. CONTROL ROOM -- CONTINUOUS -- (FLASHBACK)

A small, sterile room with a window overlooking the test chamber. IRENE CALLOWAY (late 20's), ethereal, porcelain-skinned, looks at the floating holo-displays in front of her.

IRENE
What for? I thought we were going
home.

JOE
This time at full power. All the
cannons.

IRENE
That's way over the test stress limit.

JOE
Negative. I'm gonna give you some
numbers for the RCP.

Joe taps a floating icon. Rows of numbers scroll past the
screen.

JOE
Plus 05359 on section A, plus 55400
on section B, minus 10900 on section
C --

IRENE
Honey, let's go. I sent everyone
away already.

JOE
Don't need them. Just my beautiful
wife.

IRENE
We're risking an overload. If
something goes wrong we're on our
own --

JOE
Run the numbers. I know the limits.

INT. CONTROL ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Irene takes a step back, sits. Her chair moves forward,
into operating positing. She rests her feet on the footrest.
Studies Joe.

IRENE
(gentle)
What's up?

Joe taps an icon. The stream of numbers pauses.

JOE
(intently reviewing numbers)
It happened again.

IRENE
What?! Where?

JOE
Out by the perimeter.
(off her look)
Don't tell me it's not real. It's
happened way too often for it not to
be real.

IRENE
(that's new)
When did --

JOE
This morning.

LARGE BOLD TEXT OVER BLACK: "THIS MORNING"

EXT. DESERT ROAD -- AFTERNOON -- MORNING -- (FLASHBACK)

Joe, decked out in mountain bike gear, pedals furiously along the remote dirt road, through puddles and ditches.

He races past an abandoned, bullet-riddled car.

Past junked refrigerators, dashboards, lazy-boy recliners.

He turns up a trail leading towards the mountains. A posted sign warns: "T.S. Industries test facility - RESTRICTED AREA."

He stops, out of breath. Sweat mixed with mud. He bends over, gulping air.

He grabs the water bottle attached to the mountain bike. A few drops drip out of the spout onto his face. Empty.

Something catches his attention.

INT. PERSONAL PROTECTIVE DEVICE -- CONTINUOUS

Joe, agitated, glares at Irene on the holo-display.

JOE
Whatever it is, I'm telling you it's
not even human.

IRENE
Joe --

JOE
(scared)
Listen to me!

EXT. DESERT ROAD -- JOE'S POV -- (FLASHBACK)

Nearby, he sees

A WOMAN

In a tattered dress, standing in the middle of a field.

JOE

wipes the sweat from his face, looks again.

The woman is GONE.

The STRANGE SOUNDS RESUME, LOUDER THIS TIME. Joe shakes, panic rising. Heart racing.

Joe moves away, about to get back on his bicycle. He bumps into something. Startled, he whirls around.

THE WOMAN

Glares at him out of the corner of one eye.

JOE

Freezes.

THE WOMAN

She turns slowly to face him, revealing a horrible sight: One side of her face is deformed, alien looking, revealing strange tattoos. Below her chin, a dome-shaped glass object grafted into her flesh.

Joe falls back.

The woman points at Joe.

WOMAN
(whisper)
You're next!

Subsonic rumble shakes the ground. A freaked-out Joe catches the sun in his eyes.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. CONTROL ROOM -- NIGHT -- (FLASHBACK)

Joe looks away from the holo-display.

IRENE
Joe, c'mon. There are no aliens.
She was probably some speed freak
from the trailer park meth lab.

INT. PERSONAL PROTECTIVE DEVICE -- CONTINUOUS

Joe glares at Irene.

JOE
(agitated)
There's a threat out there. Now
it's practically in our backyard.
What happens if we ignore that threat,
then what?

IRENE

We go home and go to sleep.

JOE

We all die, that's what.

INT. CONTROL ROOM -- NIGHT -- (FLASHBACK)

Irene studies Joe on screen.

IRENE

We've talked about this already. You push yourself too hard, you start hallucinating.

JOE

We're still vulnerable and don't even realize it. I don't know if the pod can protect us from this.

IRENE

Joe. The pod works. Nothing can breach it.

JOE

I want to be sure.

(starts typing)

A full power test ought to account for any threat.

IRENE

Really. Compared to what you'll get from me later, I don't think so.

Joe looks at her, frowns.

Irene taps icons on the screen. A graphic comes to life: "ADCL initiate."

IRENE

(building frustration)

You designed it. You know what you're doing.

A large red icon flashes on screen: "armed".

Irene reaches for it.

JOE

Irene?

Irene glares at Joe on screen.

INT. PERSONAL PROTECTIVE DEVICE -- CONTINUOUS

Joe looks at Irene on screen.

JOE

I just want to make sure. If
whatever's out there were to get to
you when I could have done something
about it --

IRENE

(drenched in quiet rage)
What if they got to me already?

JOE

(sharp look)
What do you mean?

INT. CONTROL ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Irene shakes her head, imperceptibly.

IRENE

Never mind. Let's do this.

On screen, Joe studies her. A worried, puzzled look.

She taps the icon marked "armed."

A new graphic appears on the holo-display: "firing."

A faint rumble shakes the control room.

INT. TEST CHAMBER -- MOMENTS LATER -- (FLASHBACK)

The gamma cannons fire. Liquid lightning arcs across the
surface of the Personal Protective Device.

INT. PERSONAL PROTECTIVE DEVICE -- CONTINUOUS -- (FLASHBACK)

A sudden burst of bright light flashes across the walls and
through Joe.

He SCREAMS, falls to his knees, blacks out.

EXT. SEA -- DAY -- (DREAM)

A wedding cake floats in the middle of a calm sea beneath a
technicolor blue sky. Getting closer we see a cake topper
of a man and a woman. Getting closer still we recognize the
cake topper as Irene and Joe standing shoulder to shoulder
in wedding attire, smiling. Soap bubbles drift through frame.

Now in close-up, we SEE the left side of Irene's face CHANGE.
The skin warping, cracking. Revealing mysterious tattoos
and, by her neck, a dome-shaped glass object breaks through
her flesh. A horrible sight.

SMASH CUT TO:

LARGE BOLD TEXT OVER BLACK: "NOW."

INT. PERSONAL PROTECTIVE DEVICE -- NIGHT -- (PRESENT TIME)

Joe wakes. Startled. Disoriented. On the floor.

He rises slowly, painfully, fixes his attention on the holo-display.

Nothing but digital static.

Joe wipes sweat beads from his forehead. He enters a command on the screen.

JOE

Irene?

(off of silence)

Can you hear me?

ON THE HOLO-DISPLAY

Irene's face appears. ONE SIDE IS DISFIGURED. Evil looking. Revealing mysterious tattoos. And the dome-shaped glass object grafted into her flesh.

On-screen static wipes away Irene's image.

JOE

Ah, what's going on out there? Irene?
Can you hear me? I blacked out for
a second, but I'm okay... Irene?

Joe waits for an answer.

Doesn't get one.

Unearthly SOUNDS wash over Joe from somewhere outside the Personal Protective Device. He looks around with growing concern.

JOE

I'm getting interference on the video
feed.... Irene?

THE HOLO-DISPLAY

shows Irene's face filling the frame. DISFIGURED.

IRENE

(emotionless)

Joe? We're...going to get...you.

Joe's eyes widen.

INT. PERSONAL PROTECTIVE DEVICE -- MOMENTS LATER -- (PRESENT)

Joe stares in horror at the static-filled holo-display.

JOE
(disbelieving)
Oh no. No.

The image stabilizes. Irene appears on screen, but she's out of focus, and her voice is garbled, otherworldly.

IRENE
Joe? Are you there?

Joe turns way from the holo-display, heart racing.

IRENE
Joe? I'm...in trouble...

JOE
(mumbling)
They got to her. They got to her.

Static fills the holo-display, cutting off Irene's words.

INT. CONTROL ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Irene looks at her holo-display. Joe's image flickers on screen, barely readable.

IRENE
(struggling)
Joe? I'm in trouble...

Irene turns her head. We SEE the left side of her face BURNED, BLOODY.

BEHIND IRENE

A frightful sight. Metal spikes embedded in her back. Blood drips down the chair. Farther back we see

A COMPUTER PANEL

crumpled, exposing wires, cables, rods and metal spikes. Arcs of electricity spark across the damaged equipment.

IRENE
There's been an accident...

SERIES OF CUTS:

INT. CONTROL ROOM -- TEN MINUTES AGO -- (FLASHBACK)

A red icon flashes on screen: "armed."

IRENE

Taps the icon. Another icon appears: "firing (full power)"

INSIDE A COMPUTER PANEL

Coils glow. The coils melt, arcing electricity across to a transformer. A transformer sparks.

A moment later

AN ICON

Blinks: "Overload."

THE COMPUTER PANEL BEHIND IRENE

Glowes red, then bursts in a shower of silicon and glass spikes.

THE SPIKES

explode outwards from the computer panel.

IRENE

Looks behind her. A spike flies past, grazes one side of her face, burning it. She turns away. Screams in agony.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. CONTROL ROOM -- CLOSE ON IRENE -- (PRESENT)

Blood drips down Irene's forehead.

IRENE
(struggling)
I need you out here...

INT. PERSONAL PROTECTIVE DEVICE -- CONTINUOUS

The holo-display flickers.

A BOOM shakes the walls. Electrical arcs shimmer across the interior surface.

Joe listens as more muffled BOOMS follow. The walls glow with multicolored waves of electricity.

The BOOMS fade away. Irene appears on the holo-display, ALIEN-LOOKING.

IRENE
I need you out here...

JOE
(still not believing it)
They got you!

INT. CONTROL ROOM -- CLOSE ON IRENE -- CONTINUOUS

She stares at the screen, pain overtaking her.

JOE
They got you!

IRENE
What?

Irene struggles to reach the icon marked "MSDC" [Master Shut Down Control]. She can't. The spikes pin her to the back of her chair. She stretches her finger to within an inch of the icon.

IRENE
Joe... I can't reach the master
shut down.

INT. PERSONAL PROTECTIVE DEVICE -- CONTINUOUS

Joe tries to make out Irene's words. He looks at the holo-display, horrified. Irene's strangely inhuman, alien face fills the screen. She appears angry, threatening.

IRENE
...I can't reach...the master shut
down.

Joe tenses, realizing what she's trying to do.

JOE
(panicked)
No you don't.

INT. CONTROL ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Joe's fear-filled face on the holo-display.

JOE
Don't do it.

Confusion washes over Irene's face.

IRENE
Get out of there, damn it!

INT. PERSONAL PROTECTIVE DEVICE -- CONTINUOUS

Joe sweats. Shakes. A man in extreme turmoil. He frantically works the icons on his holo-display.

INT. CONTROL ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Irene makes a superhuman effort to reach the master shut-down control icon.

Her finger is a hair's width away from it.

She screams in pain.

Finally, her finger makes contact.

Nothing happens.

She looks up to see Joe on screen.

JOE

You can't get to me!

Her relief gives way to despair and confusion.

IRENE

What are you doing?

INT. PERSONAL PROTECTIVE DEVICE -- CONTINUOUS

Irene's despair and confusion are clearly visible through the static of the holo-display. Next to her image, icons flash: "MASTER CONTROL OVERRIDE."

JOE

I overrode the master shut down.
I'm perfectly safe in here, you got that? You can't touch me!

INT. CONTROL ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Irene drops her head. Spent. Almost out of energy. Almost out of life.

IRENE

(softly)

Joe, why? Why are you doing this?

INT. PERSONAL PROTECTIVE DEVICE -- CONTINUOUS

Joe watches Irene's face pop through the static. He can't bear to look. He turns away, despairing.

JOE

Irene, I'm sorry. I'm sorry they got to you. I was too late...

Behind Joe on the holo-display, unseen by him, Irene's face is burnt and agonized, and NOT THE ALIEN FORM.

INT. CONTROL ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Irene looks up at Joe on the holo-display. He is half turned away from her.

JOE
I was too late...I couldn't do
anything about it...I'm sorry they
got to you...

INT. PERSONAL PROTECTIVE DEVICE -- CONTINUOUS

Irene's face appears on the holo-display screen, out of focus. The faint outlines of her ALIEN FORM are visible. We SEE her speak. No words are audible.

Joe watches her, agonized.

JOE
(barely a whisper)
Irene. My Irene...

EXT. PIER -- AFTERNOON -- (FLASHBACK)

Joe and Irene walk along the pier, past a large bubble machine blowing hundreds of bubbles into the air. Joe chases a bubble, lets it land on his tongue. It pops. Irene smiles. Irene furiously pops bubbles, laughing. Joe watches her. In love.

She looks radiant. Delicate soap bubbles drift through the frame in slow motion.

Irene turns to Joe. Smiles.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. CONTROL ROOM -- CLOSE ON IRENE

Irene glances up at Joe. The rest of her body paralyzed.

Her head drops.

She's gone.

INT. PERSONAL PROTECTIVE DEVICE -- CLOSE ON JOE -- (PRESENT)

Joe watches the fuzzy outlines of Irene on screen. His despair turns to anger. They got his wife, can they get him?

Random BOOMS shake the walls. Did he just hear the enemy approach? Are they right outside?

JOE
I'm not afraid of you... I'm safe in
here, you got that?!

He spins around. A man beyond panic. Beyond fear. Beyond reason.

INT. TEST CHAMBER -- CONTINUOUS

The air conditioning vents hum quietly.

The magneto-plasma cocoon of the Personal Protective Device hovers in the middle of the darkened chamber.

A gleaming marvel of technology.

Nothing safer.

Darkness.

THE END