

ACT ONE

FADE IN

INT, NEW PARSELEY MALL, CA - NIGHT

Opening shot of an orange sun, half-covered by a thick black cloud with a sickly brownish-red sky in its background. Camera slowly pans back to fall into the broken glass roof of a large shopping mall, with the focus still on the sun. A second floor with old clothing stores is increasingly more visible on the lower left corner, connected by a rusted escalator, but most of the second floor has collapsed to the first. A crimson-brown light shines through the roof's hole in jagged shapes, down to the decrepit, dusty flat tile floor of the mall. Within the mall's dark interior, the light reveals

[camera pans to] A VERY THIN CORPSE

hunched over something. The body is half across the entrance of an old store labelled DOLLARFOODS, and the corpse has a distinct brand burned into its neck. The sound of quickening approaching footsteps mark the arrival of two figures. The first, taller, is wearing a green pocketed jacket and heavy layered olive pants. Plastic bags are wrapped around their shoes. They grasp the hand of a small child, the second figure, walking alongside them, wearing a thick cobalt jacket and black snow pants, with hiking boots a size too large for them. The child does not hold their hand back.

They look at it for a moment, the adult behind a round ballistic mask, and the child behind a toque and scarf. The adult is still, the child shakes a little the longer they stare. The adult sets their gaze inside the DOLLARFOODS. The room is no

larger than three household living rooms. The lights are all broken, but there's no glass or debris on the floor, save for some faded red marks. The shelves, partially stocked with canned goods, are designed like a hedge maze.

MITCHELL

(Whispers)

Are we going to-

DELL

(Whispers)

Wait. And keep watch.

Dell takes another look at the corpse. She pushes it on its backside and procures three assorted cans of food, and two crushed cans splintered into its stomach. She is extraordinarily careful not to move them past the rectangular painted line marking the store entrance. As they do this,

A WHITE HOLOGRAM

slowly appears through the stocking shelves like a ghost, and looks at Dell and Mitchell from the back of the store. The hologram has the exact same face and body structure as the corpse, but without dirt or marks, and appears to be wearing an employee uniform. Mitchell, upon seeing the cleaner, untattered clone, slowly begins to sob.

DELL

(Whispers)

Don't look at it.

MITCHELL

(Whispers, stuttering)

It's him. Oh God-

DELL

(Whispers)

Mitchell!

Mitchell, sobbing, tries to open his mouth to say something else, before hearing distant thuds echoing from across the mall to their left. Dell stares in the direction of the noise for a minute as it begins to get louder and closer, then distant again. She looks back at the cans beside the corpse. Her hands start to mildly shake. She looks back at the motionless hologram, as it folds it's hands in front of itself, staring back without expression. Dell looks back at it.

The sound of a rifle cracks through the air in the direction of the thudding, followed by a loud echo of something being struck by something metal. Muffled, distant screams follow as Dell sees the figure of a human being thrown from the hall to her left, with a force that impales the figure into an exposed, jagged line of rebar hanging from the second floor. The face is bruised to the point of being unrecognizable, as the thin body begins to twitch and make sudden sounds of jerking pain. They echo through the mall, as Dell's eyes widen at the distant sight before quickly turning to Mitch, who is crying.

HOLOGRAM

(Grins, looking down at Dell)

Remember, no loitering.

Dell gives the hologram one last look before running to her brother, staring at the impaled person before slowly lowering his head and raising his hands to his eyes.

DELL

Mitch.

He snaps his gaze from the impaled body to Dell. He is now visibly shaking in fear and gasping in unsteady, short breaths. Dell approaches and places her hands on the sides of his head.

DELL

Mitch. Look at me.

He calms his breathing little by little, looking back at his sister. She wipes the tears in his eyes with the thumb of her hand.

DELL

We need to go.

After a few moments, Mitch slowly nods as he furrows his eyebrows at Dell. She lowers herself on hands and knee, as Mitch climbs onto her back. She approaches the cans again, going from a bent knee position to a crouched one, hovering her hands just barely above the food cans, with an open duffel bag in her left. Several loud whirring sounds begin to echo from the same direction, as a man holding a bag of rice gets thrown from an intersecting hall into a large glass display. The bag tears across the floor.

DELL

(Inhales)

Hold tight.

Readying her unsteady right arm, she stares back at the hologram in anticipation, squinting at it. It glances at Dell's hand, then to the fallen groceries next to it. A sudden burst of automatic gunfire and screaming begins as a loud alarm screeches through the entire building. The interior of the mall becomes pitch black and nearly impossible to see, as the camera cuts to metal gates and walls being released and closing off every roof and entrance in the building with no natural light from the outside. Red, flashing lights are the viewer's only way of seeing Dell.

In a moment, Dell swipes two of the three cans into the bag, and makes a leap from the store entrance, tripping an invisible sensor that detects the labels on the metal cans. Dell narrowly avoids a large, hidden steel gate from the roof of the DOLLARFOODS, and another from the floor beneath it, magnetically pulled towards each other to seal the entrance shut. Both halves of the gate lock together in a split second as it nearly crushes her ankle. She sprints to the direction of the mall's exit to her right. A sound alarm is set from the DOLLARFOODS, as three small passageways open in the walls of the mall's corridors. One opens above the store's entrance, as a

RIOT SECURITY MACHINE

jumps and lands three feet away from crushing Dell from its impact to the ground. It raises itself from bent knee, slender, several feet tall in gold branded metal and a sculptured human-like face reminiscent of Greek statues. From the same opening in the wall, three more appear. They brandish steel batons from their hands, each the size of a human forearm. They give chase.

SECURITY 1

Do n-n-not interfere. Law abiding workers  
will not be injured.

SECURITY 3

Atlas' law condemns you. Sur-r-r-render, and you  
will be provided attorney and compensation for  
your injuries.

The distant screaming continues from the other side of the mall as Dell makes a sprint past fallen concrete amid some other survivors running for their lives. Dell displays an almost Olympic level of athleticism as she outruns several more machines, as they turn their attention from their decimated victims to the passing runner. Some survivors manage to hold back their attackers, only to be overwhelmed by the dozens of machines now crawling from the walls in a spider-like fashion.

INTERCOM

Attention workers. There is a class 2 riot  
in the building. Stay inside the stores, repeat,  
stay inside for your safety. Collaborators will be  
identified and executed.

Mitchell clings to Dell in a sobbing fit as she runs through the pitch black of the mall. The red flashing lights barely reveal a mess of other survivors running out of and into different halls, tripping, and stealing from one another. She approaches the entrance but finds it sealed under another magnetic gate.

Running towards it, Dell sees more than several armed and heavily armored men at the gate. They wear metal helmets with thin visors, leather padding underneath metal chest plates and shoulder pads. There's a large handmade contraption attached to the front of the gate, burning a hole through it. They are fighting off the machines behind one survivor, wearing a

{camera cuts to} METAL EXOSKELETON

that places him at the same height as the machines. Overlapping his armour, he sustains attacks from several machines as a distraction. He notices Dell carrying Mitchell on her back in the distance.

PETER

Over there!

Within his machine, Peter sees Dell, as well as pockets of runners in the distance carrying food, water, and each other. They take aim at them as she strafes behind an escalator and narrowly avoids damage. The thermite bomb goes off, and a large hole begins to stretch itself and burn nearly a third of the gate open. Outside, two military trucks and a van are primed, armed with machine gun turrets. Both trucks fire into the mall, decimating both humans and machines as Dell makes her way down a flight of stairs under the escalator, to an

{camera cuts to} UNDERGROUND PARKING LOT

Seeing the area empty, Dell takes a minute to catch her breath. She runs to the end of the lot to find another weaker gate to the outside. Cautiously, she takes a blowtorch from her duffel bag and slowly opens a hole into the wall. She exits the parking lot, Mitchell still on her back, and walks up the concrete

driveway, in time to see the military trucks leaving the area, unaware of her presence. Staring for a minute, she lowers Mitchell to the ground, and looks behind her at the dark of the underground lot's entrance. Mitchell looks with her for a time, as the camera cuts to both their faces in frame.

MITCHELL

Maybe if we wait...maybe someone from  
our camp will-

DELL

No. I think we're the only ones who made it.  
It's too dangerous to wait here now.

They continue to stare into the entrance for a while.

MITCHELL

Dell?

DELL

Yeah?

MITCHELL

Will we turn into ghosts like him?  
When we...



DELL

No. That's just some brain scan or something  
the stores do. There's no workers anymore,  
so they just find more now.

Both walk away from the lot and out of the vast outdoor parking lot of the mall, entering a separate road leading into a highway. The camera pans up to the red and orange sky, focusing on several distant and dilapidated buildings in the direction they're walking, covered in dust and mist.

MITCHELL

Are they trapped there?

DELL

No. It's just a copy. It's not really them. It just  
looks like it.

FADE OUT

Opening credits play. Several conversations and news reports by different people overlap each other while nothing but white is on screen. The word ATOM is slowly revealed in red, appearing first as pristine and with a shine. The background talking starts with television and radio broadcasts showcasing optimistic ideas on nuclear energy, grocery store sales, and daily life. This slowly shifts to in-person reports on death counts, starvation, mass riots, and the manufacturing of weapons and bombs. As this continues, the screen turns black as the letters in ATOM becomes scarred, thinner, and smaller, before the sound of a screeching artillery bomb is heard. The sound of a switch turning off is heard just before the bomb lands, then complete silence and darkness on screen.