

ONE LESS DAY

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FADE IN:

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Morning sun breaks over a dilapidated country house surrounded by a forest of trees.

INT. HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Dark. Lived-in, but not cared for.

NICHOLAS, 32, as rundown as the house, lights a lantern, sets it aside. He pulls his pants on, changes his undershirt.

He rifles through the closet, pushing aside dusty women's clothes to grab a ratty sweatshirt.

BATHROOM

His bony hands shake as he fights to shave--his razor clearly too dull to be effective.

HALLWAY

Nicholas carries the lantern down a dark hallway.

He shuffles past an open doorway: a bedroom, peeling pink paint, faded unicorn poster.

LIVING ROOM

Nicholas pulls the curtains open. Sun fills the space.

Like the rest of the house, this room was once comfortable, but now it's falling apart.

He extinguishes the lantern, turns for the

KITCHEN

Nicholas stares at the cabinets. Every door open, there's simply nothing inside them.

He sits at the kitchen table, pulls on his boots.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Nicholas stands on the back porch, loads a rifle.

Passing several graves--one dirt, one grass covered--he marches into the woods.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Nicholas stands in a clearing, atop a hill, peers at a town in the distance.

A twig SNAPS behind him. He spins, shoulders the rifle, scans the woods.

Seeing nothing, he relaxes, starts down the hill.

EXT. TOWN - NIGHT

Nicholas peeks around the corner of a building, looks down the empty main drag. The town is lifeless.

INT. GROCERY STORE - NIGHT

Nicholas slips into the store.

Overtaken displays. Cobwebs. Rusting coolers. It's been a while since this place served customers.

He walks the aisles, empty shelves all around him.

He searches the back storeroom, the deli area, the old bakery area...checking every nook and cranny.

Back in the main aisles, he looks around. There's simply nothing left to plunder.

He drops the rifle and collapses, defeated, to the floor.

On his back, Nicholas stares at the ceiling, tears running down his cheeks.

He drops his head to the side...

Something catches his eye: a CAN, on the floor, under the shelf. All the way in the back.

He scrambles, tries to reach it. But, he can't.

He grabs the rifle, sweeps the barrel under the shelf, fishes the can out.

He stands, triumphant, mesmerized by the sight: an unopened can of black-eyed peas.

He doesn't see the MAN, 30s, step behind him.

One swing of a shovel knocks Nicholas flat, sets the can loose, to the ground.

Nicholas pulls himself to his knees, ducks another swing of the shovel, lunges toward the aggressor.

Choking. Eye-gouging. Kicking. Punching. The two men wrestle for their lives.

Nicholas gets the upper hand. Straddling his foe, he digs his hands into the Man's throat.

The Man swings wildly, a frantic attempt to free himself. But, Nicholas has him.

He squeezes harder.

The Man desperately reaches for something...anything.

He finds the can of peas, tries to hit Nicholas with it, but he just can't make contact.

Out of options, the Man strains to look to the side. He reaches his hand out...

...Lets the can roll from his fingers.

Nicholas looks up to see: a little GIRL, 6, muddy face, peeking around a shelf, fear in her eyes.

The can of peas rolls to a stop at her feet.

Nicholas' grip lightens as his whole body softens.

The Man seizes the moment, quickly reverses the situation, rolling Nicholas from atop him and gaining the leverage.

He punches Nicholas in the face, grabs him by the throat and squeezes with all his strength.

Nicholas doesn't fight back.

He turns to look at the Girl, until...

His body surrenders.

FADE OUT.