

Renewal

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FADE IN:

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

An overcast day. Gray clouds low over a hellish urban landscape. The rumble of thunder. Shambling FIGURES wander amongst cars stopped in the street. It's the classic vision of a zombie apocalypse...

SUPER - THE NEAR FUTURE

SUPER - DOWNTOWN ANYWHERE

A sudden gust of wind blows newspaper down the street. One unfurls against a brick wall. The headline screams in large black type - WORLD LEADERS MEET TO BATTLE DEADLY PLAGUE - before the page rips into two.

Graffiti on the wall above: THE WALKING DEAD SEASONS 9 10 AND 11 LIVE IN YOUR FACE NOW!

Outside a small church next to a park, crows feast on a ruined body. The carrion birds don't even look up as a MALE and FEMALE ZOMBIE stumble past. They seem middle aged but who really can tell?

Overhead, a gap in the clouds appears; a ray of sunlight somehow pierces the gloom and hits the open doors of the church. The female zombie stops, wavers on her feet. The male continues his eternal slog to nowhere.

The female zombie stares at the church. Her crazed eyes blink. She lowers her head and MOANS. The male pauses now. Turns around awkwardly, looking back at her. The female raises a decayed hand, searches her fingers.

The sunlight hits a fifty ring of gold, studded with diamonds before the clouds close over again. The female looks at the doors and into her...

MEMORY

Flickering, muted images like an old style home movie show a newly COUPLE emerging from the church. Family and friends line the steps, applauding, hugging, kissing...then its gone and she's back to the present.

The female zombie shuffles towards the church. The male watches for a moment. She climbs the steps, trips near the top. One knee hits the concrete, gouges a large chunk of flesh out. Green pus oozes from the wound.

She rises unsteadily, turns painfully back to her companion. Beckons him with a finger. Waits until he begins his walk towards her then heads into the church.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Twenty rows of pews on each side of the compact building. Some are overturned, some are in pieces; a few smoulder from a past fire. The aisle leading to the altar is dirty.

A body of a priest lies near the altar, stomach ripped open, face chewed upon. The white collar is untouched as is the Bible in his hand.

The female zombie makes her way up the aisle. Zombie shapes are visible on some of the pews, as if resting. Some slump forward as if trying to pray. Back in the doorway, the male enters, sniffs the air. He moves up the aisle.

The female stands in front of the altar. The male labors behind, finally reaches her. She looks at him with what passes for tenderness in her condition. He looks into her eyes. A MOAN from his ravaged lips. They kneel.

The male examines his ravaged hand, touches a simple gold ring. The female takes his hand and they face the altar.

Suddenly, two figures appear in the doorway - a young woman RACHEL(17) and a young man ALEX(20). Each carries various weapons and wears a small backpack; their clothes are stained with sweat, blood and dirt.

They move carefully up the aisle, noting the inactive zombies, covering each other's back. A pair well versed in survival in this new world.

The newcomers approach the kneeling couple. Rachel lowers her pistol, tears in her eyes.

ALEX

They're here. Like you said they would be.

RACHEL

Yes. They know. Deep down, they know this place meant something.

She steps closer. The zombie female raises her head, looks at her. A muted snarl from her cratered lips. The male gazes about. Alex points the shotgun their way.

ALEX
Careful, Rache. They aren't...

RACHEL
Maybe they can hear me. Maybe they
know who I am.

ALEX
You're only making things harder.
Please...lets do what we have to do
and leave.

(beat)
The shots will make them all
aggressive. We don't want to be
trapped.

Rachel nods, wipes her face, She checks her pistol. Braces
herself, takes a deep breath.

ALEX
Ok, good girl. I'll take your mom,
you your dad. Don't hesitate, just
pull the trigger and head to the
door. Don't even look back.

Rachel nods again, but her lips tremble. She lines up the
male zombie, holds the pistol in two shaking hands. Alex
steadies the shotgun, leaning towards the female. Now both
zombies are moaning, getting agitated. More snarls...

ALEX
Count of three...one, two, thr...

RACHEL
No. I can't do it. I won't kill
them. Please, Alex...

She slumps to her knees, sobbing. Creaking noises from the
pews as the other zombies begin to stir. Alex lowers his
shotgun, paces in frustration. Rachel looks up at him in
anguish. His tight lips soften, he nods reluctantly.

ALEX
Alright. I understand how...lets
just go, ok? Its your call.

RACHEL
Thank you. I wanted to but...

ALEX
Its fine. Come on, lets get moving.

He reaches out to help her to her feet. Suddenly, the body of the priest shoots out a claw to grab Alex's foot. He stumbles to one knee. At the same time, the male and female rise to their feet and lunge towards Alex.

RACHEL

Alex!

Alex has time to swing the shotgun and blow the priest's head off but the zombie couple are almost upon him. He raises the gun to parry but two more gunshots boom out.

Blood, pus and other liquid spray everywhere.

The zombie couple fall dead as Alex scrambles backwards. He's almost hyperventilating and looks up to see Rachel holding her smoking pistol. Tears pour down her cheeks.

RACHEL

(whispers)

Rest in peace, my beautiful
parents.

The other zombies in the church have risen, sitting up in the pews, awoken fully now. Alex gets to his feet, takes the pistol from Rachel's hand, slips it in his belt.

ALEX

You saved my life.

Rachel nods, but weeps. She clutches him close. Kisses him. Her tears trace a clear path on his grimy face.

RACHEL

Can you...can you take their rings?
I'd like to keep them.

Alex glances at the pew zombies, at the bodies then back to Rachel. He nods. She kisses him again.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

The young couple emerge into a steady rain. Alex turns to close the doors. A muffled pounding starts. They hurry down the steps. Alex surveys the street.

The crows have found fresh meat and feed despite the rain. In the distance, explosions rock parts of the city.

Rachel opens her hand. The two wedding rings lie on it. She wipes the muck from them. She slips her father's ring on Alex's finger. He watches silently. Then she puts her mother's ring in his palm. He stares at it.

RACHEL

Well, what are you waiting for?

Her eyes are wide. Alex smiles, slips the ring onto Rachel's finger. They kiss, embrace. Rachel looks back at the church over his shoulder, weeps again. They part.

RACHEL

Where to now...husband.

Alex checks his weapons and gear. Drinks from a water bottle. He studies the ring on his finger.

ALEX

Now we go look for my parents.

FADE OUT