

The Leafcatcher
by
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Scene One

EXT DAY. MORNING RUSH HOUR. LONDON.

Music: First half of 'Nothing Brings Me Down' by Emiliana Torrini.

Early morning commuter traffic is moving through the streets. The cars fill Euston Road, pausing at the traffic lights before continuing. People walk along the grey, wet paths. Some are smoking, others pull cases, most of them are absorbed in their own private space, cutting themselves off from the surroundings.

Within this mass of people the camera pauses momentarily on some of the people in the crowd. A man lights a cigarette, a woman talks on a mobile phone, a man stares blankly ahead as he walks.

Within the city environment there is also an unassuming, shabby old man standing on the street corner looking up towards the sky. He is gently swaying his body from side to side. When we finally get a clear view of him he is running and raising his hands into the air, totally focussed on what he is doing, oblivious those around him. People avoid him. Suddenly he runs forward, then he stops. Confused he looks to the ground and says something, then he looks up again.

The title appears. (Over picture)

The Leafcatcher

CUT TO BLACK WITH TITLE

Autumn

Scene Two

INT DAY. DAY CENTRE. BINGO SESSION.

The room is quiet and furnished with cheap tables and chairs from a school canteen. The camera moves through the room, pausing on the players as they play.

A collection of old, poor and scruffy looking people sit at tables in a shabby canteen playing bingo. As the numbers are called they cross them off or just sit silently. They are mostly men with one or two women. One of the women sits muttering to herself, she has a small child's doll is nestled in her jumper, pressed close to her bosom, it's head sticks out of her collar .

BINGO CALLER

On its own number 5. Four and seven,
47. On its own number 9. All the
twos 22.

OLD MAN

Quack, quack.

There is no reaction to this attempt at humour, the old man laughs quietly to himself.

BINGO CALLER

Five Oh, blind 50. Seven and two,
72. Three and four, 34. Three and
six, 36.

YOUNG MAN

House!

The room goes quiet as the BINGO CALLERS ASSISTANT goes over to the YOUNG MAN and checks his winning ticket with the caller, who shouts 'YES' after every number.

BINGO CALLER'S ASSISTANT

Five. Six. Thirteen. Twenty one.
Twenty seven. Thirty six. Forty
one.

As the BINGO CALLERS ASSISTANT is calling out the numbers, an old man gets up from his seat. He picks up some plastic bags from the side of his chair, struggles out from behind the table and makes his way out of the room. This is THE LEAFCATCHER.

BINGO CALLER'S ASSISTANT

Forty seven. Fifty. Fifty eight.
Sixty two. Seventy three. Eighty
one. Eighty three and ninety. That's
a winner.

THE LEAFCATCHER passes by the chain smoking elderly CARE-TAKER'S desk as he slowly makes his way out of the day centre.

THE LEAFCATCHER
(softly spoken)

Thank you. See you tomorrow.

THE CARETAKER

Aye.

The camera lingers on the CARETAKER as he smokes his cigarette down to the very stub of the filter. The BINGO CALLER can be heard.

BINGO CALLER

Ok, new game, one line any line and your first number. One and eight, 18. Six and eight, 68. On its own, number 4. All the threes, 33.

The BINGO CALLER's voice begins to fade as a the shot of the CARETAKER dissolves into a shot of the near empty canteen. The only person remaining is the young woman sitting at a table, in front of her is the small child's doll. She is changing the dirty tea towel that she uses as the doll's nappy, wiping its bottom with some toilet paper and talking to it in a soothing voice

Scene Three

INT DAY. DAY CENTRE. BINGO SESSION.

DOLL WOMAN
(low, loving voice)

There there my little darlin',
momma's gonna give ya a little clean
now. Make everything sweet again,
yes yes. Don't cry now, momma's not
hurting ya is she, no she's not. No
momma would never hurt you. My lit-
tle angel

She continues making baby noises to the doll, kissing it as she puts it back down her jumper.

DOLL WOMAN
(low, loving voice)

There ya go. You have a little
sleep.

Scene Four

EXT DAY. A WALL BY PAVEMENT THE OUTSIDE EUSTON STATION

It is late autumn, THE LEAFCATCHER is sitting on a low wall looking up at the sky. He suddenly stands and runs over to try to catch a leaf, but there isn't a leaf there. He bends over and says a few words to the ground. He then stands up straight and walks back towards the wall, looking up for more falling leaves as he does so.

The camera lingers on THE LEAFCATCHER sitting on the wall, dissolving into a series of shots of the environment, the people in the crowd and The LEAFCATCHER.

Over the top of these shots the following VO is heard.

VO
(vox pop interviews)

Person 1. Male.

Well, you kind of get used to it in a place like London. I mean, it's sad. In a society like this, it shouldn't really happen. .

Person 2. Female.

I don't know. I think some of them could try harder. I'm sure it's tough though, I mean I wouldn't want to do it. I couldn't do it.
(Laughing)

Person 3. Male.

Well everybody's responsible for themselves. I guess they've must have made the choice to live that way.

Scene Five

EXT DAY. A WALL BY PAVEMENT THE OUTSIDE EUSTON STATION

THE LEAFCATCHER is sitting on the wall, looking up. A MAN reading a magazine sits down on the wall.

THE LEAFCATCHER
(loudly to himself)

The 1964 election. Richard
Dimbleby.

The camera cuts to a man who looks like Richard Dimbleby, wearing a suit and sitting at a desk on the pavement. He is looking directly into the camera

MAN
(looking up from his magazine)

Sorry, are you talking to me.

THE LEAFCATCHER

No. I was just reminding myself of something that happened. I like to remind myself of things. I don't like to forget.

MAN
(going back to his magazine)

Oh.

THE LEAFCATCHER

Do you want to know what I was thinking about?

The Man doesn't answer.

THE LEAFCATCHER

I was thinking about the general election in 1964. Richard Dimbleby ate a sandwich live on the BBC. I liked that. He was a nice man.

The man at the desk eats a sandwich whilst smiling at the camera.

The man sitting on the wall stands up and walks away.

THE LEAFCATCHER
(smiling to himself)

Margaret wasn't one yet. I was working... It was a cheese and salmon sandwich.

Scene Six

Video footage of people living on the streets of London.
Music: First verse of 'Twelve gates to the city' by Ralph Stanley

PERSON 1

A very dirty woman in her fifties sits on a piece of cardboard on the pavement. She is nodding her head and talking to herself.

PERSON 2

A young man in his twenties sits on a bench smoking a cigarette. He stares vacantly into the distance as the people walk past and his cigarette burns down.

PERSON 3

An old man sits in an alleyway drinking from a can of cider. He looks as if he has just woken up. He looks around at the camera and laughing, he offers the cameraman a drink from his can.

Scene Seven

INT DAY. DAY CENTER

Lunch is being prepared. The camera moves swiftly as it follows the process from preparation to serving. Starting with the bustling kitchen where food is washed and chopped, then steaming pans with the sounds of frying and cooking and finally bringing the food out ready to be served to the day center users. As LORRAINE serves the first person at the head of a queue of people

The Canteen is about half full, people are sitting, drinking tea and having conversations.

THE LEAFCATCHER is sitting alone, an dirty plate and bowl with the residue of his meal is on the table in front of him. He is holding a mug of tea, he drinks and puts the mug down.

CU of the inside of an empty tea mug.

The canteen is now empty except for THE LEAFCATCHER who sits at a table with the empty mug in front of him.

A woman walks into the canteen and pins an information poster on the wall, THE LEAFCATCHER watches her. Once she leaves his eyes stay fixed on the wall reading the poster, it is encouraging homeless people to find out about all the benefits that may be available to them. THE LEAFCATCHER'S eyes move across the wall, looking at the many leaflets, posters and scraps of paper offering help, advice and services for the homeless and underprivileged.

CUTS between THE LEAFCATCHER looking at the wall and his POV of the wall and its information. As he does so, he looks even more sad and lonely and appears to age a little bit more. Despite all the help on offer, he is lost to a normal life.

He looks into his empty mug and with a heavy sigh, he stands with an effort and leaves.

CUT back to CU's of the information and help on the wall.

Scene Eight

EXT DAY. A WALL BY PAVEMENT THE OUTSIDE EUSTON STATION

It is late autumn, THE LEAFCATCHER is once again sitting on a low wall looking up at the sky. There are very few leaves left on the trees. He is talking to himself as he sits alone.

THE LEAFCATCHER
(singing)

The autumn leaves fall past my win-
dow...

As he sings THE LEAFCATCHER stands and walks away from the wall, still singing his jolly little autumn song.

CUT TO BLACK WITH TITLE

Winter

Scene Nine

EXT DAY. DARK WINTERS DAY. LONDON.

Video footage of people living on the cold, wet winter streets of London.

Music: Third verse of 'Twelve gates to the city' by Ralph Stanley

PERSON 1

An old, bald, toothless man looks directly into the camera. Says something we don't hear and gives a big smile

PERSON 2

A young woman with plastic bags on her feet, head and over her torso rummages in a bin, occasionally around her nervously.

PERSON 3

It is dark and wet. A middle aged man is sleeping on a bench. His orange workman's coat pulled up over his head.

Scene Ten

INT DAY. DAY CENTER CORRIDOR.

THE LEAFCATCHER is walking down the corridor towards the shower room. He has a carrier bag in his hands. The sounds of a war movie, a running bath and a shower can be heard. As he walks past the TV room, the sound of the battle intensifies and he glances in.

Scene Eleven

INT DAY. DAY CENTER TV ROOM.

There are around 10 people in the room. A war film is on, the sound of a battle fills the air. The camera moves through the room, pausing briefly to rest upon individual people. Some watch the TV with blank stares, others react to what they are seeing. Others are having conversations. One woman is knitting. A man is asleep.

Scene Twelve

INT DAY. DAY CENTER SHOWER/TOILET ROOM.

THE LEAFCATCHER walks into the toilet/shower room. Through a series of jump cuts he is seen getting undressed, climbing in the shower, washing, drying himself, putting on his trousers and vest and standing at a sink preparing to shave.

Suddenly there is a very loud woman's scream from the next room. When he hears the scream THE LEAFCATCHER stops and stands completely still, only his eyes move. He looks at himself in the mirror.

DOLL WOMAN
(hysterical)

No! No! Please God No! My baby! No!

A series of shots reveal that in all rooms of the day centre people have momentarily stopped, shocked into stillness by the desperate scream. In each room the people are motionless, but the sounds in the rooms continue (TV, radio, ticking clock)

THE LEAFCATCHER is the first to react to the scream. He leaves the men's shower room and walks towards where the scream came from. He pushes the door open to the women's shower room and goes inside.

It is quiet in there, a faint sobbing can be heard coming from behind the door at the end of the short corridor.

It is as if time has slowed as the LEAFCATCHER makes his way down the corridor and pushes open the door to reveal DOLL WOMAN kneeling on the floor beside the bath, she looks dishevelled and dirty. The bath is full of hot water, steam rising from its surface. In the bath is a small child's doll, floating face down in the water.

It is clear she loves this doll in the way a mother loves her child and that, in her mind, something terrible has happened to her 'baby'.

She looks towards the LEAFCATCHER, a desperate and disturbing look in her eyes.

THE LEAFCATCHER stands perfectly still, looking at her.

DOLL WOMAN is still kneeling by the bath, she is talking quietly to the doll and gently prods it with her finger to try and get a response.

THE LEAFCATCHER looks up the corridor walks back and locks the door to the womens shower room.

THE LEAFCATCHER takes a deep breath and walks back down the corridor. DOLL WOMAN is in exactly the same position on the floor. She looks at him again.

DOLL WOMAN

Can you help him?

THE LEAFCATCHER doesn't know what to say. He just stares at her.

DOLL WOMAN

(trying to convince herself)

He's sick. Fever. I think he's got a cold. So I'm giving him a bath. To clean out the germs.

THE LEAFCATCHER

Shall I empty the water ?

DOLL WOMAN

(with vitriolic anger)

Are ya fucking crazy! He needs a bath. Don't ya fucking listen, are ya stupid?
Who are ya anyway, this is the ladies. You some fucking pervert. Leave us alone! Who are ya, we don't need ya.

The outburst has tired her out, she slumps forward, her face almost touching the water, she is gripping on to the side of the bath.

She starts to cry, her tears falling into the bath water.

THE LEAFCATCHER looks at her calmly. Then breaks into a small reassuring smile.

THE LEAFCATCHER

I'm a doctor.

Now I'm going to empty the water and

I'm going to take a look at him.

With these words DOLL WOMAN stops crying, she looks at THE LEAFCATCHER, trying to believe her saviour has arrived. She smiles.

THE LEAFCATCHER leans forward and pulls out the plug.

THE LEAFCATCHER

(with gentle authority)

Now give me the boy and get up from
that cold floor. We can't have you
getting ill now can we?

DOLL WOMAN hands THE LEAFCATCHER the doll and stands up and starts to dust herself off, licking her dirty fingertip and pointlessly scratching at a mark on her very dirty jumper.

THE LEAFCATCHER

What's his name?

DOLL WOMAN

Thomas

THE LEAFCATCHER

A fine name. There there little fellow, let's have a look at you.

THE LEAFCATCHER examines the doll.

DOLL WOMAN

Is he going to be ok doctor? He's not been eating well and he screams all night. I haven't slept in days.

The desperation and tiredness in DOLL woman's voice betrays her confusion with life. THE LEAFCATCHER sees this and is filled with sadness, DOLL WOMAN misreads his expression as concern for the health of her 'baby'.

DOLL WOMAN
(fearful)

What is it? What's wrong? Tell me!

THE LEAFCATCHER stands still. He is looking at her pain and her loss. All he can do is maintain his charade, so she can maintain hers.

THE LEAFCATCHER

It's nothing. You were right, he just has a little cold. He's going to be fine. But you must keep him indoors. He has to stay warm.

THE LEAFCATCHER picks up a grubby towel from a rail, wraps it around the doll and hands it to DOLL WOMAN.

THE LEAFCATCHER

Keep him in this and stay indoors.
It's cold outside.

DOLL WOMAN

Thank you.

She immediately turns her full attention back to the doll, puts it down the front of her jumper and fusses it.

DOLL WOMAN

(talking to the doll)

There ya go darlin'. All better now.
Mama's here. Mama's here. It's all
ok.

THE LEAFCATCHER

How about a nice cup of tea.

The LEAFCATCHER gently takes DOLL WOMAN by the arm. They walk up the corridor towards the door. In an awkward silence.

As they reach the closed door, the sound of people talking comes through from the other side. The voices stop as the LEAFCATCHER unlocks the door. Once open DOLL WOMAN walks through the small crowd and away up the corridor. The LEAFCATCHER is left standing alone with the crowd, nobody speaks.

Scene Thirteen

EXT DAY. EUSTON ROAD. LONDON.

A cold, grey winters day. Cars fill the busy road. People, wrapped up against the cold walk along the pavement and stand on the side of the road waiting to cross.

THE LEAFCATCHER is sitting on the wall staring straight ahead.

Dissolve from day to night

EXT NIGHT. EUSTON ROAD. LONDON.

There are very few cars around now, their lights reflect on the wet tarmac as they drive past. A few late night people walk the streets, not speaking or looking.

The wall where THE LEAFCATCHER usually sits is empty. The camera pans around from the wall to see THE LEAFCATCHER walking down the street, the camera begins to follow him. The music 'Nothing Brings Me Down' by Emiliana Torrini plays.

THE LEAFCATCHER disappears around a corner, the image dissolves into a shot of THE LEAFCATCHER around the corner, still walking. In this way the camera continues to follow THE LEAFCATCHER walking the night time streets, with every new shot the camera gets closer to him.

Finally THE LEAFCATCHER reaches a small, boarded up brick building in a secluded corner of the city.

THE LEAFCATCHER carefully moves one of the boards and slips inside, pulling it back into place to conceal his presence within. The building is a disused, dirty public toilet, inside is a small bed made up of a pile of flattened cardboard boxes, upon which are two wooden pallets and some dirty blankets. In the stand up urinal he has made some impromptu shelves with a gas camping stove, two pans, a cup, a plate, some food, a book, some candles and a box of matches. This is where he sleeps and it is clear he has been staying here for some time.

THE LEAFCATCHER lights a candle and sits down on his bed staring at a photograph of a woman and small girl in the pale light. He starts to cry, quietly at first and then sobbing uncontrollably. He lies down curled up in a foetal position and continues to cry.

CUT TO BLACK WITH TITLE

Spring

Scene Fourteen

EXT DAY. EUSTON ROAD. LONDON.

It is a bright, warm looking spring morning, the street is quiet, people are relaxed as they walk on their way. Trees are beginning to bud, blossom has appeared. The wall is empty, the leafcatcher is not there.

Scene Fifteen

INT DAY. DAY CENTER. CANTEEN.

A series of locked off shots of the day centre. Looking down the corridor, people serving food, people eating. The final shot is of THE LEAFCATCHER standing behind the counter serving tea and coffee. He is dressed in different clothes than we have seen before, he looks a little tidier and healthier. He smiles as he shares a few words with the man he is serving. We cannot hear what they are saying, but THE LEAFCATCHER is happy and communicating.

There is a lull in the line of people who want serving. THE LEAFCATCHER looks at something out of frame. His look is one of empathy. He starts to pour a cup of tea.

As he is doing this, the camera starts to track left, THE LEAFCATCHER goes out of shot, the track reveals people sitting eating and talking. The camera comes to rest on DOLL WOMAN sitting alone, she is dressed in a new, cleaner set of clothes. Her doll is on the table in front of her, she is silently stroking it's hair.

After a moment THE LEAFCATCHER walks into shot and places a cup of tea in front of DOLL WOMAN, she looks at him and a faint smile passes over her lips.

THE LEAFCATCHER walks out of shot and DOLL WOMAN drinks some tea.

Scene Sixteen

EXT DAY. EUSTON ROAD. LONDON

THE LEAFCATCHER is sitting on the wall watching the people go by. The camera pulls back to reveal DOLL WOMAN sitting quietly next to him. Her doll is on her lap. THE LEAFCATCHER looks at DOLL WOMAN, she keeps looking straight ahead.

CUUT TO THE LEAFCATCHERS POV of the street and the pedestrians waiting at the crossing. It is sunny and warm.
CUT back to THE LEAFCATCHER.

THE LEAFCATCHER
(looking up, then at the street)

The leaves are beautiful.

CUT back to THE LEAFCATCHERS POV of the street. This time there is a big pile of autumn leaves on the street. A road sweeper comes through with his broom, sweeping the leaves out of shot.

THE LEAFCATCHER turns and looks at DOLL WOMAN. She looks at him. They both smile. The second half of 'Nothing Brings Me Down' begins, and the camera begins to move away from them and drives away down the street, watching the people on the pavement go about their business.

Black screen.
End credits.