

THE LAST LEAF

Written by

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Based on, the short story by O'Henry

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FADE IN:

EXT.

Camera flies down from clouds to an emerging Manhattan past the statue of liberty. Through the first skyscrapers of the early 1900's. Into the maze of streets that reveal NYC Greenwich Village as a labyrinth of shops and multicultural color. Camera settles on a young woman strawberry blond hair slight, full pack on her back fresh into town look.

CUT TO:

EXT.

Johnsy stops and looks around spellbound. Camera spins with her taking it in.

CUT TO:

INT.

Supply shop where Sue a tall Native American descent woman is counting pennies for pastels. The shop owner is looking on amused.

PAUL

I want one of these drawings Sue,
you can take 10 cents off the next
box of pastels. Adaline loves your
work.

SUE

Thanks Paulie, you got a deal.

She smiles and reaches for the box of pastels

CUT TO:

EXT.

Johnsy walks along frazzled from the magnitude of it all and sits at a local cafe. Sue walks up carrying her pastel setup and takes the seat next to Johnsy in a crash.

SUE

Whew. It's hot out for October.

Sue pulls out the last drawing she was working on and her pastels and sets to work.

JOHNSY
That it is. Are you an artist

SUE
That's right

JOHNSY
Oh wild me too.

SUE
Really how so?

JOHNSY
I paint oil.

SUE
Me too- doing some pastels today to
get some quick cash. I'm Sue.

JOHNSY
Oh I do love pastel work, (scarfing
her meal)
Sorry I'm Johnsy (wiping a hand on
her pant and extending)

SUE
Pleasure! You new to town huh

JOHNSY
Uh, huh.

SUE
Let me show you all the best spots
for art supplies and what to avoid.
It's easy for us to get taken
advantage of and artist should
stick together.

JOHNSY
Oh that would be great thanks Sue.

SUE
So who's your favorite painter...

CUT TO:

INT.

Looking at clothing and fabric

CUT TO:

EXT.

Wandering the butcher shop of links and hogs

CUT TO:

INT.

Wandering the halls of the MET

CUT TO:

INT.

Supply shops, introducing Paulie and presenting him with a pastel drawing.

CUT TO:

INT.

Witney Vanderbilt's studio looking at sculptures

CUT TO:

EXT.

They sit in the village at a cafe it's fall and warm. They have a meal in front of them and lock eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT.

Pan up a brick building Show them moving in to a 3rd floor space

CUT TO:

INT.

Mr. Behrman enters with a bottle of wine and a sketch for a masterpiece.

CUT TO:

They laugh as he joins the moving in party.

CUT TO:

EXT.

Later they settle in on the fire escape in blankets

CUT TO:

The tree outside the widow rustles and the camera fades to dark on the twilight as they nuzzle. A leaf flies up into the air caught in a draft of warm air. Linger in their view.

JOHNSY

I want to paint the bay of Naples,
Greece seems so romantic.

SUE

Let's go in the spring we can make
paintings all winter and go in the
spring.

CUT TO:

EXT.

Old man, blue in the face walking the streets at night he
leaves a cold wake slow foot falls echo in the dark.

CUT TO:

Close in and we see a icy sick look to his face and moon
white eyes. He stand in front of window and breathes his fog
like breath on the window pane.

OLD WOMAN

KAff KAUGHFFF KAF KAF KAF hhhmmm

Candle light comes on in the house

YOUNG WOMAN

Mother. Oh no..

Sobbing begins

CUT TO:

Old man tilts his hat and walks on.

CUT TO:

EXT.

Morning Johnsy and Sue leaving the building backpacks on for supplies and with canvases under their arms. Through the maze of streets they wind.

CUT TO:

I/E.

Shop keeper with small brown bags and jars of pigment Johnsy loads up.

CUT TO:

INT.

Gallery owner who holds a few canvases up pointing at one and nodding.

CUT TO:

EXT.

Walk past a group and the old man Pneumonia is in the group he see's Johnsy and follows her with his eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT.

Coffee and bread with friends including Behrman all carrying on happily.

CUT TO:

EXT.

Marching through the crowds of the market outside a big old house.

(CONT'D)

SUE

Ready?

JOHNSY

Naples here we come.

CUT TO:

Hand grabbing a proper old brass knocker of a boar with a ring. Slamming the ring down

Door opens and a house man ushers them in

INT.

To a drawing room where they set out their paintings and drawings

CUT TO:

In walks a little old lady in pearls with a gentle look

She smiles to them

CUT TO:

EXT.

Walking back to the apartment chuffed with much less in their canvas rolls and folios.

CUT TO:

EXT.

Stopping to celebrate at the cafe with Behrman and group.

INT.

In the back stands Mr. Pneumonia.

Sue stand alone in the cafe and he moves in - [Hitchcock like pull and zoom]

MR.PNEUMONIA
You make lovely work little bird

CUT TO:

He reaches out and puts a hand on her cheek.

JOHNSY
Where? Where have you seen my work?

MR.PNEUMONIA
I see everything once I find you

She looks at him confused and creeped out pulling back

JOHNSY
Great mister do me a favor buy a painting.

He moves in and kisses her forehead

MR.PNEUMONIA
Oh. I'll take everything.

SUE
Johnsy! Babe tell em about Mrs. Gammell.

JOHNSY
Scuze' me sir
(She is broken off from his gaze and his tough leaves a blue icy mark where his lips touched)

She turns to her friend and back but Mr. Pneumonia is gone

A waiter in the back begins a massive coughing fit

JOHNSY (CONT'D)
Some other time ok- maybe I might just go home.
(She stand silhouetted for a moment)

SUE
Ok. See you in a bit

EXT.

Johnsy begins the walk out into the night and a shiver hits her.

A more ghostly version of Mr.Pneumonia shadows her steps, appearing in reflections and doorways.

CUT TO:

INT.

DREAM SEQUENCE:

Mr.Pneumonia Stands over Johnsy he wraps his arms around her
He laughs and 20 arms come out of him and grab her all over

CUT TO:

She is stretched apart and then shrunken down

CUT TO:

ice forms all over her body, It shatters into mirrors

CUT TO:

she begins to run down the streets

CUT TO:

The maze turns her around and around becoming a reflected
maze

CUT TO:

Cobble stones turn to platforms in the dark as she runs up
and up.

CUT TO:

She is in a hall of mirrors and stopped before an altar

CUT TO:

A skull head grows out of the floor on a tree. It blooms and
bears leaves. The leaves all fall away leaving the skull held
in the branches. Mr.Pneumonia appears again in a death
shroud.

CUT TO:

She looks down and sees herself covered in leaves. The leaves start to shrivel and fall away. The last leaf hangs in her chest where her heart was. The floor opens up under her.

CUT TO:

falling down a tunnel and the leaf is ripped from her chest.

CUT TO:

Darkness

INT.

Next morning the sun is perfect in their space and Sue is hard at work on a big canvas. Johnsy has taken up on the day bed in her studio/room.

CUT TO:

She looks sickly as she hold her gaze with the tree outside
Sue comes in to check on her

SUE

You working today?

No reply just a slow glazed blink

SUE (CONT'D)

Johnsy, what's wrong

Johnsy curls up tighter into the shea

JOHNSY

I'll be fine, just a bit of a cold

Chest cough starts

CUT TO:

Sue back at work and the cough rings through the space.

CUT TO:

She looks on worried.

CUT TO:

Johnsy refuses toast and tea.

CUT TO:

Doctor in sitting next to Johnsy taking her temp and pulse.

CUT TO:

Sue looking devastated.

CUT TO:

Doctor coming out to talk with Sue.

DOCTOR
She won't make it

SUE
What do you mean, how can you tell

DOCTOR
She has no interest in the future.
People without some goal or desire
beyond themselves in my experience
don't make it.

SUE
But she wants to go to Naples to
paint

DOCTOR
Paint? Paint! HRMPF. No young lady
I mean a future for a young lady, a
man, a family, new winter clothes-
real goals

Sue looks at him blank confused

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
She won't survive without something
meaningful to live for. And she is
carrying on about that tree
outside. It doesn't look good. I am
sorry

SUE
(under her breath)
Tree?

Thank you doctor, I am sure she has
something to live for.

CUT TO:

Sue backs into the corner after the doctor leaves and begins sobbing.

CUT TO:

INT.

Sue moving her materials and canvas into Johnsy's space

CUT TO:

Johnsy staring out window.

CUT TO:

Sue begins to work and sing.

CUT TO:

Brush on canvas.

CUT TO:

Johnsy coughing.

CUT TO:

Sue goes to her side.

SUE

What is it little bird

JOHNSY

Twenty -two, Twenty-three, ...

SUE

What are you counting

She scans the room and window

JOHNSY

Leaves- when the last one falls I will fall with it.

SUE

What? Don't say that, Johnsy, there is no relation between the leaves and you getting better, that's just your imagination. Focus on Naples- remember we are going to paint in Naples.

JOHNSY

No not me- when the last leaf
falls...

Her gaze is distant

JOHNSY (CONT'D)

There were hundreds of leaves at
first it hurt to count them, now
only a few dozen.

SUE

Oh little bird - no.

JOHNSY

They are falling faster now

Sue bites her lip and heads out of the room

CUT TO:

INT.

Down the stairs to Mr.Berhman

SUE

Come up and bring some life, I need
a model and Johnsy is sick.

MR.BERHMAN

What Little Bird? No. What is it

SUE

Pneumonia. The doctor thinks it's
pneumonia and she wont survive.
She's talking crazy. The leaves on
the tree next door. That when they
all fall she will die.

MR.BERHMAN

Oh my. No! Fever must be bad if she
is having hallucinations. Let's go
I will bring some soup, she needs
to survive to see my masterpiece!

CUT TO:

INT.

Back in the room Berhman is posing and the wind is howling
outside the tree shakes.

JOHNSY

Six, seven. Oh- tonight

MR. BERHMAN

What are you saying little bird?
Come now, no tree decides your
fate! Where is your heart?

JOHNSY

One, two, three

SUE

Oh Johnsy stop this please. Stop
counting think of Naples or
painting or US. Please

JOHNSY

Hear the wind. Tonight the last
leaf will fall and I will go with
it- I'm sorry Sue. I just can't
hold on I won't. Not when that leaf
is gone.

Mr. Berhman looks on devastated/ while Sue sits by her side

SUE

Hold on please

CUT TO:

INT.

Berhman and Sue looking out the window at the tree with three
leaves remaining it begins to rain and snow

Berhman studies one leaf

CUT TO:

Back at work Berhman posing Sue painting, Johnsy looking to
the window. Sue closes the curtain. The storm gets worse.

CUT TO:

Berhman leaves

CUT TO:

Sue sleeps on in the chair next to Johnsy, wind and storm are
furious.

CUT TO:

INT.

Berhman mixing paint by candle

CUT TO:

Berhman packing up a kit with brushes

CUT TO:

I/E.

Berhman framed against at cold door opening with rain pouring down ladder in one hand paints in the other

CUT TO:

INT.

The storm still raging

 JOHNSY
Sue open the window

 SUE
Stop this please.

 JOHNSY
Do it I need to know.

Sue peaks and sees one leaf still on the wall.

CUT TO:

Relief on her face she opens the curtain.

 JOHNSY (CONT'D)
Oh we survived?

She put her head down and stares at the leaf.

Day to night while Sue works back to day

INT.

 JOHNSY
Sue, can I have some thing to eat?

SUE
Of course how about some broth that
Berhman made for you?

JOHNSY
Sure. I think if that little leaf
can hold on. So can I.

SUE
That's right love.

Doctor checking Johnsy's pulse and temp.

Talking with Sue.

DOCTOR
She is going to make it.

SUE
Thank you, somehow that leaf held
on and it gave her enough will to
survive.

DOCTOR
Its a miracle to be certain. But I
have sad news your neighbor Mr.
Berhman wont make it.

SUE
What Berhman what happened?

DOCTOR
He was found a few days ago soaked
to the bone, and raging with fever.
He is too old and drinks to much to
overcome this. Why he was out in
that storm is beyond me.

CUT TO:

EXT.

Sue waiting outside as they bring Berhman out to the street
in a stretcher.

SUE
Old man (tears)

MR. BERHMAN
How is the little bird?

SUE
She is going to make it.

MR.BERHMAN

ah then she saw my masterpiece.

Sue looks at him puzzled. Then along the ground a ladder, up to the tree and on the wall a perfect leaf replica painted into the plaster.

END