



FILM: **FALLEN LEAVES**

FDG RATING: 3.5 😊😊😊😊😊

Aki Kaurismäki: *director*
Alma Pöysti: *actress, Ansa*
Jussi Vatanen: *actor, Holappa*

DATE: May 19, 2024

DISCUSSION SUMMARY: **FALLEN LEAVES**

Fallen Leaves, Finland's 2024 Oscar entry, made the shortlist for best international film. A romantic comedy about two lonely young people, Ansa and Holappa, who accidentally meet at a karaoke bar in modern day Helsinki, and then overcome a series of chance obstacles including Holappa losing Ansa's phone number, Holappa's affinity for alcohol which upset Ansa, mistaken addresses, and a traffic accident, that eventually brings them together. Each is struggling in their own way to make a living. She's a cashier in a market, who unfortunately and somewhat unfairly is fired for taking expired food that would have been tossed in the dumpster. She owns her own apartment so, desperate for income, she takes a job at a bar for a meager salary but on her second day on the job, her boss is arrested, and she is jobless once again. By chance, she runs into Holappa who also has been fired for drinking on the job. After a coffee at a nearby cafe, they go to the cinema. She writes down her phone number for Holappa, but does not tell him her name or where she lives. While stopping to smoke a cigarette, he unknowingly drops and loses the paper.

There is a sweet charm to the story and light comedic situations. One discussion participant said it is a story that's been told before, but done in a unique way with an understated tone, slight sarcasm, and dry dark humor. Some discussion participants thought the bare budget look contributed to the ambiance. Others felt the pace was too slow and the characters a bit depressing. Another comment noted that Ansa and Holappa are very likeable and sympathetic characters despite the roadblocks they repeatedly confront preventing them from connecting with each other. This discussion participant felt like cheering them on, thinking life has to get better.

A favorite scene is when, after inviting Holappa to dinner at her house, Ansa goes to the discount market to buy a plate and set of utensils since she only owns one dinner plate and one set of eating utensils. When Holappa doesn't show up, she throws the extra plate and utensils in the trash.

Along the way, a loveable stray dog enters the picture. And Holappa and Ansa finally do reconnect since Holappa repeatedly waits in front of the cinema hoping Ansa will walk by. The film has a satisfying hopeful ending as the two walk off into the sunset, after Holappa is released from the hospital where he was recovering from his serious injuries from the traffic accident and Ansa had been visiting him daily while he was in a coma. One discussion participant said it was possibly the best little love story he has seen.

Amusing, quirky, clever, Fallen Leaves, left a breezy score of 3.5 on our scale of 1 to 5. (5 is the best.)



See you at the movies!
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