

WET SEAL CIGARETTES

a short film
by
Percival Bernard

REVISED 12-01-21

NOTES

- B&W
- 1:33:1 Ratio
- New Wave/Noir Aesthetic
- REF. FRANÇOIS TRUFFAUT, DARREN ARONOFSKY, ALFRED HITCHCOCK, WES ANDERSON

FADE IN:

INT. JAIL

NICHOLAS BORDEAUX sits in an orange prison jumpsuit, his arm bandaged in a sling.

MR. SEAL (VOICEOVER NARRATION)

As he awaits his fate on death row, Nicholas Bordeaux has only now realized that nothing has ever belonged to him in this life. Not even his own life...

OVERHEAD TILT: The prison guard sets a silver platter with a lid on a table before him.

MR. SEAL (VOICEOVER NARRATION)

His final meal. What is his final meal, one may inquire?

CAMERA PAN UP TO NICHOLAS' FACE

MR. SEAL (VOICEOVER NARRATION)

However, a better question would be:

Nicholas looks into the CAMERA, SWALLOWS DEEPLY

MR. SEAL (VOICEOVER NARRATION)

What is one to do when he is suffocating under a society clouded in vanity and cigarette smoke? Why, he unknowingly pours gasoline to the flame, of course! Because only when we sift through the ashes will we find the truth...

CUT TO:

INT. STAGE

We OPEN UP on a closed CURTAIN. In front of the curtain, sat a record player.

SLOW PAN INTO CLOSE: A WHITE GLOVED HANDS stick out of the curtain and waves.

AUDIO. In the B.G. An AUDIENCE that we do not see APPLAUDS loudly.

Several seconds go by before their applause ceases.

The WHITE GLOVED HAND retreats back into the curtains.

AUDIO: Cease applauds . AUDIENCE "awwwws", disappointed.

The WHITE GLOVED HAND comes back out of the curtain with a RECORD.

AUDIO: AUDIENCE SHUSHES

CLOSE PAN IN TO EXTREME CLOSE: The pair of hands carefully places the record onto the player and sets the needle:

EXTREME CLOSE: We watch the needle spin as MUSIC CUES.

TITLE CARD: BLACK: WET SEAL CIGARETTES

INT. CAFÈ - NEW YORK - DAY

(24 HOURS EARLIER)

AUDIO: Music: Just Imagine - DORIS DAY

CENTER FRAME:

MEDIUM SHOT(CHEST LEVEL): PERCIVAL BERNARD, black suit and tie, rolling up tobacco in cigarette paper in a French style cafe.

Across from him sat a young BLACK WOMAN, also wearing a black suit and blouse. Scarf tied around her head and chin, large Gucci shades on.

Curses spat from her tongue onto his cool and unfazed expression.

We can barely hear what she is saying over the MUSIC in the foreground.

EXTREME CLOSE ON:

Her angry yelling expression; her lips curled in a snarling disdain.

OVERHEAD TILT:

EXTREME CLOSE ON:

Percival Bernard's hands sprinkling herbal tobacco neatly in the cigarette paper.

CLOSE ON: the BLACK WOMAN burying her face in her hands, verges on tears, bathing in angst and frustration.

EXTREME CLOSE ON:

Percival Bérnards folds the paper around the herbal tobacco, sealing it with a lick and press. He seemed almost oblivious to the angry woman in front of him. He does not spare a glance at her through his dark frames. And there he has it: the perfect *Wet Seal Cigarette*.

EXTREME CLOSE ON: the BLACK WOMAN explodes at him.

CLOSE ON(SHOULDER LEVEL:

Percival Bernard turns away from her, his body facing out the booth, freshly rolled cigarette in pursed in between his lips. WHITE GLOVED HANDS STICK OUT FROM EACH SIDE OF THE FRAME; SOME WITH LIGHTERS, SOME WITH MATCHES. He obliged one of the gloved hands to light his cigarette.

SLOW ZOOM OUT:

MEDIUM SHOT(CHEST LEVEL):

Percival Bernard draws smoke as he continues to be yelled at.

SLOW ZOOM OUT:

TWO SHOT:

He turns back to her, nothing in the world mattered at this moment now that he has his cigarette. The perfectly rolled cigarette.

MUSIC FADES AS WE PAN RIGHT: past the yelling woman, to the next booth over. Her yelling fades into the background, now silent.

NICHOLAS BOUDERAUX, black suit and tie, sits in the next booth.

The waiter brings his French vanilla ice cream.

OVERHEAD: He slides the ice cream onto the table.

He sits across from a French speaking, *Wet Seal Cigarette* smoking, WOMAN, DARLING, black suit and pearls.

OVERHEAD. The waiter slides the salmon she ordered onto the table. Like a whole salmon. She doesn't even like salmon. (Wtf?)

CLOSE ON: the ice cream melts a bit.

She only speaks French.

NICHOLAS

There was this thing about moths where they are so attracted to the street lights of the city because they think it's a natural source of light, like the moon or something. Everything in their beings is

telling them they're doing the right thing but it's actually pointless, at least outside of their own divine or personal purpose or something like that.

(beat)

Sometimes I feel like that. Like...the world is on fire and I'm just a moth trying to find a light I believe belongs to me.

LONG BEAT.

(Isn't it awkward when someone gets really deep out of nowhere?)

DARLING

(French, subtitles)

Your philosophy is quite introspective...and pretentious.

NICHOLAS

I honestly don't even know who I am anymore.

DARLING

(French, subtitles)

Can you be honest with yourself for a few moments...did you honestly like who you were before?

NICHOLAS

It's not like I have a choice to be this person. I didn't ask to be this.

DARLING

(French, subtitles)

Then don't be.

NICHOLAS

It's not that simple, Darling.

DARLING

(French, subtitles)

But it is...It really is. The universe doesn't exist without you. And you do not exist without the universe. Your perception of yourself is only a mirror, a reflection from the inside out. You will find this out soon enough.

(beat)

Would you like a Cigarette?

She offers.

EXTREME CLOSE ON the cigarette she offers across the table.

Nicholas chuckles and takes a sip of his coffee before he replies.

NICHOLAS

(politely)

Actually, I don't smoke.

(beat)

I also do not speak French...

DARLING

(blows smoke, French, subtitles)

Then how are you understanding me?

NICHOLAS

(gesturing to the subtitles)

...I can read the subtitles.

How come she has never noticed that?

DARLING

(offers cigarette, French, subtitles)

Just one?

Nicholas politely declines, even with her charming smile...which slowly fades only a few moments later.

LONG BEAT. EXTREME CLOSE ON BOTH OF THEIR FACES.

CLOSE ON: Embarrassed, she smashes her cigarette into his French vanilla ice cream reducing it to a pitiful simmer.

NICHOLAS

I...Was going to eat that.

On cue, the waiter rushes by and grabs the bowl of French vanilla ice cream and replaces it with a new one. Nicholas stops him by the arm, confused. The waiter looked down at Nicholas' hand on his arm. Nicholas slowly removes his hand. Darling watches this entire interaction. When Nicholas' arm is removed, the Waiter smiles.

WAITER

(too assuring smile)

It's on the house...from those "gentlemen" over there.

Nicholas turns, appearing to be looking over into the camera, however, he actually is looking at the far end of the room where SOMEONE was watching them. He gives a very nervous wave.

The Waiter scurries off and Darling focuses on Nicholas.

TRACK: WAITER going to the KITCHEN.

INT. CAFE - KITCHEN

He carefully plucks the cigarette bud from the ice cream and carelessly tosses the bowl aside, allowing it to shatter. He takes out a lighter and hastily attempts to light the cigarette in a hurry.

CUT BACK TO CAFE

She leans over the table to whisper, looking towards the far end of the room.

DARLING

(French, subtitles)

(blows smoke, French, subtitles)

Are you sure you don't want a cigarette?

He turns back to Darling.

AUDIO: TELEPHONE RINGS

WHITE GLOVED HAND enters FRAME, holding a telephone to Nicholas ear.

NICHOLAS

Hello?

(beat)

Thank you.

WHITE GLOVED HAND retreats.

NICHOLAS

I must be going..

(beat)

I have an appointment.

CAMERA HANGS ON DARLING AS NICHOLAS GETS UP AND EXITS THE SCENE.

The PIG COPS enter the FRAME. They take it upon themselves to sit here Nicholas sat.

They stare at each other. Darling takes out a cigarette. Pig Cop 1 lights the cigarette.

The WAITER brings a plate of bacon and sets it on the table.

AUDIO: Their tense staredown is accompanied by the sizzling of the bacon on their table.

EXTREME CLOSE ON a plate of hot bacon.

EXTREME CLOSE ON: PIG COP 1 taking the bacon off of the plate and stuffing his face while looking at Darling (Gross)

EXT. BROOKLYN STREET - DAY

CLOSE UP (SHOULDERS UP):

NICHOLAS WALKS DOWN THE SIDEWALK

HIS FACE CENTER FRAME:

WHITE GLOVED HANDS stick out from every part of the frame offering a wet Seal Cigarette in his face.

He keeps his head forward, straight face, ignoring the temptation of the Wet Seal Cigarette.

CUT TO:

PAN UP FROM FEET: Position camera between TWO COPS from the back as we listen in on their conversation.

These cops are satirically actual Pigs smoking Wet Seal Cigarettes in uniforms.

EXTREME CLOSE: Piggy Cop 1 takes a bite of a donut:

COP FIG 1

(CHEWING)

You heard that guy back at the...He said he doesn't smoke.

EXTREME CLOSE: COP FIG 2 MOUTH, CIGARETTE STICKING OUT OF MOUTH:

COP FIG 2

Is that what he said?

(blows smoke)

How the hell did you hear them from the other side of the joint?

EXTREME CLOSE: COP FIG 1 MOUTH

COP FIG 1

The subtitles. You didn't see 'em all across the screen?

EXTREME CLOSE: PAN UP TO COP FIG 1 EYES

COP FIG 1

That's our guy?

(beat)

Ya' sure that's him?

They both look at the character description in between them: a sheet of paper with a childishy drawn man in a suit under "WUNTED" [cop pigs are illiterate apparently].

"Close enough", they thought.

They put down the sign, Nicholas now CENTER FRAME between them in the B.G.

COP FIG 1 & 2 nod at each other in the F.G.

COP FIG 2

FREEZE!

RACK FOCUS: Nicholas freezes and looks at the camera.

Long beat.

Nicholas books it down the street.

SWING back to FIG COPS.

COP FIG 2

Damn...that usually works.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

Nicholas cracks an eye open to the faint flicking of a lighter. He opens his eyes and looks RIGHT.

PAN RIGHT:

Sitting next to him on the bus stop bench, A HOMELESS MAN with a PAPER BAG on his head, holes cut out for eyes, attempts to light a cigarette.

Nicholas looks over at the homeless man, taking notice that it is indeed a Wet Seal Cigarette.

CLOSE ON: The Wet Seal Cigarette.

The homeless man notices Nicholas. He silently offers Nicholas the cigarette. He declines.

NICHOLAS

I don't smoke.

The homeless man looks at him for a beat.

Nicholas tries to ignore him. However, the constant failed flickering of his lighter is annoying him.

The homeless man gives up and sighs.

PAN IN ON: his sad paper bag.

AUDIO: STRIKING MATCH

EXTREME CLOSE ON: The fingers of Nicholas enter the frame, a lit match nestled between his fingertips. He lights the homeless man's cigarette.

SLOW PAN OUT: He inhales - Suddenly the homeless man's paper bag catches on fire!

However, he is not alarmed, nor is Nicholas. Strangely enough, nobody was alarmed. The homeless man sits back and enjoys his Wet Seal Cigarette in peace, the flame spreading to the rest of his body.

ZOOM IN TO EXTREME CLOSE: THE FLAME IN NICHOLAS' PUPILS

Nicholas sits back as well, the homeless man in flames next to him as they wait for their bus. Nicholas closes his eyes...

SHARP CUT BACK TO CAFE

INT. CAFE - DAY

SLOW ZOOM IN: We are a fly on the wall, watching Darling smoke a cigarette completely in her element.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON: DARLING, looking directly into CAMERA.

Darling blows smoke from a Wet Seal Cigarette before speaking:

DARLING

(French, subtitles)

I take it you haven't found what you are looking for.

(smiles, leans in)

Take a look around. Nothing is missing.

SHARP CUT TO BLACK

DARLING (CONT)

(French, subtitles)

Give it form.

EXT. OPEN FIELD - DAY

NICHOLAS & DARLING CONVERSE IN VOICEOVER AS THIS SCENE PLAYS OUT:

CLOSE ON: WET SEAL CIGARETTE IN THE GLOSSED LUSCIOUS LIPS OF A BARBER, women, black. Smoke rises from her lips.

NICHOLAS (VOICEOVER)

This feels like a dream.

DARLING (VOICEOVER)

(French w/ subtitles)

Like a dream?

NICHOLAS (VOICEOVER)

Like we've been here before. And if we stay here long enough...

SLOW ZOOM OUT:

CENTER FRAME:

As the VOICE OVER PLAYS, we ZOOM OUT to reveal that Nicholas is getting his haircut by a BLACK WOMAN BARBER in the middle of an open

field. The Brooklyn Bridge in the background and the sunset softly kissing the scene before us. BLACK CHILDREN play in front of them, their adolescence making us mourn the child we were once upon a time ago.

We find ourselves in this open field, disassociated and just simply distant. It's beautiful. Nostalgic.

(What is this feeling?)

DARLING (VOICEOVER)

(French w/ subtitles)

...Then perhaps we will begin to remember...

(beat)

Purify yourself. Immerse yourself in the beauty of it all. All of this movement flows through every fiber of your being. This energy. You are this energy. You are movement, even when still. Now you are understanding. Above becomes below. Below becomes the above. Everything bigger becomes smaller. Everything smaller is becoming bigger. The endless becomes the infinite and we, my friend...

(beat)

We are becoming God.

EXT. BROOKLYN SIDEWALK - DAY

Nicholas, hair nicely cut, walks down the sidewalk.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEYWAY - DAY

In an ALLEY, A STRANGE MAN stands over another quivering MAN, gun pointed to the quivering man's forehead. He pulls the trigger-

CUT TO:

AUDIO: (OFF SCREEN) GUNSHOT

Nicholas jumps. He looks at the ALLEYWAY where the gunshot came from. Something is wrong..

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEYWAY - DAY

The STRANGE MAN looks down at the dead body, then looks towards a horrified Nicholas at the end of the alley, smoking a Wet Seal Cigarette and chuckling.

CLOSE ON THE CIGARETTE IN HIS MOUTH.

The STRANGE MAN looks into the camera , chuckling, and nods towards NICHOLAS. He takes his cigarette out and flicks it towards him.

Nicholas steps back from the projectile cigarette bud, allowing it to fall at his feet. He looks up..

...only to find the Strange Man gone, The Quivering Man slumped the alley wall. He approaches the deceased man slowly, seeing something protruding from his mouth. He reaches and slowly pulls a WET SEAL CIGARETTE from his bloody mouth.

The cigarette burns him and he drops it to the ground.

CLOSE ON: His eyes widen as we watch the cigarette burn rapidly (timelapse) on the concrete until it is reduced to nothing but dust.

Nicholas grows angry. He looks up...

NICHOLAS

(French, subtitles)

I! DON'T. SMOKE!

Nicholas snaps his head to the end of the alley. The Pig Cops standing at the crime scene, Nicholas now in a compromising position.

SHOT MONTAGE

- SLOW PAN IN: Pig Cops staring directly into the camera.
- EXTREME CLOSE: Nicholas' eye widens.
- JAMES BOND STYLE GUN BARREL SHOT W/ NICHOLAS
- Pig Cops pull trigger.

AUDIO: GUNSHOT

SHARP CUT TO:

INT. JAIL

Nicholas looks up, a tear falls from his eye. We now know why his arm is in a sling.

CLOSE ON: He laughs bitterly, never breaking eye contact with the camera. Smoke rises in front of his sad expression.

OVERHEAD TILT:

CLOSE: Nicholas opens the silver platter before him..

The only thing on the platter was a lone Wet Seal Cigarette. His final "meal".

CLOSE ON:

The guard lights Nicholas' cigarette. He inhales as if it was his last breath and soon it will be. He puts his feet up on the table.

He exhales smoke.

MR. SEAL (VOICEOVER NARRATION)

Now, that's a damn good cigarette.

(ABRUPTLY) A cartoonish "BANG!" Flag shoots out what we know now to be a toy gun, however, Nicholas' brains are blown out just as quickly and he falls out of frame.

HOLD ON: BLOOD DRIPPING FROM BANG! FLAG. IN THE GUARDS HAND.

A few beats. Let it breathe.

CURTAINS CLOSE ON SCENE.

SLOW ZOOM OUT:

White gloved hands protrude from the curtains. They held a Wet Seal Cigarette Carton.

FOCUS ON WET SEAL CIGARETTE CARTON IN FOREGROUND

We now realize that all of this was indeed a commercial advertisement for cigarettes.

AUDIO: CLASSICAL JINGLE

MR. SEAL, a suavely dressed gentleman and the official spokesperson for Wet Seal Cigarettes, steps into the frame to stand next to the

gloved hands. He blows smoke from his own cigarette before gesturing to the carton in the gloved hands.

Wet Seal Herbal Cigarettes™ for \$1.99!" slogan appears over the carton as Mr. Seal speaks:

MR. SEAL

Wet Seal Herbal Cigarettes! 20 Grade A Herbal Cigarettes in an Eco-Friendly Carton! One hundred percent nicotine free!

(eerily)

Wet Seal Cigarettes! "They're to die for"!

The camera continues to PAN OUT to show that this all took place on a small television stacked amongst various televisions in a small and dark AV Room.

"FIN"