

the lobster

Nothing serves as a more painstaking reminder of loneliness than the mundane, sheer oppression of being single in a society which is adamant that life is much more plentiful when you have an other – or indeed, better – half to share it with.

Yorgos Lanthimos' *The Lobster* portrays an absurdist dystopian world, where coupledom is obligatory or the consequences are animalistic, in both senses of the word. Singletons are escorted to a moderately lavish hotel for a dating retreat, where the pressures of finding a partner are heightened ever more by the knowledge that you will be transformed into an animal – of your choosing, if that's any consolation – should you not find a compatible partner within forty-five days. Leading from one extreme to the other, by escaping the hotel, you're alternatively left to live in the woods with a pack of singletons referred to as 'the loners'. In this circumstance, your chances of happiness are lessened by the fact that any form of romance is forbidden.

Whilst dystopian through concept, the visuals of the film host striking resemblance to our world now, and are somewhat of an aesthetical reprieve from the oppressive themes bound within the film. Thimios Bakatakis' cinematography offers a generous provision of enticing scenery and stills photography, Despina Spyrou, encapsulates these moments in a series of still photographs that are both parts captivating and conceptually indicative of the film itself.

Seen predominantly from the male perspective of focal character, David, played by Colin Farrell, a paunchy, emotionally inert middle-aged man, and his hotel peers played by Ben Whishaw and John C. Reilly – the first of whom breaks his nose to appear compatible with a girl prone to nosebleeds, and the latter whose hand is placed in a toaster as a result of his masturbation – it actually appears to be the women who suffer the most brutal consequences of love, or lack of.

'Biscuit Woman', played by Ashley Jensen, is one of the single residents at the hotel who adheres to her titular name through her seemingly endless supply of butter biscuits. In desperation, she throws herself at the male residents, leaving an accommodating answer message to David, offering sex in whichever way he chooses. Upon receiving no answer, she commits suicide by throwing herself from her hotel balcony.

Angeliki Papoulia plays the role of 'Heartless Woman', a woman so deeply disturbed and doubtful that she and David were compatible, that she mercilessly kills his dog – which is in fact David's brother after his hotel-stay proved unsuccessful – to find out if he was genuinely as cold-hearted as she. David leaves her unconscious body outside the animal transformation room.

One of the most tragic of the film's fatalities is 'Shortsighted Woman', one of the 'Loners' in the woods played by Rachel Weisz. Through their compatibility of shortsightedness, she and David fall in love, but their plans to run away together are diminished by 'Loner Leader' – played by Lea Seydoux – who is so bitter towards the idea of love that she prevents it by any means necessary. Upon finding out, she falsely leads 'Shortsighted Woman' to believe she has arranged an optician appointment in the city to cure her sight, which instead turns her blind. However, her own fate of loneliness is ultimately sealed in the nastiest – and most deservedly – way possible, where 'Loner Leader' is left to die in a grave of her own digging; to be killed by a pack of hunting dogs.

The satirical tragicomedy is both enigmatic and at times ludicrous, but is telling of a society where the pressures to find love are formidable.

