

Maoussi by director Charlotte Schiøler

My eldest son was watching *Stuart Little*, my youngest watched *Ratatouille* and I watch *Maoussi*.

Babette has no children; she gets Maoussi with Edo from the Congo. Maoussi is a white lab mouse, who, like Edo, has probably escaped terrible hardships. After a brief stay in a vase inherited from Babette's grandmother, Maoussi takes up residency and takes on the role of / becomes like the child they will never get together.

The film opens like an adorable romantic comedy *à l'anglaise*, but quickly reveals more serious themes. Babette is a professional dancer and, in her private life, a confirmed bachelorette. Edo is only supposed to spend a few nights in her Paris apartment, - arranged by Nora the matchmaker -, long enough to honor a few concert dates.

There are some good real laughs in the film, particularly at the beginning of the film when Edo discovers Babette's pleasant apartment with its Nordic interior, and probably experiences his first European kitchen. He tumbles over American-style self-help books with revealing titles. He also gets acquainted with Babette's low calorie and cold gazpacho soup and watches Korean action movies on the couch.

Edo quickly faces the harsh reality of obtaining political asylum in today's France, which isn't easy. What can he do?

Babette indulges in croissants in bed after a difficult night, sleeps with Maoussi, but won't allow Edo to lie by her side. *Croissant* is reminiscent of a waxing crescent moon, but will Babette dare let love grow and take its place?

There's a multitude of funny scenes with conversations to the tune of ageing, "Here people live longer and longer but no one wants to age.", who makes the decisions in bed, at which height should the breast be on a woman and whether a love relationship can be based on need.

One of the more striking scenes, a tragi-comic one, is set right after a very unusual concert where Edo plays, which is supposed to be his entrance ticket with immigration authorities. This scene, a very touching one, pins the relationship between Edo and Babette.

We Europeans, who may know the Congo only through the comics series *Tintin*, learn over the course of the film about the country's current situation and history. But also, like Babette, we get a glimpse of another culture and its values.

The original score is especially beautiful and evocative in the moments where Babette is silent and lets her emotions do the talking. And what is the meaning of Babette's wild dance? Is she trying to adopt a certain ferocity or rid herself of it? Is she depicting heartbeats? Or breathing?

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Charlotte (Eriksen) Montiel - CATAMARAN