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A Last Bath by David Bonneville, explores a complex, dysfunctional relationship between a nephew and

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Gautaman Bhaskaran

The Last Bath

Director: David Bonneville

Cast: Anabela Moreira, Martim Canavarro, Miguel Guilherme, Margarida Moreira, Angelo Torres

There was something about first-time feature movie director David Bonneville's (renowned for his shorts) *The Last Bath* that reminded me of the celebrated 1960s musical, *The Sound of Music*. Like Maria in the classic, Josefina (played by Anabela Moreira) is all set to take her celibacy vows in a convent near Porto (the second largest city in Portugal), when a tragedy pushes her away from this path. While in *The Sound of Music*, Maria is sent to take care of the widowed Captain Von Trapp's seven children, Josefina has to rush to care of her nephew when her father passes away. The 15-year-old boy, Alexandre (Martim Canavarro), has been, in the absence of his mother, staying with his grandfather.

Also, like Maria, who struggles to reconcile with Christ's calling in the face of her growing attraction to the Captain (there is a beautiful scene here in which Mother Superior asks Maria whether she would love God less if she were to love Von Trapp), Josefina also faces an inner turmoil in her relationship with her young nephew.

The Last Bath, which premiered at the Tokyo International Film Festival, is disturbingly complex, intense

PHOTOGALLERY

and even dark as we see a family on the verge of dysfunction. At her father's funeral, Alexandre weeps inconsolably and holds on to the hope that his mother, Angela (played by Moreira's real-life twin Margarida Moreira), would come back to fetch him. But the neighbours tell Josefina that the mother has not been seen in years.

Josefina is distraught, and she does not know how to console the grieving boy. So, she comforts him physically by dressing the wound on his feet and scrubbing him in the shower. He runs to her bed after a nightmare. And the viewer watches at the way she runs her hands over his body, staring at him while he sleeps.

Yet, Bonneville (who co-wrote the script) does not judge – neither the teenager nor his aunt -- but seems hard on the sister, who returns to claim her son back, much to Josefina's anguish, for in the weeks before Angela's appearance, the aunt and nephew had forged a deep relationship.

The movie leaves us with a question: Has Josefina found a more satisfying meaning in life in protecting Alexandre than in serving god? The Last Bath, unlike The Sound of Music, ends without a clear resolution.

Rating: 3/5

(Author, Commentator, Movie Critic Gautaman Bhaskaran has covered the Tokyo International Film Festival for several years)

• **TAGS:** ANABELA MOREIRA | ANGELO TORRES | DAVID BONNEVILLE | MARGARIDA MOREIRA | MARTIM CANAVARRO | MIGUEL GUILHERME | SOUND OF MUSIC | THE LAST BATH

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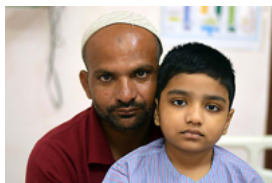
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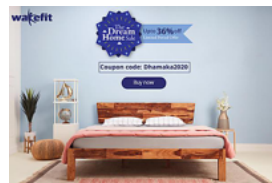
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