

LA RELÈVE - *Previous titled LES VÉTOS (THE VETS)*

Original language: French/ Subtitles: English



Director: *Julie Manoukian*

Release date : *January 1st, 2020*

Genre: *Comedy, Drama*

Country of origin: *France*

Length: *92 minutes*

North American Premiere

Recommended for 14 years and older

Please note that the title of the film THE VETS was changed to LA RELÈVE as its Canadian title. All references to THE VETS especially from French sources are references to LA RELÈVE as it is one and the same film.

SYNOPSIS

In the heart of Morvan, Nico, the last vet in the area, strives hard to save his patients, clinic, and his family. When Michel, his partner and mentor, tells him he's retiring, Nico that the hardest is yet to come. "Don't worry, I've found someone to take over." Except that... the someone is Alexandra, who graduated only 24 hours ago, is brilliant, misanthropic, and not at all ready to return to the dead end of her childhood village. Will Nico manage to make her stay?

<https://en.unifrance.org/movie/47229/the-vets>

FILM REVIEWS

This descriptive file being written before the opening of the film *La relève* on January 1, 2020 in France, no film review is available.

This is what Julie Manoukian says when asked: **Who is *La relève* intending for?**

For everyone. It is a story about family, scars that are healing and about solidarity. All who feel good thanks to the movie are welcome!

DETAILS

LANGUAGE

The characters speak an everyday language with the usual familiar interjections of “putain!” and “merde” translated in English by *Fuck!* or *shit!* Especially when the characters are angry.

In the film, there are a few scenes of outburst:

-Alex resents his uncle Michel, the soon to retire vet of the village, for having forced her to replace him while she had other plans. She angrily hits the steering wheel of her car screaming:

“Enfoiré, putain” – *Fucking bastard*

“Enfoiré de merde” – *Piece of shit*

-Nico is not happy with the villagers who signed a petition to get rid of Alex who is helping him cope with the impossible demands of his trade:

“Je suis le seul con à me battre pour rester ici » - *I am the only jerk fighting to stay here...*

“...ce putain de village...” – *this whole damn village*

Nico is under a lot of stress so he apologizes to Alex:

“J’ai déconné” – *I freaked out*

« ... tu feras une connerie.. » - *you goof up*

The dialogues include coarse words like “couillon” [*moron*], “connerie” [*bullshit*] and colourful expressions in French or in the English subtitles like the translation of one of Nico’s reaction against administrative papers:

“La paperasse me fait chier » - *It inks me*

or Alex’s reaction against the villagers’ rejecting her as a vet:

“Je vais vous faire bouffer vos dents » - *I will make you eat your shit*

The film focusing on the veterinarian profession, it exposes the viewer to its jargon starting with the title of the film : *Les vétos* which is the familiar abbreviation of the French word “Vétérinaire”. It is the equivalent of the vets.

In the course of their practice, Nico and Alex will use a number of specialized medical expressions. For instance, at the beginning of the film Nico comes to the rescue of a female dog suffering from *fetal inertia* [“inertie utérine primaire”] and *fetal distress* [“détresse fétale”]. One of Morille’s puppies has a *bacterial conjunctivitis* [“une conjunctivité bactérielle”]

Alex deals with an *avian virus* [“un virus aviaire”] and a *devastating pandemic* [“une pandémie dévastatrice”] for the thesis of her doctorate.

When she is introduced to her new lab, her guide mentions her love for *molecular biology* [“biologie moléculaire”].

With Nico’s car accident, the viewer learns that he suffers from a *brain contusion* [“une contusion cérébrale”] and a *moderate trauma* [“un trauma modéré”].

The notion of euthanasia is raised in the film.

The notion of death in a figurative way comes linked with the notion of retirement. Alex reproaches her uncle with having exaggerated when he said it was an emergency:

“Je croyais que tu étais en train de mourir » - *I thought you were dying*

To what Michel replies :

« Je prends ma retraite... Il y en a qui disent que c’est la même chose » - *I am retiring...*
They say it is the same thing [as dying]

There is an obvious generational conflict between the older and younger characters in the film.

Alex remarks that Morille aged a lot.

The dog breeder does not trust Alex and shares her state of mind with Nico who says:

“Sois pas macho. Elle a 12 ans” – *Don’t be a macho. She is only 12 years old.*

When Nico grabs the stethoscope, Alex says: “Il a fait la guerre” – *It went to war.*

Nico likes to suture his animal patients whereas Alex and her later replacement prefer to staple them. They need more modern professional instruments like the “monitoring” but Nico does not have it.

Michel, Alex’s vet uncle, thinks in a progressive way as far as food is concerned. He values organic fruit and chicken (that he feeds the visiting fox) over the non-organic food. Marco does not want to eat the pastry Alex she is offering him, he calls it diabetes that refer to sugar as a poison.

Some slurs

Against Parisians

-Morille stops Alex (whom he does not recognize) when she tries to get through the road passing his cows.

-Alex herself worries about her rat that, as a Parisian, is not used to the countryside manners and may be eaten alive.

Against an unhinged bull that impregnates a lot of cows

-Nico calls this bull *hot to trot* [“c’est un chaud”]

Against Nico's way of getting paid

-Nico's accountant tells the vet that he has a losing economic model because he does not charge the farmers his full rates. He tends to barter: the snail farmer gives lunch to Alex for healing her snails; Michel used to take Pokémon cards in exchange of taking care of a little boy's rabbit.

Against the villagers machismo against female vets

-Alex reminds the villagers that 80% of the students at the vet school are females. Because of the prospect of making more money, she mentions that male students go to business schools.

VIOLENCE

The film is not focused on any visual violence but on the trials of the vet trade in rural area which comes with tension and stress.

When Alex is invited to help Nico in his surgery, her face gets splattered with a little blood which leads to her falling. The scene is very brief, no significant bloodletting. The impact of Alex's fall is suggested by the sound of a thumps.

The same thumping sound suggests that Alex falls down after she has been bitten by an animal. A quick look at the bite is seen. Very little blood. A brief non-graphic image.

Nico tries to avoid the car coming in the opposite direction and ends up driving his car against a tree. The impact is not seen. The scene is very brief.

NUDITY

None to signal

SEXUAL ACTIVITY

Alex falls in love with Marco. She kisses him on the mouth once and another time later on in the film. When she loses her rat, the two young people sleep side by side under a tree.

At the hospital Nico's wife tenderly kisses her husband's arm and lies by him in bed to show she cares.

PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT/MESSAGES

⇒ **“This profession is neither easy, nor prestigious nor lucrative”**: Nico about his position as a vet in a rural area

This notion is developed throughout the film on many levels that affect the main characters:

-The family: Nico's wife complains that her children are growing with an absent father and that they really do not have a family life.

-the financial level: Nico's accountant qualifies the vet's “economic model” as a losing proposition because of the way Nico charges his clients.

-The medical equipment: Nico cannot afford to pay for the latest medical materials.

-Intrusive schedule: a vet can be called any time of the day and night.

-Relationship with clients sometimes

-The stress level and morale: Nico is pulled in all directions hence his car accident.

⇒ **“A tricky/sensitive scene”** according to filmmaker Julie Manoukian (press kit):
the calving

The camera shoots the birth of a calf and shows how intense it is for frail Alex to deal with it.

⇒ **The animals in the film**

- At the beginning of the film, a female dog is lying lifeless on a table. The vet gives her a needle before she gives birth to her puppies
- Morille brings one of his puppies with its eyes glued
- Philippe’s hunting dog is depressed: he has licked his skin for so long that he caused lesions
- Florence’s dog’s diagnostic is found at the end of the film
- Alex loses her rat: she discourages Zelda, her little assistant, to have one because rats have short lives.
- The cat in the clinic is gentle and let people pat it.
- The cow that gives birth to her calf does not look in pain.
- The calf is well taken care of and loved by Alex.
- The fox appears as a mysterious animal
- The snails: Alex and Zelda take care of their broken shell. The snails are at once food and part of snail farming.

⇒ **Drinking alcohol**

Alex plays a French game called “babyfoot” with the villagers. At the end of each segment, the loser has to drink a shot. Alex wins when one of her opponents falls down after a few shots.

⇒ **Tobacco**

Morille is seen with a cigarette on his lips.

⇒ **A few details for sensitive audiences**

- The vets give needles to the animals they care for. These are non-graphic actions
- Some blood splashes on Alex’s face when she helps Nico for the first time during one of his surgeries – very brief image
- Sutures: Nico and his assistant vet later sow their patients lying covered on the surgery table. Their gestures are above the patients and do not involve any bloodletting images of scars or skin.
- The car accident: a very quick scene that startles because it is not expected.
- Nico is lying in a hospital bed, connected to a breathing machine
- The profession trials: the intensity of calving as the calf was twisted; the injury from an agitated animal
- Alex passes away at the sight of blood.
- Alex loses her beloved rat.
- Florence’s dog: the idea that a dog may be an accessory.
- Nico’s children throwing ice cream in the microwave oven and causing a mini fire.
- Nico’s stress with his children, his wife, his human customers, the villagers, his accountant, etc.

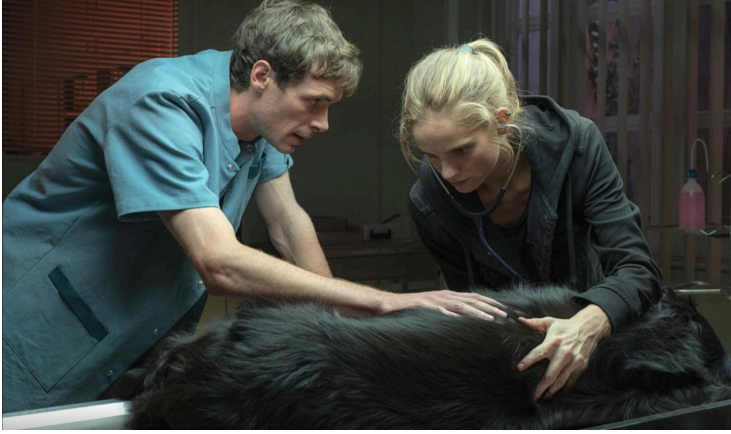
PHOTOS OF THE FILM



Lila, Nico and Alex looking at an X-ray



Lila, Nico's assistant and Alex patting the cat, a permanent resident of the clinic.



Alex and Marco taking care of a patient



Nico pays a visit to a cow breeder to examine one his pregnant cows.



Alex is going to help the cow give birth to its calf.