



Joe + Belle



Joe is an alienated confused and charismatic young woman doing occasional drug errands. One night she comes across a suicidal woman called Belle who has broken into her bathroom in order to slit her wrists. Somehow this later leads to a gun going off a few times in the direction of Joe's ex-lover, and Joe and Belle need to disappear. But where? When your entire country is the size of New Jersey it's not easy to disappear, unless there's a convenient war zone in your neighborhood...

The Israel-Palestine conflict plays no role in this film. In the Tel Aviv "bubble" the fighting in Gaza does not even reach the urban radar. But it supplies a crucial back-drop to the story of Joe and Belle:



A WIDER BRIDGE

BUILDING LGBTQ CONNECTIONS WITH ISRAEL

While Jerusalem is the capital of Israel's government, most of the nation's key financial and cultural institutions are based in Tel Aviv.

Unlike the "big city" of Tel Aviv, Sderot is a small town with the ill-fortune of being less than a mile from the border with Gaza. Ever since 2005 when Israel withdrew its army from Gaza and evacuated all settlers, there has been a constant if irregular barrage of make-shift "Kassam" rockets fired into Israel – about 10,000 and rising.

The rockets are fired almost 'blind', and casualties are relatively small. Many houses in Sderot are not within reach of a bomb shelter, nor is there a particularly adequate warning system. When the alarm signal "Color Red" is sounded, residents know they have between 15 to 45 seconds to find what shelter there may be. The psychological impact (over 50% of kids in Sderot were diagnosed with PTSD) and the economic impact has been huge. At the height of one wave of attacks in 2007, over 40% of Sderot temporarily evacuated the town for a few weeks.

Since these Kassam rockets are short-range, they never fall anywhere near Tel Aviv (one hour's drive from Sderot) or Jerusalem (80 minutes' drive away). Several rockets can fall throughout a day in Sderot without it affecting life in Tel Aviv whatsoever. Sderot's mayor has bitterly complained that if the rockets had ever reached Tel Aviv, the military establishment would have done far more to ensure the rocket fire would stop. While the outside world looked on the harsh Israeli counter-attacks on Gaza in 2006, 2008 (Operation Cast Lead) and 2012 (Pillar of Defence) with approbation, most residents of Sderot and surround towns have seen these campaigns as too little too late. (Operation Pillar of Defence followed the shooting of a new type of missile that hit Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.)





A Wider Bridge works to bring the LGBTQ communities of Israel and North America closer together. Our programs include educational and cultural activities here in the U.S., including this film series, LGBTQ trips to Israel, and our online magazine, www.awiderbridge.org.

A Wider Bridge commissioned these study guides from Makom, and consulted fully in their development. Makom is the think-and-do tank for adult Israel engagement. You can find Makom at www.makomisrael.org and at facebook.com/makomisrael.

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