

Edinburgh International Film Festival 2016 Endless Night (Nadie quiere la Noche) *****



[tweet_box design="default"]A lush, extravagant, brilliant triumph of a drama, Spanish director Isabel Coixet's Endless Night transfixes and mesmerises.[/tweet_box]

Based on a true story, Josephine Peary (a stunning performance from Juliette Binoche) has followed the explorer, her beloved husband Robert Peary, determined to meet him once he has conquered the North Pole on his 1908 exploration.

Beautifully coiffed and resplendent in her New York gowns and cloaks, she promenades around the icy port in Ellesmere Island, waiting to persuade the dignitaries and some of the local guides to allow her on the dangerous journey further north to Peary's base camp. Against their better judgement, Irishman Bram (Gabriel Byrne) and an Inuit guide agree to take her. Josephine incongruously dines en route using crockery and cutlery from a picnic basket and sipping fine wine, as they bivouac while making the treacherous sled-ride. They finally arrive at the base-camp having experienced significant loss of life but, to Josephine's devastating disappointment, Peary is still on his way to the Pole.

Her guides and the local Inuit insist on returning to Ellesmere Island before winter sets in but Josephine is convinced that her husband will return and settles into the shack to await his arrival. To her surprise and shock, an Inuit woman insists on doing the same – Alaka (the wonderful Rinko Kikuchi) Peary's Inuit woman who is pregnant with their child.

The plot follows the transformation in the women's relationship, appearance and attitude as the polar winter progresses. An epic feast for the eyes, the cinematography is simply stunning and my single disappointment is that no Aurora Borealis was shown.