

# A Common Thread

(Brodeuses)

France 2004

88 mins

## Crew and Cast

Director	Eléonore Faucher
Screenplay	Eléonore Faucher
Cinematography	Pierre Cottereau
Clare	Lola Naymark
Mme Melikian	Ariane Ascaride
Guillaume	Thomas Laroppe
M Lescuyer	Jackie Berroyer

## Synopsis

Claire, a talented **Synopsis** young embroiderer, earns her living as a supermarket cashier in a French provincial town. Her workmates comment on her sudden weight gain, a side-effect, she tells them, of cancer treatment. In fact, she is five months pregnant and plans to keep her pregnancy secret so that she can give her baby up for adoption. With no one to confide in, she consults a sympathetic doctor, who gives her sick leave.

Claire begins temporary employment as an assistant with an embroiderer, Madame Melikian. Grieving for her son Ichkhan, recently killed in a motorbike accident, Madame Melikian makes little attempt to communicate with Claire;

her sorrow, heightened by her awareness of Claire's pregnancy, becomes so overwhelming that she attempts suicide. Claire stays close to her during her recovery, and succeeds in reuniting her with Guillaume, Ichkhan's best friend, who survived the accident. As their work becomes ever more intricate, Claire and Madame Melikian grow closer. Claire is tentatively reconciled with her estranged mother, and finds herself increasingly drawn to Guillaume. As the two make love, they both find release from their solitude. Claire decides to keep her baby, which she now knows to be a girl, and she and

### Felicity Huffman - Interview

her employer contemplate a future based on a shared passion for embroidery, and the presence of a new life.



## Reviews

This sensitive and beautiful French film has quickly earned prestigious accolades, including both the Cannes 2004 Critics' Week Grand Prix and Screenwriters' Award. Now it has been nominated in the French Academy Awards as Best First Work, as have its two outstanding actresses... The heart of the film lies in the relationship between Claire and Madame Melikian. The two women form an alliance - an unspoken bond that develops slowly as they sit opposite each other in a small, dark room, creating exquisite embroideries with thread, beads and pearls. Both women reach a turning point, and find their emotional strength through each other. *A Common Thread* is as delicate as the intricate needlework that both women are so passionate about. It's an uplifting and optimistic film, canvassing light and shade on both the superficial and profound. *Louise Keler, Urban Cinefile, Australia*

"Eleonore Faucher's quietly promising debut makes a noble attempt to revive a sub-genre long thought unfashionable: the old-fashioned 'women's picture', with heartbreak and labour pains playing out over a sewing machine. Pregnant teenager Claire (Lola Naymark) struggles to get by in a small corner of rural France. After boredom forces her to quit her supermarket job, Claire finds work with Madame Melikian (Ariane Ascaride), a black-clad seamstress mourning the death of her son in a motorcycle accident. At the film's heart is an acutely observed and sensitively played relationship between two people very much in need of one another: a mother grieving for a dead child, and a young girl initially hesitant at the prospect of giving birth herself. Claire brings lipstick and pop music into Madame M's workshop; employer gives employee greater confidence in her abilities. As the seamstress, the experienced Ascaride isn't the type of actress to let unnecessary sentiment creep into a scene. There's also an eye-catching performance from Naymark - a sort of young French Tori Amos - whose frizzy red mane and lively features come to illuminate the frame."

*Mike McCahil, BBCi*

Imperiled or alienated youth has proven a fecund theme in recent European cinema. Director-co-writer Eléonore Faucher eschews the strict minimalism of the Dardenne brothers' spiritual enquiries or Lynne Ramsey's visual expressionism in favour of a minor-chord lyrical naturalism for her sensitive debut, the story of an isolated, pregnant 17-year-old in rural Charente. Hiding her bloating tummy from sarcastic supermarket colleagues, aspiring embroideress Claire (the flame-haired Lola Naymark) takes a job in the house of a grieving haute couture designer (Guédiguian regular and wife Ariane Ascaride) and over the needlework a bond slowly forms. Impressive visuals (courtesy of Pierre Cottereau), sound design and effective if modernistically withholding performances combine with Faucher's mood-sensitive attention to gesture and detail to a kind of therapeutic effect, conjuring an intriguing, non-specific feminised space. Sweet, too, to see how Faucher privileges the (creative) work of hands; a lovingly slow pan over a particularly beautiful sequined design becomes her low-key equivalent of the epiphanic bell-making scene in Tarkovsky's *'Andrei Rublev'*. *WH Time Out May 2005*