

"Stefan Gryff From Aphrodite's Inheritance"

It's Just A Small Step From Pettifogger To The Stage

I've defended murderers, thieves and rapists says Stefan Gryff who plays the part of Charalambros in the current television series "Aphrodite's Inheritance". However, considering my previous vocation I should have played in shows such as Perry Mason. But strangely enough I've only ever been offered parts in Greek tinted television plays. First in "Who Pays the Ferryman" which was also shown in Holland I believe and now in "Aphrodite's Inheritance". But you won't hear me complain because at least there's food on the shelf these days and that wasn't always the case when I was just starting out as an actor. Stefan Gryff was born in Poland thirty nine years ago. He emigrated to Australia with his parents in 1957 where he finished school, became a British subject and studied law. After he graduated he set up a law practice and made quite a name for himself by taking on seemingly hopeless cases.

"I was the first lawyer to defend a convicted topless sun bather ", he says with a smile. Australia is a rather Puritan country in this respect and it was a brilliant case. I defended the girl with quite a large dose of humour. Something like: "Your honour, I ask you to consider the bare facts" and more of that kind of thing. But I had the public's support and the girl got off lightly."

Nevertheless Stefan had his mind set on a different career. "Even when I was working as a lawyer I played parts in amateur stage productions occasionally. But eventually the stage beat the bar! In 1965 I left Australia for England to start building up a career as a professional actor. But that wasn't as easy as it sounds and I'm not ashamed to admit that I often went hungry in the beginning." Then lady luck smiled down on Stefan when he was offered a part in a stage production called "Chase me comrade" in which he played a kind of Rudolf Nurijev. " He attracted the attention of the director of "Who Pays the Ferryman."

"In that series I was a police officer" Stefan recalls. "That label seems to stick. I often play the part of a European police officer. That's probably because I've never lost my accent entirely. But the pope has the same problem and he's come a long way for someone from Poland...."

From the pope to religion is just a small step and Stefan suddenly becomes extremely serious. "I've been playing parts in series set in Greece lately", he repeats and I must say that when I was at school I thought all that fuss about Greek gods and goddesses was nonsense. Absolute rubbish. But I've changed my mind now. There's absolutely no doubt about it, they really exist. There can't be any other explanation.

"Doubting Stefan" was converted during a car trip on the island of Cyprus. " Together with Brian Blessed, who plays the part of Basileos in the series, I was driving along a road by the sea. We passed the spot where, according to legend, Aphrodite arose from the sea. Brian started talking about it but I cut him short by saying I didn't believe in that sort of nonsense. I hadn't finished

speaking when the front tyre of our car burst with a deafening bang. Completely cut to shreds. When we stopped one of the car's doors opened all by itself. It sounds quite harmless but at the time it was a hair raising experience.

"Those who wish to destroy the gods shall be struck blind by them first" said the Greek writer Sophocles in his Antigone. I was well and truly blind because after we'd had the car repaired and had a glass of wine we returned passing the same spot. Brian kept on teasing me about what had happened.

"I suppose you believe in the Greek gods now ?" he asked somewhat mockingly. To hide my discomfort I said " Ah.....gods!" And then it all happened at once. The doors flew open as if they'd been thrown open by force, the engine stalled and the whole car began to shake frighteningly. It was horrifying. I would have given anything to be some place else at that moment. Even Brian, who doesn't frighten easily, had turned quite pale. But before we could get away we had to go through one more ordeal. Despite the heat outside on the coastal road, inside the car it suddenly became freezing cold as if we'd been touched by an icy hand. Then everything returned to normal as if nothing had happened. We started the car and drove away as fast as we could and felt very relieved when we rejoined the rest of the group. Of course they didn't believe one word of our tale. But it really happened. You see, I'm not at all a superstitious person but after everything that happened I really believe in the Greek gods now despite what anyone else may think of them."

Obviously the gods are pleased with Stefan Gryff because recently he's been offered the leading part in a film co-starring none less than Shirley Mac Laine's brother Warren Beatty. He hopes it will be his chance to really break through in the movie business. "After all," he reflects "it's only a small step from pettifogger to the stage. In both cases it's just a matter of play acting."

**Translated from Dutch to English by Anna Pereboom
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