

Who pays the Ferryman?

The island of Crete, being the alleged birthplace of Zeus, is often mentioned in Greek mythology. Daedalos created his famous maze here, king Minos ruled it with an iron fist, his daughter Ariadne was abducted here by Theseus and Heracles managed to capture a wild bull. Perhaps this is the reason that a television series, recently filmed in Crete, has been given a name that finds its origin in Greek mythology: "Who pays the ferryman?"

The ferryman refers to Charon the ferryman who, in return for a fee, rows the souls of the departed across the river Styx to the underworld, Hades. At one point in the series the main character receives two coins accompanied by a note with few words but much meaning: "For Charon". It is obvious that the author of the note wishes to banish the main character to the underworld. The viewer is made aware of this from the first episode but the main character does not discover this until much later.

The series is made up of eight 50 minute episodes and will be aired weekly by the AVRO. After all the American series that have been aired over the past months (The Swiss family Robinson, Executive Suite, Once an Eagle and the Moneychanger) it will come as a pleasant change for many viewers to be able to watch a quality British product even though it is a co-production between the BBC and the Greek film centre and several Greek actors participate in the series.

The main part has been given to the famous British actor Jack Hedley and his leading lady is Betty Aravaniti, a well known Greek actress. Hedley plays the part of a former soldier who returns to Crete 30 years after the war to re-acquaint himself with old friends and familiar places. Betty Arvaniti as Annika Zeferis is an island girl with whom Haldane falls in love and who also happens to be the sister of the girl he had a love affair with during the war although he does not have the courage to tell Annika this.

It took a team from the BBC eleven months to film "Who Pays the Ferryman?" on location in Crete. The screenplay was written by Michael Bird who lived and worked in Crete for six years. This perhaps being the reason for the vivid capture of the islands atmosphere.

Hate

The story centres around the hatred felt by Katerina Matakis, the mother of Melina the girl Haldane befriended during the war. When Katerina discovered that her daughter was expecting the child of a foreigner, an Englishman who returned to England immediately after the war, she decided to either prevent his return or, if she failed to do this, at least make sure that he would be killed. Sicily is not the only country where vendetta is a common method of taking revenge.

Haldane's return to Crete, 30 years after the war and many years after the death of her daughter, rekindles her hatred towards him as never before and she recruits several people to help her get rid of him once and for all. She does not know however that Haldane has already made the acquaintance of her other daughter Annika shortly after his arrival in Crete. When Haldane discovers who Annika is, he does not have the courage to tell her about his past relationship with her sister Melina. Naturally this leads to complications and misunderstandings.

Thriller

The mixture of romance and tension that go to make up "Who Pays the Ferryman" turn it into a kind of contemporary romantic thriller. The eight episodes can be viewed separately because each one tells a different story in which Haldane and Annika meet new people, Cretans and those who come to Crete from abroad, who each in turn leave their impression on the chain of events. However, the ever threatening presence of Melina's mother, drifting like a grey ghost in the background makes the viewer aware that, although she is not often seen she is always there. Heth

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