

Alexandra Bastedo, Helene from “the Aphrodite Inheritance”

I AM AN IMPOSSIBLE PERSON TO LIVE WITH

Alexandra Bastedo, the beautiful and mysterious Helene from the AVRO-series “The Aphrodite Inheritance”, which was aired for the first time on Monday the 12th November, does not surround herself with mystery nearly as much as she does in the series. Certainly when it comes to her love life. In an exclusive interview with Privé,s Barbara Plugge, she reveals that she is searching for a man, but that she expects so much from her future partner that no man will ever be able to live up to her expectations.

She is stunningly beautiful, successful, wealthy and ... unmarried. Not for lack of marriage candidates one would be inclined to think, but once more there is the exception to the rule.

Alexandra Bastedo, the 33-year-old English actress who plays the part of the mysterious Helene in the new AVRO series “the Aphrodite Inheritance” is still single. And it does not need much knowledge of human nature to understand that her forced celibacy will continue for some time to come.

Beautiful Alexandra sets almost inhumanly high standards when it comes to a potential future husband and as a result not one suitable candidate has come forward.

When I visited her in Mayfair, one of the classiest suburbs in London, where she lives with her Doberman Pinscher and yet another new boyfriend (late forties, divorced, one child) in an expensive apartment, she says haughtily:

“ My eventual husband must be well bred, exceptionally well mannered, a noble person, intelligent and always in a good mood. I am a reasonably generous person, prepared to give much but in return I will expect to get as much as I give from my husband. I would never be able to give unless I knew I was getting something in return.

And the older I get, the more I demand. Therefore I assume that I am IMPOSSIBLE TO LIVE WITH. At present I am living with a man, but he is not the man of my life.

Alexandra, who boasts that she is very famous in her own country, continues to explain that her busy career has not contributed much towards her search for the ideal husband.

She smiles aristocratically as she adds:

“I am one of the English actresses who are never out of work. Moreover, I have worked myself almost to death for years. I never took a day off and travelled from Los Angeles to New York, from New York to Toronto, Madrid, London and Paris. I had no interest in men, my work was my whole life. Now I have resolved to look around more.

She sighs deeply and looks bored when I ask her to tell me about herself.

"I was born in Brighton and wanted to be an animal surgeon. My parents talked me out of it resulting in my wanting to be a physician. However, when a cousin, who was a surgeon, invited me to attend a major heart operation, I knew instantaneously that I would never become a doctor. At the age of sixteen I was discovered by COLUMBIA PICTURES when I was taking part in a school play. I was invited to play a part in a creepy movie, which was being filmed in Hollywood. When I returned from Hollywood I finished my English, French and Latin studies and left for London because I had been offered the leading role in "the Count of Monte Cristo", followed by guest roles in "the Saint" and "Compact. At the age of eighteen I was given my own television series, "The Champions", which made me world famous. I am known everywhere, from South America to Spain and Canada.

Every time she is offered a part, Alexandra goes on to say, it is always the leading role. She does not bother with small, unimportant parts.

"I also play the leading part in Aphrodite's Inheritance together with Peter McEnery (David Collier in the series). My character is the only important female in the series. I play the part of Helene, a very mysterious Greek woman who behaves very strangely and does things that seem to have no logic whatsoever. For this part I had to learn to speak with a heavy Greek accent. Was that difficult? I never find anything difficult. I can speak any language and do any accent as long as I have the required time to prepare myself. I speak fluent French because my grandmother lived in France, and often comes to stay with us in Brighton, fluent Italian because I have an Italian mother and fluent Spanish because my ancestors came from Spain and I made more than eight films there."

The series is a co-production between the BBC and the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation and based on the novel with the same title by Michael J. Bird. He was also the author of the novel "Who Pays the Ferryman", and the ensuing TV series, which got very high viewer ratings.

"We spent more than twelve weeks filming in Cyprus, in the summer with temperatures soaring to 35 or 40 degrees," Alexandra continues, "the camera crew were sweating so much that they ended up filming dressed in swimming trunks and bare chests. As I was not allowed to get sunburnt, blonde hair and a brown face do not make a very flattering combination on film, I always wore an enormous sunhat. My arms and legs must have become more tanned during the course of the filming but I assume no one will notice. Seeing I was expected to appear in a bikini in several scenes, I went to a beauty farm in Sussex for a week before filming commenced. I wasn't really overweight, just a bit too much fat here and there which always shows in my face as soon as I put on a few pounds. A taut jaw line suits me better.

It was a fantastic week in Sussex. I had a room with a lake view and I was treated like royalty. There was a whole team of doctors keeping an eye on me and beauticians who gave me massages and accompanied me to the steam baths.

Another reason why I chose this beauty farm was the fact that they had their own riding school. In part 4 of the series I have to do a horse-riding scene. That was quite a dangerous undertaking because that part of the beach was very rocky. Even though he knew it was impossible to learn to ride in a week, the

director expected me to come galloping up to that part of the beach, stop abruptly at a certain spot and then turn and gallop into the sea. He had rented a snowy white full blood Arab for this scene and I was dead scared of it. I did not trust it and I was right. While I was sitting on the horse in the water the director started yelling "More to the right, back a bit more" and as I pulled on the reigns to get the horse to the right spot, it suddenly reared and threw me off into the sea. After that I refused to get back on and do it all over again so they got me another horse, a bay with a beautiful mane and tail. Fortunately this one did exactly as it was told."

Alexandra strokes the dangerous looking Doberman Pinscher's head and says that her co-player, actor, Peter McEnery is a very charming man but certainly not one of her best friends. She spent most of her time in Cyprus in the company of Brian Blessed (Basilio) and Stephan Gryff (Chalandos). "You get on better with some people than others," she says almost apologetically, "and I don't know if I am normal or abnormal in that respect, but I have great difficulty in making friends. I only have a few real friends, one of which is Myra, Peter Egan's wife, who played the part of Oscar Wilde in the series "Lily Langtry."

A fully packed suitcase is standing in the hallway of Alexandra's flat. Despite her resolve to stay at home more and refuse parts that will take her away from England, she will be leaving that same afternoon for Paris for a meeting with an important French film director.

"I have to go because the BBC is on strike", she explains. "I was to play the leading role in a new series, but the filming keeps on being postponed. That's why I am interested in this French film. I have also been asked and accepted the lead in a Spanish film. If everything goes according to plan, shooting will commence in November.

I have considered doing a theatre play but realised just in time that I hate spending more than three months on the same project. I would never be able to work in a play for a whole year.

Fortunately there are plenty of offers and like I said, I am one of those actresses who are never out of work."

**Translated from Dutch to English by Anna Pereboom
for the Michael J Bird Tribute Website**

<http://www.mjbird.org.uk>