

A person with long hair, seen from behind, stands in a dark, misty field. They are looking towards a large, leafless tree on the right. In the background, there are dark, forested hills and a large, bright full moon in the sky. The overall mood is somber and mysterious.

UNDER the JUDAS TREE

Based on the novella "The Judas Tree" by *Michalis Makropoulos*

Logline

In a remote village near the Greek-Albanian borders, an exiled father becomes obsessed with a young woman's murder.



Short

Synopsis

Elias, a self-exiled father in a village in the north of Greece discovers the body of a young woman. When the dead girl begins appearing to Elias, he decides to do his own investigation. After confronting Nasios, a young boy whom Elias suspects, Nasios is discovered hung by a tree - where Elias finds evidence involving the local police officer and Elias' best friend, Kostas.

Elias confronts Kostas who reveals that Giannogasis, a local illegal

trafficker, pays him to turn a blind eye to his dirty business. Kostas staged Nasios' suicide fearing he would expose his deal with Giannogasis, the dead girl's obvious killer. Giannogasis then appears, and Kostas sacrifices himself to save Elias. Waking up in the hospital, Elias is about to be charged with Kostas' murder, after Giannogasis staged it as so. There, he must decide whether to protect his friend's memory, or, by telling the truth, to return to the one person he was always meant to protect: his daughter.



Long

Synopsis

Elias, a middle-aged father, arrives in his home village in Delvinaki, near the Greek-Albanian borders, after leaving behind his life in Athens. He reacquaints himself with his old friend and local police officer Kostas, and his wife Vito. At his childhood home, Elias tries to call his daughter in Athens - but she is distant, not understanding why her father left. Drunk, Elias heads to one of his old spots near the village: the giant pit in the earth. There, he sees the naked, bloodied body of a young dead woman at the bottom of the pit.

The police have no idea who she is. During the next days, Elias notices eerie footprints and bloodstains following him about. After noticing Gianogassis, an elder hunter of the village and Nasios, a young man, acting suspiciously by the roadside, the dead girl appears to Elias in his bedroom, staring at him silently, as though asking him for something.



Elias decides to dig into the girl's death who seems to be following him about, and confronts the young Nasios who he suspects knows something. After being threatened by Giannogasis, the old hunter, to stop digging into the girl's death, Elias is convinced he is the killer and pleads to Kostas to do something. But Kostas only gets more annoyed with his friend. Isolated, Elias confides in Vito the real reason for his exile: after catching his wife with another man, he beat the man up, and in the process accidentally hit his wife too.

Elias receives a call from Nasios who seems to want to talk. But before they manage to meet, Elias finds his lifeless body hanging from a Judas Tree in the woods. Elias decides to head back to Athens for good. But after one more terrifying visit from the dead girl, he heads back to the Judas Tree. There, he finds a button belonging to Kostas' uniform, thus suspecting his friend's involvement in Nasios' death.

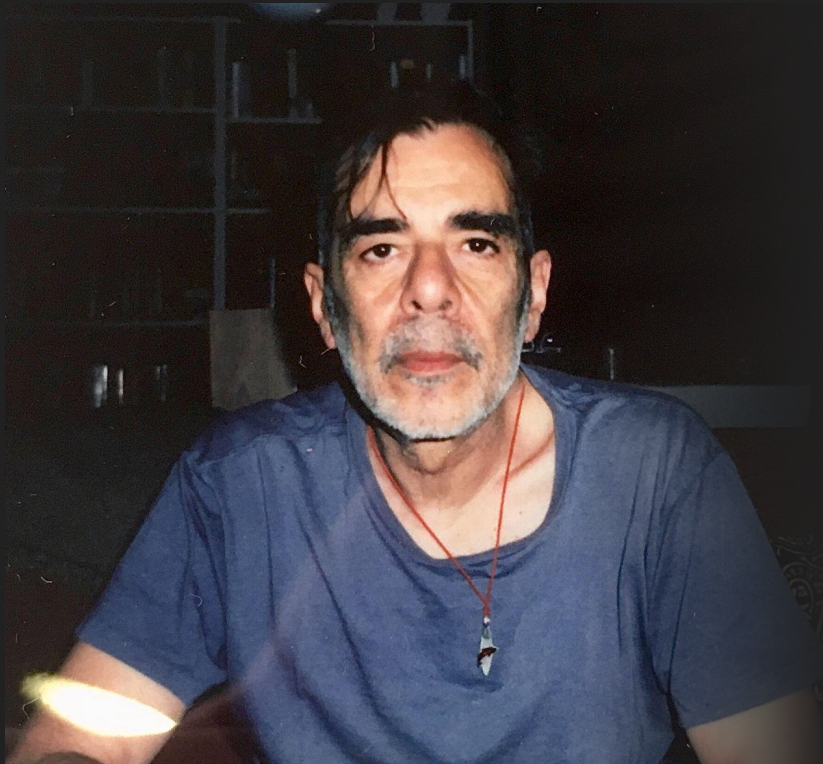
Elias confronts Kostas about Nasios' death, by the Judas Tree. Kostas admits that Giannogasis pays him to turn a blind eye to his illegal trafficking business - and thinking Nasios would expose them, staged his suicide. But denies any involvement in the girl's death. At that point, Giannogasis appears, rifle in hand, demanding that Kostas shoots Elias - but Kostas tries to save his friend, and is killed in the process. Giannogasis shoots Elias in the leg, making it seem like he killed Kostas in the quarrel.

Recovering in the hospital, Elias is about to be charged with Kostas' murder. Vito visits him, pleading to Elias to tell the truth about Kostas' illegal dealings - something she already knows about. Elias hands Vito Kostas' button, insisting that he must protect his friend's memory, as he sacrificed himself for him. He deserves his fate. Vito reminds him that the only person he has to protect is his daughter, giving him a phone to call her. Elias, alone, calls his daughter. And for the first time promises to tell her the truth. To her, and to everyone. He'll be back.



UNDER the JUDAS TREE

The Characters



Elias Kouros

53 years old

A man of few words, proud. Defeated by unemployment and his wife's infidelity, he returns to the village where he grew up on the Greek-Albanian border. Leaving his 19-year-old daughter behind in Athens.

Kostas Mentis

53 years old

The village policeman, father of two, Elias' childhood friend. Despite his financial problems, he supports his friend financially and with his company—they only have each other.



Vito

46 years old

Kostas' wife. Discreet, proper, pessimistic. Her relationship with her husband has been distant since she had cancer and their children left for Athens.

Giannogasis

69 years old

A hunter, cold, his wife and only son are dead—he has nothing to lose. People say he's involved in smuggling.



Nasios

18 years old

He lives alone with his alcoholic father. Naive and fond of playing the tough guy, he gets mixed up with Giannogasis.

Notes

From the Director & the Producer



After reading the novel, by Michalis Makropoulos, I felt sympathy for the main protagonist and imagined it as a script. As this will be my first feature, I wanted to create a solid story with mysterious atmosphere, just like the way I experienced when reading. Along with George Zafeiropoulos, we worked on a story about friendship, fatherhood, the illusive limit between present and memory, between the living and the dead. A modern thriller-drama, with haunted protagonists in enigmatic locations.

Our protagonist, Elias, jobless and cuckold, his life falling into ruins, decides to move back to his childhood village, like a wounded animal. There, he will dwell in silence and alcohol, to forget the life he leaves behind. The story calls on the viewer to share this man's journey as someone who has lost it all and looks for something to hold on to. As viewers, we will feel his burden, his responsibilities in the life he is trying to forget and the guilt he tries to overcome.

Our childhood location always carries something solidified, something that has stayed untouched by time. This location will be the film's universe, where the forgotten becomes one with present, where life and death co-exist.

As Elias tries to forget his miserable life and his disappointments, he will eventually confront his responsibilities and the memories that should never be forgotten. However, his way for salvation goes through sacrifice, and the viewer is required to accompany him, as he weights the burden of freedom, friendship, fatherhood.

Starting with wide establishing shots, we gradually focus on the landscape that swallows our protagonist. The gigantic mountain range, the forest, the snow, will all act as the backdrop where Elias will mark his silence and empty space. The shots are still, frozen. The grayness of the stone-walled houses will prevail in the color palette, with a tonal range of blue and the white from the snow as underlining accents. The rhythm will move as slowly as the time passes for Elias, almost disconnected from reality.



In his childhood house, his dead father always leaves a mark on his old bed with a dent or makes a squeaking sound with his rocking chair. In this kind of universe, the line between dead people and alive is very thin. The murder, just outside the village, will bring us closer to Elias. The victim, a young female, accompanies him, reluctant to talk, like himself. Her face will provide him with the company he has been looking for all this time, in his mother's silence and the cigarettes he shares with his childhood friend, Kostas. Her face will also carry the cruelty and hardship that she has been through, before and after her death. Like all women in his life, she is silent, suffering from her wounds someone else inflicted on her.

As the rhythm intensifies, Elias becomes more obsessive to find the murderer. His only salvation will now be his desperate quest to find the culprit of this heinous crime. He doesn't seem to know what he is doing; his guilt is driving him. From the wide landscape shots, we move closer to the protagonist. Elias must deal with his demons, his guilt as a father, everything he thinks he has left behind, and the viewer and camera move even closer to him. His face and his eyes become the canvas of the battle inside him, as the silence of nature has now moved in the background.

His final decision to take the blame or not, whatever he decides, will be heroic and at the same time, self-destructive and bitter. His dilemma becomes ours, and while feeling sorry, one could also admire him. Reality though will remain unchanged, the damage has been done.

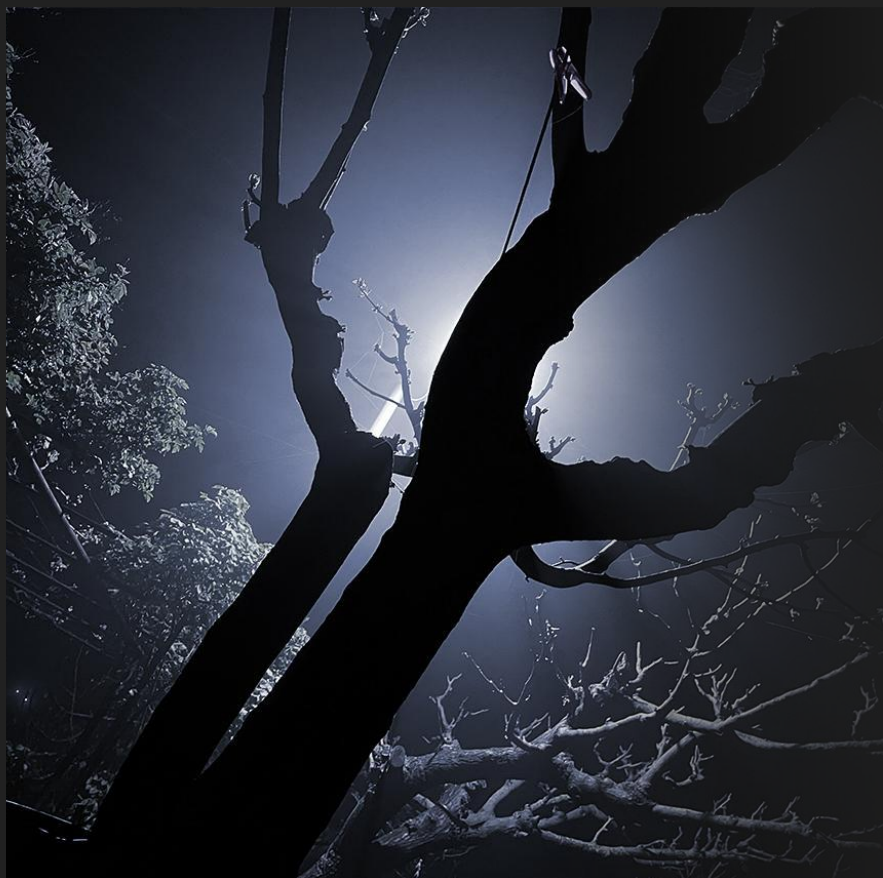
CHRISTOS HOULIARAS

When we decided to come on board Houliaras' first feature film, we knew that we had in our hands a story that can resonate with a wider audience, as it is based on the exceptional novel by Michalis Makropoulos, which has been described as **Balkan Noir** and received very positive reviews from readers and experts. Similarly, working with script writer George Zafeiropoulos, with whom we have worked before, was a guarantee of quality and smooth co-operation. George's previous work include scriptwriting for the project "Cora" by Evi Kalogiropoulou which was selected and awarded at Cinefondation' Ateiler.

When we, at Marni Films (an all-female company) started the discussion between the scriptwriter and director, we wanted to make some changes in the script, to reflect our point of view, highlight the film's themes and make it more relevant and appealing to the international audience. The issue of femicide, one of the driving forces of the plot is emphasized more, along with the duality of friendship and betrayal, the interplay of suspicion and hidden secrets at the borders of a country. Within this dark atmosphere of the countryside we also decided to develop Vito's character, a strong and resilient woman who initially lacked a strong personality, thus bringing new dynamics in the plot and widen the audiences' reach.

In terms of demographics, we identify our audience within a broad range of ages and tastes. The crime drama genre is usually addressed to adults of any age, interested in exploring multi-dimensional characters with a dark thematic context. In the same way, we include in our potential audience, the fans of the genre itself - attracted to the plot, the twists, the mystery and the suspense, as well as the viewers with a cinematic interest who like to delve into genre films. In addition, what can expand our audience appeal is the fact that our cast will include not only emerging talent but also established, recognisable and popular actors.





International co-production for this project is necessary, not only to complete our financing plan successfully and with partners from the wider Balkan area, but also to enrich and reinforce our creative team with talents and crew from the region. We want to use the wider Balkan area for our location scouting (Macedonia, Bulgaria, Albania), as the authenticity of the script requires, for this Balkan Noir film. Our story can take place in any small mountainous Balkan village, the themes of femicide and illegal migration are always relevant and we strongly believe that the genre of our film is going to help us secure distribution in our neighboring countries, as well as a wider audience in the region and in Europe.

Taking into consideration examples of crime films of the wider Balkan region that have received excellent reviews at major festivals worldwide- such as: "The Hills where the Lionesses roar" 2021, Albania- premiered at Cannes IFF, "No Man's land" 2001, Bosnia- Academy Award for best Foreign Film, "The Trap" 2007 Serbia, "The Whaler Boy" 2020, Russia- premiered at Venice IFF, "The Father" 2020, Bulgaria- premiered at Toronto IFF, "The Mover" 2020, Latvia- premiered at Tallinn Black Nights and the recent success of "Behind the Haystacks" in both awards and box office- we believe that our film has the potential to have a remarkable festival round and attract audiences in Greek and international theaters.

MINA DREKI

An aerial, high-angle photograph of a dense forest. A light-colored, winding path or road cuts through the dark, textured canopy of the trees, creating a series of gentle curves across the landscape. The lighting is soft, suggesting a misty or overcast day, which enhances the ethereal and somewhat somber mood of the scene.

UNDER the JUDAS TREE

Film Treatment



Equipped with nothing but two old suitcases and two bruised knuckles, Elias, a tired middle-aged man, arrives by bus in Delvinaki, a small village near the Greek-Albanian borders.

Walking through the sleepy ghost-like village, Elias arrives outside an old stone house, keys in hand. But instead of entering, he elects to go visit his old "spots": the large Judas Tree in the forest - and the giant pit, nearby. He heads to the police station, looking for a certain "Kostas", but he isn't around.

Elias knocks on the door of a house. He is greeted by the warm yet secretly worried gaze of Vito - the village schoolteacher and Kostas' wife. Kostas is out on patrol by the borders, so Vito and Elias catch

up, after what appears to be a long time. Despite Vito's smile, the subtext hints at things with Kostas having changed since their kids left for Athens to study. When the topic shifts to Elias' family and his daughter, Aggeliki, Elias goes mysteriously silent. He leaves abruptly - but not before Vito gives Elias the keys to Kostas' old car so he can drive about whilst there.

Elias returns to the house he never entered. Inside, everything is bare and dusty - apart from his childhood bedroom which seems to not have changed since he was a teenager. Later that night, Elias silences the eerie ghost-like "creaks" of the house with liquor. His eyes fixed on the telephone. He picks up the receiver, about to dial a number - but doesn't.

The next morning, Elias picks up Kostas' old, battered car. After driving around aimlessly, he parks by a mountainside road. He turns on the stereo - which blares an old heavy metal tape, the music he and Kostas apparently listened to as youngsters. But as he tries to restart the car, it fails - and he struggles to turn off the blaring heavy metal music that is now waking up every household around from their midday siesta.

After abandoning the car and wandering on foot, Elias happens on a group of hunters carving up slaughtered boars on tables. One of them, Giannogasis, a village elder, recognizes Elias and invites him over. As they catch up, Elias fixates on a young boy, Nasios, no older than 18, his scared eyes locked on the slaughtered boars, almost in terror.



Later on at night, as Elias carries on about aimlessly on foot, a patrol car stops by as if to arrest him - but it's his old friend Kostas. The two drive toward the village cafe. On their way, they run into a solitary Nasios again, grey plastic bag in hand, and offer him a ride. But the boy's previously timid and scared attitude is now serious and aggressive, and he declines. In the village cafe, Kostas fiddles absently with a loose button on his uniform. Idle chit-chat about both their financial troubles turns serious when Kostas pushes Elias to talk more about why he left Athens. With no clear answer, Kostas hints at Elias' wife's unfaithfulness, suggesting that he should move on from it. He offers Elias to help him financially. But a proud Elias hides his anger and doesn't accept.

Back in his childhood home, Elias finally makes the call he hesitated to make the day before. A young girl picks up. Aggeliki. Elias tries to seem caring. But Aggeliki is cold and distant. The only question she has is why her father left Athens abruptly. But Elias, again, stays silent, and hangs up.

With a half-empty bottle of liquor in hand, a drunk Elias arrives at his old spot, the giant pit, in the middle of the night. Staring down at its depths, Elias chats to no one, saying things he couldn't tell his own daughter. About how ashamed he is about his life, and his undisclosed "failings". Something suddenly catches his eye: from the darkness of the pit, the lifeless eyes of a young, naked, murdered woman stare back at him.

Later, Kostas reaches the scene. He and Foris, a young policeman, stare in shock at the woman's bloody face in the pit. Back at Kostas' office, he tells Elias that she was probably hit in the head with something heavy. She must have been in her late teens. They don't know anything else, not even her name.

In the following days, the previously sleepy village becomes alive with gossip about the murder. In the now packed village cafe, Elias sees bloody footprints leading to the empty chair across from him. He isn't sure if he's imagining them. At night, the sounds of footsteps and the creaking wardrobe in his bedroom keep him awake all night. And as the sun rises, he packs his suitcases to leave.

After starting up Kostas' car, Elias heads to Ioannina, the nearest town - but just off the edge of the village, he runs into Vito by the bus stop. She's also headed to Ioannina, so he gives her a ride.

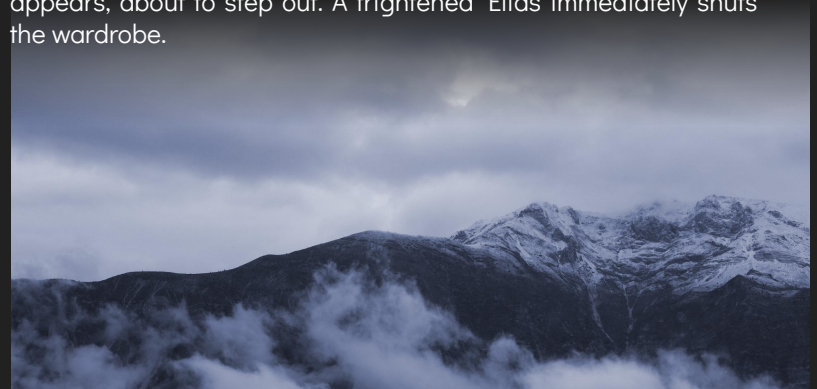
On their way, Vito implies she's heading to the hospital to check up that her cancer is still in remission. Kostas hadn't mentioned Vito had cancer. She bitterly comments that Kostas doesn't talk about the "bad things". Elias offers to go with her, but she can handle it on her own. She asks if he's heading back to Athens. He is, but only for two days - for Aggeliki's birthday.

In Ioannina, Elias stops at a clothes store to buy a gift for Aggeliki. He doesn't know what to get her. It's as if he can't remember her height and hair color. After getting the gift, he waits at the station

for the bus to Athens - but gets cold feet at the last minute, and heads back to Delvinaki.

On the snowstorm-besieged way back to Delvinaki, Elias spots Giannogasis and Nasios by a car at the side of a rural road. He stops to offer help if needed - but a suspicious, rifle-toting Giannogasis tells him to back off. Elias notices that fear again in Nasios' eyes. Something's off - but he leaves.

Back at his childhood home, Elias stares at a blank greeting card to send to Aggeliki along with her gift. But he doesn't know what to write. He picks up the phone to call Athens. It rings out. Nobody answers. Dejected, he heads to bed. But the house's noises keep him up again. But this time, something even stranger happens: through the creaking wardrobe door, a pale, female hand appears, about to step out. A frightened Elias immediately shuts the wardrobe.





In the following days, Elias notices signs of the "dead girl" everywhere. Bare footprints in the dirty snow, blood on the armrests of the cafe's chairs. One night, a once again drunken Elias heads back to the pit. He starts talking again, yelling to someone who could be his absent daughter, asking what "she wants from him". In his drunken despair, he loses his balance - and falls into the pit. He looks around, frightened. He tries to get out, but can't. And then, out of the darkness, the figure of the dead girl appears, naked and bloody. Elias stares at her, frozen. After a long silence, he asks her name. She moves her lips - but her voice is inaudible.

Elias wakes up at the bottom of the pit. Walking back to his house, he runs into Kostas, who is out on patrol. He invites him to join. On patrol, the two friends talk. Elias asks Kostas why he didn't take Vito to the hospital. He replies that since their children left for Athens, he and Vito have grown apart. They're no longer the same people.

As they drive by the village school, Kostas stops. Elias follows Kostas as he breaks into the school. They find their old classroom, their old desk, and sit down, reminiscing. But their cheerful nostalgia is cut short when Elias asks about the dead girl. Kostas tells him that there are many cases like this one. Nameless people who go unclaimed after crossing the border, either on their own - or as victims of trafficking.

That night, at Elias' childhood home, the pale, female hand ap-



pears from his wardrobe again. But this time Elias just waits - as the dead girl steps out, sitting by Elias, staring at him silently, as though asking him for something.

Over the next days, Elias decides to dig deeper into the unnamed girl's death. His first target: Nasios. The young boy spends his time alone, either walking about aimlessly or drinking at the cafe. Elias starts following him about. Meanwhile, he takes Kostas to visit some old, abandoned stone buildings outside the village. They're full of rubbish, signs of passersby who sought shelter there. Kostas tells him that sometimes traffickers hide people there - and sometimes they just leave them there without food or water for days. Before leaving the houses, Elias mentions the night he saw the rifle-toting Giannogasis and Nasios by the road. They seemed suspicious. Kostas plays it down, but promises to investigate further.

The dead girl appears more frequently by Elias' side. As he walks with her through the woods, he starts talking to the silent girl, more and more. Trying to get to know her. He tells her of the local legends they subscribed to as children. About the pit that grows deeper with time. About the immortal Judas Tree that never sheds its blossoms. But as they reach the Tree, Elias notices a grey plastic bag tied to a branch - a sign of passing hunters. Elias recognizes the type of bag - one carried by Nasios the second time he crossed paths with him in Kostas' patrol car.

Elias decides to check in on Nasios' mother's house, to ask questions about her son. But the alcoholic old lady explains away her son's often aggression as "boredom" of being confined in a small village. So Elias decides to confront Nasios himself. He approaches him at the cafe, offering him a cigarette, chatting idly in a friendly manner. But the boy's attitude turns Elias serious, and he asks him about Giannogasis and why he spends time with him. What were they doing that night in the snowstorm, by the road? Nasios explains it away: he was drunk and needed to throw up. But Elias senses fear, and spurs him on to talk more. Nasios gets aggressive and walks away.

But Elias follows, confronting Nasios directly. And when Nasios pushes him away, Elias strikes the young boy hard in the face. Nasios' serious expression quickly turns to terror. Elias notes the kid's fear, and is filled with remorse and shame. He tries to approach him gently - but the boy runs off.



Back at his childhood home, Elias is sat on his bed next to the dead girl, reading a list of female names, noting the girl's response to each one, attempting to learn her name. Then, a loud knock on the door. It's Giannogasis. His veiled hostility hidden beneath a smile, asking him to go out for a drink. Elias hesitates - but then obliges. At the cafe, Giannogasis questions Elias about his life, learning of his unemployment in Athens. The seemingly friendly chat then turns hostile, when Giannogasis openly threatens Elias to stop digging into the girl's murder - dead girls don't sleep with men, not even desperate ones with cheating wives. Later, Elias loses it - punching away and screaming at the wheel of his borrowed car.

The next morning, Elias waits for Kostas in his office. Kostas confuses Elias' intentions as a friendly catch-up - but Elias quickly tells him of his confrontation with Giannogasis, of his threats. He's positive he killed the girl, and that Nasios knows about it. Kostas loses his temper. He tells Elias to stop. He knows he hit Nasios. He should be ashamed of himself. He doesn't care about the girl, only about himself, and of some sort of retribution he's trying to find, for something that Kostas has no idea about, as long as Elias doesn't talk about it. Elias, again, stays silent. He leaves. Angered at his friend.

A few days later, Elias drives aimlessly about. He spots Vito by the bus stop again. He picks her up. They drive off to Ioannina, to the county hospital. On the way, they dive into one of their chats. About relationships, past and present ones, about love. An initially

withdrawn Elias becomes more open, as hints emerge about Elias and Vito's past romance. Elias hints at his feelings of inadequacy as a husband and father, seemingly opening up more than before. But he's still slightly mysterious as to why he left Athens. He drops Vito off at the hospital.

Hours later, when Vito re-emerges from the hospital, she is pleasantly surprised to see Elias has waited for her in his car. They drive back. Vito's health news isn't great. She might need treatment again. It's not too serious. But she's afraid of the road ahead, yet again. On that note, and after a moment of silence, Elias confides in her the real reason he left Athens. After catching his wife cheating on him with a former associate of his, Elias beat the man up, heavily. And in his manic state, struck his wife too. He says it was by accident, immediately regretting it. But he's not too sure if he didn't mean it. Vito remains silent upon hearing Elias. She asks to be dropped off. She'll take the bus the rest of the way, leaving Elias alone.

At his childhood home, Elias tries calling Athens again. No response. Later, he is joined by the dead girl in his room. He stares at her bloody wounds, asking her who did this to her. But she stays silent, as usual. The phone rings. Elias hopes it's his daughter - but, to his surprise, it's Nasios. He asks to meet with Elias. They arrange a time, and hang up. Moments later, the phone rings again. Elias picks it up thinking it's Nasios, saying his name. But it's Kostas. He called to apologize for his outburst at the station and to tell him that they found out the dead girl's name.

Her name was Adela. Adela Maidani.

Time passes by that night. Nasios hasn't shown up. Elias, worried, goes out to find him. He goes to his house. No one answers. Then, he sees a grey plastic bag dragged by the wind along the street. He follows it. Elias finds himself in the forest, walking faster and faster, anxious. He reaches the Judas Tree -- where he finds the lifeless body of Nasios, hanging by a branch.

At the police station, Elias gives a statement to Foris, the young policeman. He asks where Kostas is. Foris tells him he's gone to the coroner. Over the next few days, Elias looks for signs of the dead girl. But the wardrobe remains closed. No sound of those familiar footsteps either. She's nowhere to be seen.





After Nasios' funeral, the village cafe is packed with black-clad mourners. Elias sees Kostas outside, troubled. He joins him. They talk about Nasios. Kostas wonders what led the boy to that point. Elias notices Kostas' loose button, the one he's been fiddling with constantly, is missing. Elias says that they could have helped Nasios. He was just a kid. On that note, Elias announces his return to Athens, for good. Kostas tells him to keep the car he lent him, so that he can drive it back to the village more often. The two friends say their goodbyes.

The night before he leaves for Athens, Elias is visited by the dead girl, Adela, for the first time in a while. Her breath heavier than usual, frosty. Her eyes wide in terror. Elias approaches her. Grabs a jacket and puts it on her. He takes her in his arms. That same night, Elias quickly heads back to the forest, to the Judas Tree where Nasios hung himself. As he reaches the tree, he sees something at its foot, beneath the branch where he found Nasios: Kostas' missing uniform button.

The next morning, Elias heads to the post office. The greeting card he got for Aggeliki is no longer blank. He places it in the gift he got for her and mails it. He walks to a gas station. Fills up a tank of gas and leaves.

Kostas returns from a hunt. As he reaches his home, he sees the car he lent his friend, parked outside. A few minutes later, he gets a phone call. It's Elias. They make an appointment for one last stroll through their childhood spots. Before leaving, Kostas appro-



aches Vito, who's sat smoking in the yard. He hugs her from behind. It's the first time we see them embrace. It seems that they haven't touched in a while. An initially distant Vito, suddenly feels something is off. Something bad is about to happen.

Elias and Kostas walk through the woods in silence. They come to a fork in the path. Elias goes right, the way to the Judas Tree. Kostas suggests they go the other way. Elias insists. They reach the Tree. Elias starts talking. For the first time, he opens up to Kostas, about his wife, about Aggeliki, about his anger at losing his job, about his shame that instead of being his family's protector, he now felt he only brought them pain - leaving out the incident where he hit his wife.

Elias takes Kostas' button out of his pocket. He shows it to Kostas. Kostas' expression changes. Elias asks for the truth about Nasios, about how he died. Kostas tells him that Giannogasis did it, but that Kostas brought the boy's body there and hung it from the tree, staging his suicide. He admits that Giannogasis, as rumors have it, is involved in illegal smuggling and trafficking -- and that Giannogasis pays him to look the other way. His financial troubles left him no choice but to accept.

Elias then asks him about the dead girl, Adela. Kostas had nothing to do with her. He doesn't know what happened. Something must have gone wrong when she was brought through the borders, and Giannogasis must have beaten her up so she couldn't get away. That's all he knows. He admits that the night he called Elias to tell him the name of the dead girl, when Elias picked up the phone thinking it was Nasios, he knew the kid was going to talk. He was going to expose Giannogasis and himself. And he couldn't let that happen.

Elias asks why he got involved with Giannogasis. For the money, Kostas replies. He has a family to take care of, and he doesn't care how he gets the money to do that. Elias has given up the role of protector, but Kostas can't do that. He has his children to think about.

Suddenly, a rustling sound from the trees behind. Kostas quickly pulls out his gun - aiming it at Giannogasis who has appeared behind them, aiming at them with his rifle. He tells Kostas to shoot



Elias. Kostas hesitates, lowering his gun. Giannogasis insists, losing his patience. Kostas and Elias look at each other silently, sadly. Kostas quickly raises his gun and aims it at Giannogasis -- but the old hunter has already shot him in the chest.

Elias scrambles for Kostas' gun, but Giannogasis knocks him to the ground, kicking the gun away. He aims his rifle at Elias who awaits his doomed end. But after a moment's hesitation, Giannogasis empties his rifle's cartridges into his pocket and tosses it aside. He picks up Kostas' gun, aims it at Elias' knee -- and shoots. He then leaves, making it look like Elias took Kostas' life in a quarrel.

A semi-conscious, bloody Elias crawls towards the lifeless body of his friend. Kostas is gone now. But his dead voice tells Elias one last sentence: Nasios was nothing to him. But Elias is a brother. He wouldn't sacrifice himself for him if it weren't so. Before losing consciousness, Elias sees the dead girl one last time. Standing over the two friends, staring down at them. Her frosty breath slows down. Moments later, she's gone.

Elias wakes up in the hospital in Ioannina, his leg bound in a cast, his hand clenched in a fist. He looks beside him at the only other bed in the room, empty. Across from him, seated in a chair, is Foris, looking at Elias, troubled. Foris asks him what happened.

Elias is accused with Kostas' murder, but something seems off to the young policeman. He mentions that Elias was clutching some-

thing in his hand when they found him. He asks what it was, hinting at Kostas' missing uniform button. But Elias keeps his hand clenched, not saying a word.

The days pass. Elias is still in the hospital. To his surprise, Vito visits him. She sits down next to Elias. Neither of them speak for a while. Vito tells him that if Elias doesn't speak, he will spend the rest of his life in prison, away from his family, his daughter. Elias reminds her that Kostas had a family too, but he sacrificed himself for his friend nonetheless. So he won't talk. He can't talk. He won't say a word about his friend.

Vito reveals to him that she knew about Kostas' dirty business with Giannogasis. That's what changed when their kids left. That's what created the cold space between her and her husband. Elias shouldn't be protecting him. He's not the bad guy. He doesn't need to be the bad guy. A silent Elias unclenches his hand -- revealing Kostas' missing button. He hands it to Vito. He apologizes for telling her about how he hit his wife. He didn't mean to scare her. But he deserves his fate.

After a moment of silence, a serious Vito tells Elias that he didn't scare her. She isn't afraid of any man. Hinting at her cancer, she says there are scarier things than men. Because men are just boys, as she has come to know during her many years as a schoolteacher. Boys only become men when they become fathers. She leaves Elias her mobile phone, hinting that whatever he decides to do, he should first talk to the one person he's avoided to

do so all this time: his daughter.

Vito leaves and Elias is alone, yet again. He picks up the phone. Dials a number. It rings out. His breath speeds up as he's about to accept that he won't get through, once again. But then, his daughter, Aggeliki, picks up. This time she sounds worried. Vito told her most of the news, but there are things she doesn't understand. She wants her father to talk to her: what is he going to do?

For the first time in ages, Elias is brought to tears, as he listens to his daughter. He then musters courage: he'll tell her everything. He'll tell the truth. To her. To everyone. And he'll be back. Soon.

The End





UNDER the JUDAS TREE

Creative Team

Christos Chouliaras

DIRECTOR

Christos is a film director based in Athens, Greece. An avid film buff as a child, he went on to study directing and cinematography in Athens, entering the film business before even completing his studies. He has worked as an assistant director with some of the most prominent directors both in Greece and overseas, including Costa-Gavras, Park Chan-Wook, Maggie Gyllenhaal, Nikos Nikolaides, and Yannis Economides. He has directed short films and a feature documentary and is now ready to make his debut feature film.

DREAM TOY (2015)

13' GREECE / SHORT FILM ([link](#))

DIRECTING HELL (2011)

79' GREECE / DOCUMENTARY

THE FIGURES OF ENORMOUS GREY (2014)

5' GREECE / SHORT FILM ([link](#))

A portrait of George Zafeiropoulos, a man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a plaid shirt. He is positioned on the left side of the frame, with a white paper lantern hanging above him and a framed picture on the wall behind him.

George Zafeiropoulos

SCRIPTWRITER

Born in 1989, George Zafeiropoulos is a Greek-Scottish script writer who lives and works in Athens. He has completed his studies in psychology and turned to scriptwriting after obtaining his Master's degree in Scriptwriting from Bath Spa University in 2018. During 2020-2021 he worked as a scriptwriter and editor for ANT1 tv station, while his short films have participated in many festivals, in Greece and abroad. His completed script «Judas' Tree» based on a novel by M. Makropoulos is in pre production, funded by ERT and his script «Cora» for Evi Kalogiropoulou was awarded at Rotterdam Cinemart in 2021 and at L' Atelier Cinefondation in Cannes IFF 2021.

A portrait of Mina Dreki, a woman with long, wavy blonde hair, looking directly at the camera. She is wearing a dark green patterned jacket over a dark turtleneck. The background is a plain, light-colored wall with some colorful posters or artwork visible on the left.

Mina Dreki

PRODUCER

Mina Dreki, producer, based in Athens, Greece, has been working with Marni Films since 2010. She has a BA in Mass Media and MA in Linguistics and second BA in European Studies. She cooperated with British post-production houses and worked in international productions like Mamma Mia!, The Sisterhood of Traveling Pants, etc.

Her shorts have participated at many international a-list festivals (Cannes, Clermont-Ferrand, BFI, Animaze, Molodist, Cairo IFF, Drama IFF, etc.), won Greek Academy Awards and been released by global publishers, such as The New Yorker and HBO Europe.

She is currently in development her first features documentaries, “Sunken”, “Survivors”, “Katerina” and fiction features “Under the Judas Tree” and “Paperplanes”, which has been selected at Midpoint Institute Feature Launch programme.

She is a member of the Greek Film Academy, alumni Of American Film Showcase (AFS) Network, a mentee at EWA and ACE Producers programmes, has trained in sustainable filming by TFL’s Green Film Lab, and participated at Producers Lab at Sarajevo’s Cinelink, DocLisboa’s Nebulae programme, IDFA Academy and Rotterdam’s Film Lab. She recently won the Producers’ Network Award of Marche du Film, to attend Cannes 2023.

Marni Films

PRODUCTION COMPANY



Marni Films, an independent film production company based in Athens founded in 2011, develops, and produces feature films, shorts, and documentaries by emerging and promising talents whose work can spark the interest of international audiences with high quality and unique story telling.

In 2016 "Suntan" by Argyris Papadimitropoulos and "Afterlov" by Stergios Pashcos both took international audiences by storm, at numerous festivals, screenings and sales. "Suntan" premiered at Rotterdam IFF, SXSW and was sold to Netflix, winning awards at Edinburg IFF, FEST, Oaxaca, Odessa, bringing back 6 Greek Academy Awards. "Afterlov" won the Youth Jury Award at Locarno, the Fipresci Award at

Transilvania IFF and two awards at Thessaloniki's IFF. In 2018 the first feature by Kostis Samaras "Magic Skin" premiered at Berlin's Critics Week, while as a co-producer, Marni has supported important Greek feature productions such as "The Alps" (2011) by Yorgos Lanthimos, which premiered at Venice IFF, "A Blast" (2014) by Syllas Tzoumerkas premiered at Locarno and Sarajevo IFF, "Wednesday 4:45" (2015) by Alexis Alexiou which premiered at Tribeca, Karlovy Vary, Rotterdam IFF, Sitges, "Norway" (2015) by Yiannis Veslemes, premiered at CHP PIX, Fantasporto, and many more.

Marni's extensive filmography includes a long list of short films, which have premiered in a-list festivals around the world, as well as creative documentaries. With its numerous artistic and commercial collaborations, Marni Films keeps an open dialogue with filmmakers from Greece and abroad, providing them with a wide pool of creative collaborators that can fulfil their vision and expose their talent, with great inventiveness and high production value.

A silhouette of a person with curly hair, seen from behind, looking out over a misty, blue-toned landscape. The person is wearing a dark jacket. The background is a soft, hazy expanse of light blue and white, suggesting a foggy or misty environment. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

Thank you

UNDER the JUDAS TREE

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