

Fango Flashback: “LADY IN WHITE”

Written by Alondra Rogers

Saturday, 20 November 2010 10:10



It's 1962, Halloween, and the placid town of Willowpoint Falls is as perfect as it ever was. *LADY IN WHITE* follows young Frankie Scarlatti's (Lukas Haas) journey of understanding that his small world isn't the carefree, safe place he once knew it to be. The film is both a murder mystery and one hell of a ghost story.

LADY IN WHITE, released in 1988, was written and directed by Frank LaLoggia, who unfortunately hasn't done much to speak of since. Here's the summary: At the receiving end of his classmates' joke, Frankie gets locked in the school's coat closet overnight, where he witnesses the spirit of a little girl being murdered by an unseen attacker—followed by a brush with the killer in the flesh. Frankie survives and becomes driven to find out what happened to the girl and how she may be linked to the legendary Lady in White, a restless spirit who roams the cliffs at night.



Willowpoint Falls is a picturesque East Coast small town 25 miles and a world away from the big city. It's almost a character itself, providing comfort in its welcoming town square, trusty old brick buildings, barber, tailor and candy store, making the betrayal of child murder and false accusations all the more cruel. The ghost story is haunting and the mystery engaging, but *LADY IN WHITE* is more than this. It's also about family, the loss of innocence and racism.

Love is an additional key element in the film. Frankie lives with three generations of Scarlattis, and has genuine, loving relationships with his grandparents, his father (Alex Rocco) and his brother. He also has a special love for his deceased mother, as shown through a dream sequence. Then there is spirit of the little girl longing to be reunited with her own mom.

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Frankie changes over the course of the film, becoming less of a child after he leaves the cloakroom. He learns that Willowpoint Falls has been home to an unnamed child murderer for 10 years—his whole life. That knowledge makes everything different for him, and so does what happens next: The school’s janitor is arrested for Frankie’s assault and the murder of the other kids. His arrest is based on the fact that he was in the building at the time of the attack and nothing else—except perhaps that he is black. The janitor and his family—especially his family—are subjected to poor treatment and ridicule. The only person to come to their aid is Frankie’s kind and fair father.

There’s no gore or nudity in LADY IN WHITE, and that makes the few scenes of violence all the more shocking. The contrast of the simple small-town life with these few acts of brutality and murder is startling. However, the film may be mild enough to serve as entertainment for certain young viewers, even though it obviously deals with some pretty adult issues.



Clearly a labor of love for writer/director LaLoggia, LADY IN WHITE is a rich story ripe with detail and meaning. It is a tense mystery and lingering ghost story that explores the bonds of familial love for both the living and the dead, the injustice of racism and the idea that innocence is only maintained as long as children are kept ignorant of reality.

{jcomments on}