

because this is the fight he's been waiting for all his life. Xena says she won't give him the satisfaction and walks away. He comes after her; she impales him with a log. Varia is the new leader of the Amazons, as chosen by Marga.

COMMENTS: Renee O'Connor directs her first "real" episode. She had previously directed the fourth-season finale, "Deja Vu All Over Again," but it was a clip show, with most of the new segments taking place in a single set. "Dangerous Prey" is a much more ambitious project, not only because there are no clips (outside of some forest-fire scenes), but because the action takes place in exteriors, making things more difficult to film. O'Connor does a fine job, opening the show with some nice tracking shots of Marga running through the forest.

The story itself is nothing spectacular—a variation on the "most dangerous game" idea. One gets the sense that more could have been done with the conflict between the prince and Xena. On one hand, there's a man who has devoted his life to finding a worthy adversary; on the other, Xena has succeeded in battle but renounced it as an end in itself or as a path to self-serving ends. Is the prince a sort of earlier version of Xena? Because of the lack of psychological exploration, his character mostly just lies on the screen, a generic, cardboard comic book villain, despite an adequate performance by the actor. The only theme present—barely—is that uncontrolled anger can get a fighter killed. Xena tries to impress this point on the Amazon, and it turns out that the prince's anger is what makes him lose his composure and strategy and simply leap at Xena in a blind rage, making him easy prey. As shown, it's all a little too convenient. And it's a dull theme to wrap an episode around, anyway, having been done to death in TV and film—and done better. Watch *Star Wars* or *Kung Fu* instead.

As with some of the other episodes in this sixth season, "Dangerous Prey" isn't bad—it's moderately entertaining—but it seems as if the show is marking time. Considering last season's climax of the death of the gods, the show doesn't seem to have much of a direction right now. It's not surprising that it turned out to be the final year.

The end-credits disclaimer: "Raczar mysteriously disappeared at the completion of production of this motion picture and is rumored to have been living under the guise of 'Prince Vhalimar Barbiqueen Raczar of Lower Alibabaston.'" (Note: This was a particularly difficult disclaimer to read on our tape, so we checked numerous Xena Web sites, and they all had it wrong—and wrong in *exactly the same way*. (They ended with "Barbeque Raczar," completely omitting the last three words, which we knew wasn't right.) Apparently everyone is just copying everyone else on these sites, and if the first person gets it wrong, the error is never corrected. We finally found a great site, "Sherry's UK Xena Page," at www.ukxenate.fsnet.co.uk/index.htm, which appeared to have this disclaimer correct. At least it was much more accurate than everyone else's. Good work, Sherry!)

RATING: ★★★

12. THE GOD YOU KNOW

First televised February 2001

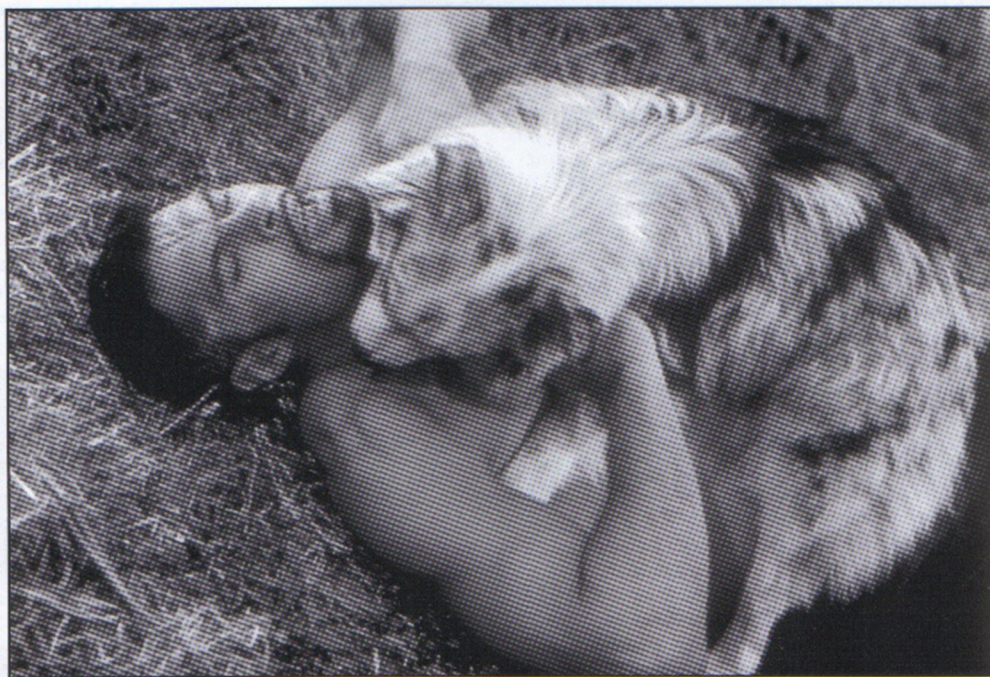
Guest starring Adrienne Wilkinson (Eve), Alexandra Tydings (Aphrodite), and Charles Mesure (Michael); with Alexis Arquette (Caligula) and Kevin Smith (Ares); **Written by Emily Skopov; Directed by Garth Maxwell** (no editor is credited)

Xena and Gabrielle come upon a scene of carnage—men and women have been slaughtered. The archangel Michael appears and tells Xena that the Roman emperor Caligula did it, and he's a god. Xena must stop him. He killed Tiberius to gain power. He'll kill everyone—including angels and

followers of Eli—who does not submit to him. Eve is in Rome to confront him. Caligula asks a bystander to pierce him with a sword. The man does, and it does not hurt the emperor. A follower of Eli will not worship Caligula, so he is ordered to be killed. Eve intervenes. Caligula recognizes her and knows her past as Livia. Xena arrives by chariot. Soldiers attack while Gabrielle pulls Eve to safety. Ares look on. Xena is about to stab Caligula when Ares tackles her. If Caligula dies, Aphrodite (Ares' sister) is destroyed, too.

Eve goes to hide in the catacombs outside town. Gabrielle tells Caligula that she is Synda of Thrace and Xena is Saba, and they're challenging him to a chariot race. Caligula invites them to the palace. Xena will try to find out what the Caligula/Aphrodite bond is. Later, at Caligula's party, Aphrodite doesn't seem to recognize Gabrielle. Caligula is upset Xena hasn't arrived yet. Xena visits Ares in the dungeon. He says that without the god of war, the goddess of love becomes unbalanced. Caligula is sucking Aphrodite's godhood from her. To distract Caligula from looking for Xena, Gabrielle dances for him.

Xena arrives at the party. To prove herself worth of racing Caligula, Xena must first kill Ares. Instead, Xena suggests showing the emperor their "floor show." But first Xena kisses Caligula and bites him on the lip. He bleeds and demands Xena be put in chains. He clears the hall. He demands a soldier stab



Ares and Horace

him in the arm; it doesn't hurt him. Aphrodite's forehead bleeds from a slap by Caligula. Xena tells Caligula she's the Celtic god of sex. She tells him she wants to replace Aphrodite by his side.

Caligula imagines being taunted by his mother. Michael appears and laughs at him. Michael then appears for Eve and says she's ready. She is brought before Caligula and tells him to turn from lust and violence. He's about to kill her when Xena appears and knocks her out. Caligula says "the demon with wings" told him his legacy would be guaranteed if he killed Eve. Xena suggests he kill Eve in public to send a message. Caligula needs one final kiss from Aphrodite. Michael is about to kill Aphrodite when Xena intervenes. The two fight. Xena puts the pinch on him; he says he was going to kill Aphrodite to keep Caligula from kissing her one more time and becoming a full god. Xena tries to drown Michael, but a beam of light from overhead appears, paralyzing Xena. Michael stands before her, laughing, then disappears. When Xena comes to, she tells Gabrielle she can no longer kill gods. Caligula kisses Aphrodite; a beam of light passes between them. Xena kicks him. He laughs and disappears.

Aphrodite is herself again. But she can't teleport out. Xena visits Eve and Ares in prison. Eve is upset at Xena for interrupting her plans. Later, Xena has Eve chained to a pole. Caligula makes a speech. The winner of the chariot race will be allowed to kill Eve. The race begins. Caligula's chariot crashes shortly before the finish line. Xena takes off her mask; Gabrielle yells out that it's Xena. Caligula remembers that she's called "the killer of gods." The crowd chants