



SD: I was surprised to see Eve working for the emperor of Rome. Do you know which emperor that was supposed to be?

Joel: If you remember, they killed off Caligula in "The God You Know." I didn't have anything to do with that episode, but I think they had originally planned to put Claudius in there. When I was on board, they were going to make Claudius the new emperor. He would be kinder and gentler and was going to have a thing for Eve. He would have been under her influence and allowed her to go around trying to make peace with groups like the Amazons. And that's why the Roman bodyguard came after Eve to protect her. That became the powderkeg that started the episode.

SD: In "Path," Xena says to Gabrielle, "I guess this new emperor's really serious about waging peace?" And Gabrielle responds, "Thanks to you." I guess that refers to the death of Caligula and Claudius coming to power.

Joel: Yeah. I didn't see "The God You Know," so I don't know if that part of the story made the episode. In the early discussions, we were throwing in the whole Claudius story. Xena would have been responsible for placing a good man on the throne. That's what that line was about. I guess it got cut out of the Caligula story.

SD: How did you approach Gabrielle in this episode?

Joel: In a story, you want characters in conflict. It's always good to have Gabrielle on one side and Xena on the other if they have a different point of view. Gabrielle loves Eve and she knows that, right now, Varia is misguided. But she also sees that for the Amazons to band together is the only way for them

to survive cause they're dying out. The future of the tribes is at stake and she wants to help. But she sure as hell doesn't want Varia following Ares. The path of vengeance is the wrong path to go down. And Xena is concerned, first and foremost, with her daughter.

SD: Not being Eve's mother, Gabrielle is not as emotionally tied to the threat to Eve's life. She knows they need to save the Amazons as well as Xena's daughter.

Joel: Exactly. Gabrielle's trying to do both. Xena's caught in the middle. We all know that if push comes to shove, Xena could, theoretically, just pull out her sword, kill all the Amazons and take her daughter home because she's so powerful. And that's the challenge of this episode — to put Xena in a bind. Xena is kind of like Superman — no one can kill her, she's too powerful as a fighter. As a writer you have to put her in double binds where she's damned if she does and damned if she doesn't. Xena doesn't want to slaughter the Amazons to save her daughter, Gabrielle wants the Amazons and Eve to survive, and Eve wants to be punished for her crimes.

That was my major challenge throughout my tenure at *Xena* — how do we put her in real danger because we've seen her go up against armies. She's so good, she's practically invincible. It's hard to throw anything at her that the audience thinks she can't easily get out of. You have to set up a situation where, sure, she can pull out her sword, but it's not going to help solve the problem.

SD: In the first Amazon episode in season one, "Hooves & Harlots," Gabrielle challenged Queen Melosa and then appointed Xena as her Champion to fight Melosa. Why didn't Gabrielle do that this time? Why did she fight Varia herself?

Joel: I remember the scene you're talking about. It was good for the Gabrielle character to fight Varia herself because she really put it on the line for the future of the Amazons and Eve. She's willing to face a battle of "who's the toughest fighter in camp?" The fight was originally written as a kind of Roman wrestling match. There was a scene of Xena oiling Gabrielle before the fight where Xena was telling Gabrielle she didn't need to

do this.

SD: The fight between Xena and Varia over the lava pit was well done. The stunt coordinator came up with some clever new moves.

Joel: We really, really strive to top ourselves with the fights and it's difficult because we do it every week. We knew there was going to be a big fight at the end and originally it was set in the Temple of Ares. The scenes in the field were originally set in the Temple of Artemis which Ares was having made over into a temple for himself. The fight was going to be on top of a huge statue. After I turned in the script, it was moved to the outside pit. It was a fantastic fight! Xena was Varia's teacher and she knows a lot of Xena's tricks. She was also trained by Ares. Fictionally, we had two great fighters and in real life they wanted to take advantage of Tsianina's skills.

SD: Was it Xena's plan all along to let Varia get the better of her?

Joel: In my mind, at any point Xena could break the Amazon law and free her daughter. She gave Eve every chance to be acquitted and then it came down to the moment of Eve's execution. Xena tried during the fight to reach Varia. But it wasn't working. Finally, she realized Varia was willing to die rather than admit the guilt she felt over her sister's death. Xena thought if she could recreate that moment, Varia would realize what she was doing and why. At that moment, Varia saw that she had become just as bad as Livia.

By the way, Varia's little sister's name was Tura. I named her after my friend, Tura Satana from the movie, "Faster Pussycat, Kill, Kill."

