

Xena Sixth Season Episode Guide

Sixth season credits: Starring Lucy Lawless (*Xena*) and Renee O'Connor (*Gabrielle*); Music by Joseph Lo Duca; Developed by R.J. Stewart; Producer Michael McDonald; Supervising Producers Bernadette Joyce and Emily Skopov; Produced by Chloe Smith; Co-Executive Producer Eric Gruendemann; Executive Producers R.J. Stewart, Sam Raimi, and Rob Tapert; Created by John Schulian and Rob Tapert; Directors of Photography Simon Riera, Warrick Waka Attewell, Aaron Morton, and John Cavill; Production Designer Robert Gillies

1. COMING HOME

First televised October 2000

Guest starring Adrienne Wilkinson (*Eve*), Tsiarina Joelson (*Varia*), and Kevin Smith (*Ares*); **Written by Melissa Good; Directed by Mark Beesley; Edited by Tim Batt**

Soldiers march through an Amazon forest and get attacked. Xena, Gabrielle, and Eve come upon the battle and aid the Amazons. Finally, the defeated soldiers flee. The Amazon queen, Marga, introduces herself and says they seek to kill Ares.

Everyone wonders why Ares has attacked the Amazons—and why he wants a meeting with Xena. She finds his camp; he tells her he wants his godhood back and will get it if he can obtain the Amazon's ambrosia. Xena asks for control of Ares' army to wipe out the Amazons; then he can take the ambrosia. Gabrielle goes along with the scheme. Eve refuses to fight, then hooks up the Xena, Gabrielle, and Ares. He prepares his army for war. Xena, Gabrielle, and Eve are actually Furies seeking revenge on behalf of the Olympians—they hope Ares and the real Xena end up killing each other.

The real Xena and Gabrielle find Ares and are confused about his plans for war. Xena suspects the Furies. Ares begins moving his army into position. Xena creates a rock slide to delay the men so she can warn the Amazons. The Amazons realize that Eve is Livia, "the bitch of Rome." They're ready to kill her when Xena and Gabrielle enter the camp. The Amazons explain that Livia killed many Amazons and sold others into slavery. Gabrielle challenges Marga; Eve is temporarily spared.

Xena tells Ares to fight the Furies; he says he can't trust her, that he offered her everything, but she betrayed him, and that she is hungry for power but won't admit it. The Amazons head off to battle; Xena can't talk them out of it. The armies meet. Ares demands the ambrosia. Xena interrupts and fights Ares. Disheartened, his men retreat as Ares pursues Xena. They continue their fight. The Furies reveal themselves, happy that Ares has killed Xena. (She apparently has drowned.) But Gabrielle arrives and revives her in time. Later, Xena kisses Ares. "You always got to me. But you were bad for me, Ares. You still are." But Xena admits there's a "one in a billion" chance they might end up together some day.

MYTHOLOGY NOTES: Ares, the Greek god of war, is the half-brother of Hercules. (Ares is the son of Zeus and Hera; Hercules is the son of Zeus and Alcmena.) Amazons have appeared in many episodes of *Xena*, going all the way to episode ten ("Hooves & Harlots") of the first season. According to classical mythology, Amazons are said to have cut off their right breasts (Amazon means "breastless") so that they can use the bow more easily. (Of course, the Amazons on *Xena* are far from breastless.) Hercules fights against them during one of his labors (and perhaps another time with Theseus.) The Amazons assist Troy in their war with the Greeks. Finally, the Furies, also called the Erinyes, are three avenging spirits—Unresting, Jealous, and Avenger. In the third-season *Xena* premiere, they torment her as punishment for not

avenging the death of her murdered father.

COMMENTS: "Coming Home" brilliantly combines the dramatic and comedic aspects of the series. We've long credited *Xena* with introducing this element to television (though *Buffy* would end up with most of the credit), alternating between episodes of melodrama and silly slapstick. But in this episode, these two are prominent in the same episode—and even in the same character, as Kevin Smith puts on a bravura performance with scenes of humor on some occasions, intensity on others. He has most of the great lines in the episode, such as expressing frustration at having to walk everywhere as a human (as a god, he traveled by simply teleporting). Or in talking to Xena (actually a Fury): "I don't do mortal at all well. I'm more of a—what was that word?—a god!" The foibles of humanity prove to be a source of constant frustration, whether it's bleeding, or even the annoyance of a simple fly, which he finds difficult to remain still long enough for him to kill.

Smith keeps Ares a sympathetic character, and in fact Xena comes off as manipulative and even a little nasty at times. The final battle, in which Ares and Xena are pummeling each other, represents their passion that finds expression in both love and anger, compassion and frustration. Though done recently with a little more finesse in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* between Buffy and Spike, the *Xena* scenes work well and form a great climax to the conflicts and emotions that have been building throughout the episode. Having Gabrielle be the one to revive Xena seems like a bit of a cop-out, though it does make sense that Ares might not know the particulars of mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.

The final moments combine a few of the elements of the episode—Xena's tender moment with Ares, including a kiss of thanks; Ares' expression of frustration with being human; and a final joke, with Ares failing to teleport away, and wondering if he's going to "rupture something" if he keeps trying without success.

Ambrosia was introduced in the first-season episode "A Fistful of Dinars," in which an assassin and a warlord are seeking it, because whoever eats ambrosia becomes a god. Xena gets it first and throws it into a volcano. In the second-season episode "The Quest," Xena is dead (or near death, or something, although her spirit is inhabiting Autolykus). The Amazons possess some ambrosia, and Gabrielle puts it in Xena's mouth, and the warrior princess is revived. Unfortunately, in the following episode ("A Necessary Evil") nasty Amazon Velasca also eats some, becomes an immortal, and goes on a rampage. Xena and Gabrielle give Callisto some ambrosia; and Callisto apparently kills Velasca.

The end-credits disclaimer: "Xena and Gabrielle's psyche were harmed during the making of this motion picture."

RATING: ★★★★★

2. THE HAUNTING OF AMPHIPOLIS

First televised October 2000

Guest starring Adrienne Wilkinson (*Eve*), Darien Takle (*Cyrene*), and Anthony Ray Parker (*Mephistopheles*); **Teleplay by Joel Metzger; Story by Edythe Swensen and Joel Metzger; Directed by Garth Maxwell; Edited by Tim Batt**

The Spectrum Television Rating System

★★★★★

The best that television has to offer, equal to the greatest art of other media; exceptional writing and acting; usually dynamic, innovative visuals. Examples: most episodes of *Twin Peaks*, *The Prisoner*, *Homicide: Life on the Street*, *Crime Story*, *The Civil War*, and *The Twilight Zone*.

★★★★

Still great writing and acting, though perhaps not as innovative in the visuals. Examples: most episodes of *ER*, *All in the Family*, *Moon-*

lighting, *The Simpsons*, *Hill Street Blues*, and *St. Elsewhere*.

★★★

Enjoyable and entertaining, particularly to a fan of the genre of show that may fall into this category; possibly worth taping and keeping, although the writing is sometimes only average. Examples: *Early Edition*, *Hercules*, and *La Femme Nikita*.

★★

Serious writing problems or acting deficiencies begin to affect enjoyment of the show, although

engaging characters or intriguing concepts may keep viewers watching. Examples: *Baywatch*, *Sledge Hammer*, and *Nowhere Man*.

★

Unwatchable; lacking any wit, originality, or visual flair. Examples: difficult, since these are the shows we can't endure for more than five minutes; *Full House*, *Family Matters* (or virtually all TV sitcoms, for that matter); variety shows (or—even worse—variety "specials").