

Below: Gabrielle joins the Amazons in *Xena's* sixth season.

Bottom: Xena turns down the opportunity to become a god in *You Are There...*



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and dance routine is nothing short of brilliant.

The following tale, *Dangerous Prey*, is far more serious: Xena confronts the hunter Morloch, who belongs to a Darwinist race whose way of living is based on the idea that there are only the hunters and the hunted. Morloch is responsible for the death of more than a few Amazons, and by the end of the episode, not only have they been avenged, but Xena and Gabrielle have taught the Amazon Varia all she needs to know to become a truly great Amazon Queen.

The Archangel Michael pops up again in the next episode, this time to confront Xena on a battlefield strewn with the bodies of the slaughtered innocent victims of the new Emperor of Rome. Xena's daughter is in the Empire's capital, preaching the word of Eli, when she is captured and taken to Caligula Caesar, the immortal God-Emperor of the Roman world. As Xena has the power to kill Gods, Michael, the One God's representative, decides it's up to the Warrior Princess to dispose of Caligula Caesar for him.

The God You Know is a highlight of the sixth season, a terrific script with strong yet unusual roles for both Ares and Aphrodite (played by Alexandra Tydings). Guest star Alexis Arquette gives a suitably insane performance as Caligula, and the spin on history (that the insane Caligula who believed himself to be a God was actually a God) is inspired.

You Are There is a wicked piece of television innovation. Staged as a series of present-day interviews and faux-documentary snippets, the episode tells the story of Xena and Gabrielle's acquisition of the Golden Apples of Valhalla, magical fruit with the power to transform someone into a God.

The episode acts as a sequel to *The God You Know*, picking up the storyline of Ares and Aphrodite's ongoing attempts to survive as mortals, and presenting a brilliant scene in the Underworld in which we meet many recently deceased Xena characters, including Caligula, who is unable to conceal his contempt for the Warrior Princess who put him there.

You Are There is a pithy, self-reverential and extremely clever episode that stands as one of the series' best ever. The last scene is extremely funny, although some might justifiably call it an appalling cop out...

Path of Vengeance wraps up Eve's storyline. The Amazons swear vengeance on Xena's daughter for her crimes as Rome's champion, Livia, and we witness the poor girl's previous persona for the last time via flashbacks. It's up to Gabrielle to use her position of authority within the Amazons to prevent her best friend and her people from becoming mortal enemies.

Path of Vengeance again features Ares, who, now returned to godhood, is back to his lip-smacking, machiavellian best. Even he admits, "It's just like old times." Xena and Eve's final parting is a touchingly scripted and beautifully played end to Eve's story.

To Helicon and Back has been described as Xena's take on *Saving Private Ryan*, thanks to its beach-bound scenes of mass slaughter, reminiscent of the bloody Normandy landings. The episode is a particularly violent outing, and once again concerns the Amazons, as Xena's writers bring their story arc to a poignant (and rather sad) conclusion.

The villain of the piece is the mythological Greek hero Bellerophon, son of the late Goddess Artemis, who wants revenge on the Amazon people for abandoning his mother and ceasing to worship her. Consumed by bitterness and hatred, he's a sort of Anti-Hercules, a Demi-God blessed with extraordinary powers, who's given in to the desire for revenge rather than devoting himself to the cause of helping others.

While the fighting and effects in *To Helicon and Back* are impressive, in particular the final fight between Xena and Bellerophon, the episode's best moments concern Gabrielle. Leading the Amazon Nation into war, she begins to lose her grip on who she is and what she should be doing, violence corrupting even her in the end.

Send in the Clones couldn't be more different from the previous instalments. A modern episode in the tradition of *Déjà vu All Over Again*, it works by taking the currently topical (and these days almost scientifically plausible) topic of cloning, and spinning a partly comic tale around the idea of duplicating Xena and Gabrielle in the modern world. Like *You Are There*, it's essentially a play on ideas of perception and how fiction is viewed by its audience. As the quartet of fans in the episode exist to point out, many interpretations say at least as much about