

that Livia is dead and has been replaced completely by Eve. She has been "born again" (to use the common phrase) and is not working toward salvation, but has already received it. Her message of peace flows out of that gift.

The dilemma set up in the episode is, how should Eve pay for the crimes of her past? How is justice to be done? Interestingly, she does not argue that she should not be punished.³ Here, the script cops out a little bit. It is slightly convenient that the Ares who manipulated Livia into attacking the Amazons is in league with Varia, making Varia's harsh sentence arguably hypocritical. Likewise, Varia's sudden emotional collapse at the end of her fight with Xena is not convincing. The problem isn't as much with the idea itself as with the set-up—it hasn't been properly established, but more or less comes out of nowhere. Why does it happen *now*? It's a minor problem, but we wish the writers could have resolved the Xena/Varia conflict a little better.

One of the Amazon queens in this episode, Cyane, is at least the fourth one identified in the series. In the fourth-season premiere, "Adventures in the Sin Trade," Cyane (played by Vicky Pratt) is an Amazon queen whom Xena kills (back in Xena's evil days) on behalf of Alti, who is at war with the Amazons. During the fifth season, "Lifeblood" gives us Cyane the Atma (Selma Blair), who comes from the future to turn the Amazons from their bloodthirsty ways. (It's possible—perhaps probable—that the Cyane in "Sin Trade" is an older version of the Cyane in "Lifeblood.") In the episode immediately after "Lifeblood," "Kindred Spirits," the Amazons want Gabrielle to be their queen. She considers the offer but eventually declines, and Cyane (Shelley Edwards) becomes the new queen. Finally in "Path of Vengeance" there is the Cyane who, ironically, is played by the same actress who played Eris the Amazon in "Kindred Spirits" (Morgan Reese Fairhead).

The end-credits disclaimer: "The disclaimer for this episode was harmed during the making of this motion picture."

RATING: ★★★★★

15. TO HELICON AND BACK

First televised February 2001

Guest starring Tsianina Joelson (Varia) and Craig Parker (Bellerophon); **Written by Liz Friedman & Vanessa Place; Directed by Michael Hurst; Edited by Robert Field**

Xena leaves the Amazon village as Gabrielle participates in a ceremony during an eclipse. Varia's arm is cut; she holds her bloody hand up; the Amazons dance. Masked, robed men attack. Varia is captured, and the men retreat. The men are from Helicon. Gabrielle must lead the Amazons in the attack. They will attack by water. Xena will try to take out the leader first and create a diversion.

Varia is held captive in a fortress. The Amazons sail toward Helicon. Xena

³It's always weird when a convicted killer "gets religion" in prison and argues that he should be given leniency because of the change. While that person may not pose the same threat to society as he once did, he—more so than other inmates—should recognize and appreciate the horrendous nature of his crime and the punishment that he deserves.

sneaks into the fortress and meets the leader, Bellerophon, the son of Artemis. They fight. Artemis looked after the Amazons, and they abandoned her because of Xena, who later killed Artemis. Bellerophon is ready for the Amazons' sea attack. He launches a fireball by catapult and hits the ship. By the next morning, the Amazons are charging onto the shore, but the women are being slaughtered. Xena makes her way to Gabrielle. She uses her chakram to explode a firebomb before it leaves the fortress, setting some men on fire. The Amazons use the brief time to get out of the line of fire.

Varia is set free, blindfolded and chained. She wants to retreat at nightfall. Xena wants to gather the Amazons and attack the other side of the fortress. Gabrielle reluctantly agrees. Gabrielle leaves to try to find the path on which Varia left the fortress, but she soon faces fire from the fortress. It was a trap—Bellerophon promised to save the Amazons if Gabrielle were killed. Gabrielle will let Varia accompany them on the attack, but she is no longer queen.

As Gabrielle rallies the troops, Xena rides up to the fortress and fights Bellerophon again. Xena pretends to be beaten and retreats. Bellerophon and some of his soldiers pursue her. Amazons attack. Xena fights Bellerophon. She wants him to call off the cycle of vengeance, but he refuses. She ends up killing him—he was half god, but also half mortal. The soldiers retreat.



Xena and Gabrielle

Gabrielle worries that, with each battle, she loses more of herself.

MYTHOLOGY NOTES: Artemis is Apollo's twin sister, the daughter of Zeus and Leto. She is the goddess of the hunt, the moon, and childbirth, and the patroness of unmarried girls and of chastity. Bellerophon is the Corinthian hero who, with the aid of the winged horse Pegasus, slew the Chimera. When the Amazons invaded Lycia, Bellerophon fought them back. In classical mythology Bellerophon is not the son of Artemis, but of Poseidon (god of the sea).

COMMENTS: Xena meets *Saving Private Ryan*. Though the attack on the beach is thrilling, this episode is strangely dispassionate. For some reason we find ourselves rooting against the Amazons during the battles. Maybe their arrogant demeanor is finally wearing thin, and Varia might be getting simply annoying. The core idea of having Bellerophon avenge Artemis is not bad, but we would have liked more background into the origins of how Xena led the Amazons away from their worship of Artemis. Back in the second-season episode "A Necessary Evil," Artemis was still the goddess of the Amazons. Whatever Xena did between then and now to turn the Amazons away, we've forgotten.