

## 'Battlestar' babe Tricia Helfer gets back to being dangerous

By [Elisabeth Vincentelli](#)

December 14, 2014 | 12:06am

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Tricia Helfer

Photo: Syfy

Viondra Denninger, the spaceship captain's wife in Syfy's new futuristic miniseries, "Ascension," is a handful — scheming, icy-blond and prone to bodacious butt cleavage.

Clearly, this called for a special star.

"In the first draft of the script, I put in a parenthetical next to Viondra's character description that read, 'Think Tricia Helfer,'" recalls Philip Levens, the show's co-creator.

As luck would have it, Helfer and Levens share a talent agency. A coffee date and an offer later, Viondra was Helfer's to play.

The statuesque Canadian actress burst onto TV as Cylon Number Six in "Battlestar Galactica."



Tricia Helfer in "Battlestar Galactica."

Photo: Syfy (2)

She didn't mind being cast as a woman described as "beautiful, manipulative and dangerous" in "Ascension."

"At first you may think it's not a compliment," Helfer says from her home base in L.A. "I'm pretty opposite of that in terms of my personality. But the manipulative and dangerous parts mean I'm probably going to have fun with the character. And what I consider fun is not jumping around for joy and having giggles, but something you can sink your teeth into."



Tricia Helfer as Viondra Denninger in "Ascension."

Photo: Syfy

After "Galactica" wrapped up in 2009, Helfer, 40, went on to guest star in a multitude of TV shows, often playing ass-kicking roles on either side of the law — most recently, she was a Texas Ranger in the short-lived "Killer Women."

"I like to think I'm a strong female myself, so I'm more drawn to that than to someone meek," Helfer says. "I grew up one of four daughters on a farm [in Donaldda, Alberta], so I was driving tractors and fixing machinery. I certainly appreciate a nice pair of high heels and a pretty dress, but I have no problem getting down and dirty."

And of course there's the baggage of her pre-acting career: "Because I modeled for 10 years, people don't realize that I'm a tomboy or that I do my own stunts," Helfer suggests.



Tricia Helfer and Brian Van Holt in "Ascension,"

Photo: Syfy

Helfer even joined up with former "Galactica" co-star — and fellow action icon — Katee Sackhoff to found the charity Acting Outlaws, which uses their common love of motorcycle riding to raise money for causes such as the Gulf Restoration Network. Sadly, Helfer's husband, lawyer Jonathan Marshall, doesn't hug her from behind on the back seat — he has his own hog.

The actress is more versatile than her physical feats would suggest — she had a recurring role on "Two and a Half Men" as one of Charlie Sheen's flings — but overall her résumé is pretty short on laughs.

"Probably the reason is that I'm really tall, and most male actors are not really tall," Helfer says, laughing. "There's not many romantic comedies for a girl who's 5-foot-11."

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