

Gurkhan for Sarah's head. How can she possibly know that he wouldn't immediately grant her wish before she would have a chance to rescue the girl? It seems to be done more for an artificial shock in the story than for any believable strategy on Xena's part. Even the final beheading by the guards isn't convincing—are viewers to accept that they wouldn't even look at—or see—the woman's face before executing her?

Despite how it may sound from our comments, "Who's Gurkhan?" is a solid episode. It's enjoyable to see a serious Gabrielle instead of the goofy, silly side of her, and the mystery of Gurkhan's identity—particularly during the auction scene—is well done.

For the second time in three episodes, Xena and Gabrielle return to their home towns, and in both cases the news is exceedingly grim—Xena's mom Cyrene went mad and was burned as a witch; Gabrielle's mother, father, and brother-in-law were captured and beheaded.



Xena and Lucifer

the killing. She will be executed at dawn, and the tribes will not follow Xena to battle against the Romans. Gabrielle thinks back on her life with Xena. She doesn't think there's much light left in her; it's best that she die.

The next morning, Gabrielle is buried alive in the sand up to her neck. Xena tells the governor where the nomads are gathered. As the Romans approach, Xena rescues Gabrielle. Xena and Gabrielle then lead the nomads against the Romans. As the army marches into a valley, a sandstorm hits. The nomads attack and defeat the Romans. Later, Gabrielle wonders why Xena rescued her, in spite of the greater good. Xena says that Gabrielle's life is more important than the greater good.

COMMENTS: Though not flashy, this is a fascinating episode because it utilizes the more interesting basics of the Xena character as part of the foundation to the story in a way that never would have worked for, say, Hercules. Xena has no problem deceiving her new allies if it means the survival of Gabrielle, and she even collaborates with the Romans in a plan that could have been devastating to the nomads. She compromises herself and her honor

because of her love for Gabrielle. It's quite a dilemma she finds herself in—a dilemma that Gabrielle simplifies (perhaps overly simplifies). Should Gabrielle's honest mistake result in her death? It is the law of the tribe, but that law is not placed within any context. Is it a reasoned, just law or a kneejerk, mindless law? Is Xena protesting some legal injustice? Such questions are never addressed; instead there is merely Xena's wish for Gabrielle to remain alive because of her importance to Xena. But the very fact that Xena doesn't ask those questions shows her willingness to bend things in her favor when it comes to Gabrielle. (It's interesting to compare this to the situation in which Gabrielle finds herself in the season finale. Like Xena here, she is less concerned with the larger ramifications and concerned only with returning Xena to life.)

This episode continues to emphasize Xena's continuing influence on her world after her disappearance twenty-five years ago and subsequent re-appearance (as presented in "Looking Death in the Eye" and "Livia" last season; see *Spectrum* 25). It gives Xena an almost immediate mythic status without quite explaining why—although she had the power to kill gods (somehow), that was not generally known. Yet her exploits, as recounted in Gabrielle's scrolls, reached at least as far as northern Africa, where this episode apparently takes place. (At least, that's where Xena and Gabrielle ended up at the end of "Who's Gurkhan?")

The most startling scene in "Legacy" is in the teaser. Pushing the boundaries of nudity on television, Xena and Gabrielle emerge from their bath, apparently naked, in a longshot from the side/three-quarter view that soon cuts to a rear-view shot. Because of television's poor picture quality, not much can be seen (the eventual DVDs may be different; who knows?), but it is certainly



Xena rescues Gabrielle in "Legacy"

It's a not-so-subtle reminder that, despite the occasional light-heartedness of the series, the foundation of the show is dark and violent. Willa O'Neill returns to play Gabrielle's sister Lila, who was introduced in "Sins of the Past," the very first Xena episode.

The end-credits disclaimer: "Xena's uncanny ability to recover from devastating wounds was not harmed during the production of this motion picture."

RATING: ★★★

5. LEGACY

First televised November 2000

Guest starring Alison Bruce (*Kahina*) and Rawiri Paratene (*Tazir*); **Written by Melissa Good**; **Directed by Chris Martin-Jones**; Edited by Robert Field

Xena and Gabrielle trek through a desert sandstorm. After stopping for a bath, they interrupt some nomads attacking five people. The nomads flee, but the five aren't appreciative of Xena and Gabrielle for barging in. Xena has to prove she is who she says, and the five immediately bow down.

Back at camp, the tribe's leader (*Kahina*) wants Xena to lead them against the invading Romans. Gabrielle wonders about her fighting instincts—when to disable an opponent, and when to kill them. Xena and Gabrielle visit *Tazir's* tribe (Gabrielle is known more as a warrior than a bard) to get more information about the Romans, then visit a nearby town to check things out. Disguised as a wealthy Roman wife and her servant, they meet with the Roman governor (ostensibly because they might want to invest) and learn that three legions are on the way to quell nomadic uprising. (The nomads are waiting for a warrior to lead them while believing in stories about Xena.)

On the way back, Xena and Gabrielle get separated in a sandstorm. Gabrielle thinks Xena's being attacked and kills a messenger (*Tazir's* son *Korah*) with scrolls. Xena takes the body back to *Tazir* and blames the Romans for his death. A Roman soldier is accused of the murder; Gabrielle admits to