



Xena and Mephistopheles

Angels (Michael and Raphael) watch as Xena, Gabrielle, and Eve travel to Xena's home town of Amphipolis. The angels hope Xena will succeed at her next task. If she fails, "the realm of Hell will spill onto Earth." Amphipolis is deserted. Xena's mom Cyrene appears, ghost-like. Eve says she's dead—she felt her spirit. Cyrene is trapped in the house and in pain. Other souls are trapped there, too.

Xena goes to the mausoleum and finds Cyrene's bones. Back at the house, the food turns to worms. Gabrielle has a vision of her hands filled with worms, then rotting. Eve casts out the evil presence "in the name of Eli." A bum tells Xena that Cyrene went mad from evil spirits sent to her tavern by Mephistopheles; eventually the townspeople burned her as a witch. Gabrielle is pulled "into" the floor by monsters. Xena hears her screams and pulls her to safety.

Xena sees a vision of her brother Lyceus, lying on a table dead and mourned by Cyrene. She blames Xena for his death. The house begins to "bleed." Eve prays again. Gabrielle becomes possessed and fights Xena. Mephistopheles seeks Eve, the "messenger of Eli." When she dies, Mephistopheles will be made flesh and rule the Earth. Cyrene will be in eternal torment unless Xena kills Eve.

Eve exorcises Gabrielle "in the name of Eli." Xena wants Gabrielle to leave, but the two become connected at the arms. Eve separates them. Mephistopheles says Eve is dying; she's fighting a battle she can't win. Xena puts the pinch on herself and "dies" momentarily in order to take the fight to Mephistopheles.

Xena sees Cyrene in torment. Xena fights Mephistopheles. He says whoever defeats him will rule over Hell. Xena refuses to kill Eve. Eve is confronted with spirits of some of those she killed. Eve confronts Livia (i.e. herself), who wants Eve to spill her blood and allow Mephistopheles to rule. Eve appears to possess Livia. Gabrielle undoes the pinch Xena put on herself.

Eve slices her hand; Mephistopheles appears. Xena fights and kills him. Cyrene appears and gets to meet Eve; then she disappears. Gabrielle wonders what happens now that Xena has killed the king of Hell. Xena doesn't know.

**MYTHOLOGY NOTE:** In the European Faust legends, a German

magician and astrologer of the sixteenth century sold his soul to the devil (called Mephistopheles) in exchange for power and knowledge. The most famous presentations of the story are two dramas, Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and J.W. von Goethe's *Faust*. In some presentations, Mephistopheles appears as an intermediary or familiar spirit of the devil.

**COMMENTS:** We finally get the haunted house episode of *Xena*, and it turns out to be rather silly, even though the thematic element—Xena's battle with the king of Hell—is good. But first one has to wade through *Amityville Horror*-ish goofiness like bleeding walls, and Eve's exorcism of Gabrielle, and exterior shots of a storm pounding against an old house. It's all done so earnestly that it doesn't fall into the category of satire, so what we're left with is a bunch of clichés that just lie on the screen, as if the writers are going through the motions. There's probably a way to do this right, but *Buffy* suffered a similar fate (with even worse results) when it attempted a haunted house episode ("Where the Wild Things Are" from the fourth season, airing in April 2000).

The rationales for everything here are mysteries. What does Eve's blood have to do with Mephistopheles becoming flesh and ruling Earth? Why has Mephistopheles been tormenting Xena's family in the first place? Why can Xena not defeat him in the spirit world but can on Earth? Some of these things are given half-hearted explanations, but none is convincing.

There is an effective scene of Livia's victims tormenting her over her cruelty in their deaths and is reminiscent of the scene years ago (way back in "Dreamworker" from year one) in which Xena's victims came after her.

Archangel Michael (Charles Mesure) makes his first appearance in the sixth season, though he will pop up again. Though Michael was introduced in the fifth-season premiere ("Fallen Angel"), Mesure's work on the show goes back to the second-season episode "The Price," in which he played Mercer, an Athenian army commander. (Mesure also appeared as Darnelle in the