

Xena: Warrior Princess - Subtext Virtual Season 10



Production #V1001 – The Xenthurian Legend

Virtual Airdate – October 31, 2004

WRITTEN BY
Linda Crist

PRODUCED BY
Carol Stephens

DIRECTED BY
Denise Byrd

SCREENGRABS
Judi Mair

ARTWORK
Lucia

TITLE GRAPHIC
MaryD

Xena: Warrior Princess is a trademark and copyright of MCA/Universal, StudiosUSA and Renaissance Pictures.
This is a fan based not-for-profit work of fiction and is not intended to infringe upon their rights.

TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. HILLSIDE BATTLEFIELD - DAY

It is cloudy and misting. The hillside is very green, with a few small trees and boulders, but mostly it is open. Sitting atop the hill is a large castle built of damp plain gray stone, with archers stationed all along the ramparts.

All across the battlefield, two armies are engaged in a bitter and bloody conflict. Many soldiers have fallen, their dead and dying bodies scattered across the hillside.

ZOOM TO:

EXT. FOOT OF CASTLE - DAY

Two men are struggling fiercely at the foot of the castle, their swords connecting again and again while sparks fly from their blades. Both are breathing heavily, and covered liberally in muck and blood. The mist drips down their faces, and coats heavy, well-made armor.

Suddenly, one of them steps back, losing his footing on the slippery ground. As he flounders, the other soldier sees his opening and swings his blade with all his might, slicing across the first man's mid-section and connecting with flesh.

Blood splatters everywhere, as the stricken man falls to the ground. The soldier still standing raises his sword high in the air.

SOLDIER

(bellowing loudly)

I've killed Uther Pendragon!
Long live Saxony!

Pendragon rises up on one elbow, grasping his sword and plunging it into the man's stomach before he falls back to the ground.

PENDRAGON

(whispering)

And I've killed you, you bastard.



The other soldier's eyes grow wide as he drops his sword and clutches his midsection with both hands, then falls down next to Pendragon. Their blood pools together as it starts to rain.

PENDRAGON
(*cont'd, eyes closed*)
Long live Camelot.

PAN TO:

EXT. ACROSS THE HILLSIDE - DAY

A young soldier comes running across the battlefield, leaping over boulders and dead bodies. He fights every enemy that confronts him, leaving more dead soldiers in his wake.

SOLDIER
(*yelling*)
Father!

He arrives at Pendragon's side and drops to his knees, cradling Pendragon's head in his lap. He glances at the dead man next to him and grunts in satisfaction.

SOLDIER
(*cont'd*)
A king for a king. Good.

Even as he speaks, the Saxon army is retreating, realizing their leader has fallen as well. The soldier watches the retreat with tears tracking down his face.

SOLDIER
(*cont'd, snarling*)
Gone. For now. But they'll
come back... they always do.

He looks up and behind him.

SOLDIER
(*cont'd*)
Open the gates!

The gates open and he drags Pendragon inside, before the gates slam closed again, shutting out the noise of the dwindling battle.

CUT TO:

INT. CASTLE - DAY

It is quiet inside and sparsely decorated, with only a few torches burning from sconces along the walls of a large open entry chamber. At one end, a fire blazes in a great fireplace. The soldier lays Pendragon down on a thick soft rug beside the fire, still holding his head in his lap and stroking his rain-soaked hair.

SOLDIER
(sobbing quietly)
Oh, father.

Pendragon's eyes flutter open and he smiles weakly, lifting a trembling hand up and cupping the soldier's cheek. On his forearm is a tattoo of a dragon.

PENDRAGON
Arthur. There's no face I'd
rather see before I cross over.

ARTHUR
(sniffling)
You mustn't talk like that.

He covers Pendragon's wound with one hand, and blood oozes between his fingers.

ARTHUR
(cont'd)
You'll live to fight another day.
We will defeat the Saxons.

PENDRAGON
Aye, that we will. But it won't
be me who defeats them.

He covers Arthur's hand with his own. As they are speaking, a small crowd of soldiers and other castle servants gathers around the fireplace, standing at a respectful distance to allow father and son their final moment together. We hear handmaidens weeping.

PENDRAGON
(cont'd)
I charge you with Camelot, Arthur. Go
now, and take Excalibur. The time has
come, and it is yours. You will lead my
army to victory and drive back the Saxons.

Arthur glances over to an alcove, where twin torches illuminate a large square-cut gray stone. Their light glints off the hilt of an ornate sword driven deep into its center.



ARTHUR

(confusedly)

Excalibur? But the Lady....

Pendragon grunts in pain.

PENDRAGON

The Lady foretold it. The one who wields Excalibur will lead my people when I am gone. You are that one. Go now and make me proud. I love you, son.

Pendragon's eyes close and his head lolls to one side, as he breathes his final breath. A shocked gasp arises from the crowd of onlookers. Arthur weeps and bends over, kissing his father's forehead.

ARTHUR

(whispering)

I love you too, father.

Arthur gently lays his father's head down on the carpet and stands, walking resolutely toward Excalibur. He circles the stone and finally grasps its hilt, looking up at the crowd.

ARTHUR

(cont'd)

For Camelot!

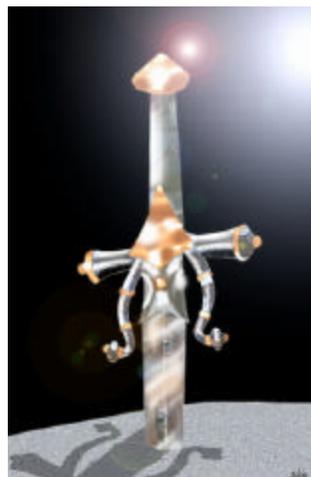
He tugs at the sword, but it won't budge. He grasps it more firmly and tugs at it again, with the same result. He moves back a step, spits into his palms and rubs them together. Then he steps back to Excalibur, ready to try a third time.

ARTHUR

(cont'd, gasping)

What is this?

Arthur peers at the exposed portion of the blade. On its gleaming silvery surface, he sees a pair of striking blue eyes, framed by dark hair and bangs.



Arthur's eyes widen in disbelief.

ARTHUR

(cont'd)

Who is this woman?

He moves away from the sword and walks to the corner of the alcove, where we see a stand bearing a scrying bowl. He looks at the surface of the water, drawing a deep breath.

ARTHUR

(cont'd)

I call upon you Viviane, Lady of the Lake, mistress of Excalibur. I beseech you, Lady. Grant me now this, my birthright, to bear Excalibur and drive the Saxons back from our land.

Slowly, the face of a beautiful woman appears on the surface of the water.

THE LADY VIVIANE

I'm sorry, Arthur. Another has claimed Excalibur. Another who yet lives. It is she, and only she, who can wield Excalibur. You must find her. She alone holds the fate of Camelot in her hands.

ARTHUR

But... but Excalibur.

You promised.

Arthur steps back, gathering his wits, then bends over the bowl again.

ARTHUR

(cont'd)

My Lady, for the love of Camelot, how shall I find this woman? Where is she? What is her name and when did she claim Excalibur without us knowing of it? I... I don't understand.

THE LADY VIVIANE

She was here some thirty-three winters ago. As for finding her, that is up to you, Arthur Pendragon.

Viviane's features begin to grow murky, rippling on the surface of the water.



ARTHUR

(desperately)

My Lady, no. Please. I need
more information. I beg of you....

It is too late, and Viviane disappears. Arthur stands and steps into the center of the chamber. He looks up, his fists clenched at his sides.

ARTHUR

(bellowing)

Merlin!!!

His voice echoes off the chamber walls.

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT. INN UPSTAIRS ROOM - NIGHT

We see a cozy room, with a large fluffy bed tucked into one corner. Next to the bed is a small desk and chair, and on the opposite wall is a row of pegs with a sword and scabbard, a chakram, a set of leathers, and a travel bag hanging from them. On the floor below the pegs two sais are crossed, lying next to a set of well-cared for armor.

A cheerful fire crackles in the fireplace, apparently for ambiance more than warmth, as the window to the room is open allowing a soft breeze to riffle the curtains. The remains of dinner sit on two plates on the hearth. Next to the two plates is a flagon of wine. Beside the fire is a large round wooden bathtub.

Xena is in the tub, her head resting back, her arms draping along the rim. Her eyes are closed, and in one hand she clutches an almost empty glass of wine. Steam rises all around her and the water's surface is covered in soap bubbles.

At the desk, Gabrielle is scratching away at a piece of parchment, a quill in one hand and another almost-empty glass of wine in the other.

XENA

(lazily)

We got any more of those
little cherry tarts left?



Gabrielle stops and puts her quill down, swiveling in the chair and tipping the glass against her lips to finish off her wine. She gazes at the back of Xena's head indulgently.

GABRIELLE

Maybe.

She rises and moves to the fire, retrieving a plate bearing a single tart, along with the wine flagon. Then she moves to the tub, sitting on the rim next to Xena.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd, smiling coyly)

This is the last one.
What's it worth to you?

Xena smiles affectionately as her fingertips dance up Gabrielle's bare leg, distracting her as Xena steals the tart, taking a bite and chuckling as Gabrielle re-fills her wine glass.

Gabrielle's nose wrinkles in a smile.

GABRIELLE
(cont'd)
Very sneaky.

Xena waves the tart in her face.

XENA
Thanks. Question is,
what's it worth to YOU?

Xena holds the tart up over the water, just out of Gabrielle's grasp, inviting her to try to get it back. Gabrielle sets down the flagon and leans forward, reaching for it. Xena gives her a solid nudge, and she falls into the water with a yelp. Gabrielle surfaces, standing on her knees in the water, and looking down at her now-drenched shift.

GABRIELLE
(exasperatedly)
Xena! That was my
last clean nightgown.

Xena's blue eyes glint with mischief.

XENA
Guess you'll have to sleep in the
buff then, won't you? What a pity.

Gabrielle shakes her finger at Xena in mock anger.

GABRIELLE
You.



Xena flashes a sexy grin and pulls her closer, sharing both tart and wine, and we see the shift appear in one hand before Xena tosses it across the room, where it lands in a corner with a wet 'thwack.' They share a lengthy kiss, then Gabrielle settles back into Xena's embrace with a blissful sigh, holding the wine glass.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

I needed a bath anyway.

Xena takes the glass from her and sets it and the plate on a small stand next to the tub. She picks up a washrag, giving Gabrielle's ears lengthy attention.

XENA

That you did.

GABRIELLE

Hey!

Gabrielle glares over her shoulder, but warm and full of food and wine, relents. She closes her eyes, settling back again as Xena begins to wash her all over

GABRIELLE

This is nice. It's so peaceful here.
Good food, good wine, warm fire,
gorgeous partner. I can't ask
for anything more. Thank you.

The words put a pleased expression on Xena's face.

XENA

For what?

GABRIELLE

For suggesting we take a night
off the road. I needed this. I
think I could spend a month
sleeping in a warm bed.

XENA

(thoughtfully)

Is that what you
really want?

Gabrielle catches her drift and moves away, dunking under the water and rinsing her hair before she surfaces and moves back into Xena's arms, facing her. She traces Xena's collarbone with one finger as she talks.

GABRIELLE

No. At least not a whole month.
But a few days would be nice. I think
I'm just tired. These last few months
with Casey and his people... it was
great helping them get back on
their feet after Boudicca's attacks.

XENA

We did some good
there, my bard.

Gabrielle smiles.

GABRIELLE

True. Their village is re-built and who
knew Peti would turn out to be such a
good teacher? Those kids, they
have a promising future now,
and that feels really good.

XENA

But?

Gabrielle's smile becomes a sigh.

GABRIELLE

But I'm exhausted, and it's nice to be
pampered now and then. That's all.
A few more days of the innkeeper's
cooking, and a few more nights
with you in that nice comfy bed,
and I'll be good as new.

XENA

Good enough to hit
the road again?

Gabrielle's smile returns and she falls back into Xena's embrace once more.

GABRIELLE

Absolutely.

Xena appears unconvinced, her face pensive. She shrugs in resignation and resumes washing Gabrielle. The breeze from outside picks up a bit and she turns and frowns as it becomes an all-out whirlwind, swirling through the room and upsetting everything in its path.

XENA

(standing)
What the...?



Gabrielle stands behind her.

GABRIELLE

Xena? What's happening?

The whirlwind increases, and a form begins to take shape, morphing into a tall old man, with a long white beard and hair and wearing a dark gown and cloak. On his head is a strange pointed hat, and in one hand he holds a long staff. The wind dies down and he steps forward.

Xena grabs up a towel and hands it to Gabrielle, who immediately wraps up in it. Then Xena turns to glare at the old man, hands on hips.

XENA

Who are you?

The man steps forward, oblivious to her nakedness.

MAN

The name is Merlin. And I've heard your... um... friend there speak your name. You're Xena of Amphipolis, correct?

XENA

(suspiciously)

Among other things, yes.
What do you want?

MERLIN

You must come with me.



Gabrielle peers around Xena. Xena crosses her arms over her chest.

GABRIELLE

Why?

XENA

I don't blindly follow anyone anywhere.

She glances behind herself at Gabrielle.

XENA

(cont'd)

Almost anyone, that is. So. Why don't you tell us what's going on, and we'll decide if we'll go with you or not?

MERLIN

I see. Where you go,
you go together?

XENA

That's right.

MERLIN

Unfortunately, I need you
elsewhere before I can explain.

He raises his arms overhead and the wind picks up again. Xena glowers at him and leaps up into the air, turning a perfect flip and landing next to her armor, grabbing her sword from its sheath and holding it out menacingly, as water pools at her feet.

XENA

Make it stop. Now.



She starts to move closer, and Merlin merely stares at her, lifting his arms higher as the wind gains speed, forming a small tornado, holding Xena at bay as she tries to walk against it. She keeps moving deftly, holding one hand to block her eyes from flying debris, and with great effort, plows through the swirling wind into the center with Merlin, where the air is calm.

XENA

(cont'd)

I don't know who... what... you are,
or where you come from, but you just
interrupted the first peaceful evening
we've had in over a moon.
Make... it... stop. Now!

MERLIN

(calmly)

I'm afraid I can't do that unless you agree to come with me peacefully. I'm sorry to disturb you, but I've come a very long way and there's little time. There are things I need to show you that are easier seen than described. So. Are you coming or not?

In answer, Xena assumes a fighting stance, her sword held up, her empty hand twitching in anticipation. She lunges forward and Merlin meets her blow with his staff. Small lightening bolts fly out where staff and sword connect, and Xena is thrown back into the swirling wind.

With great effort she leaps back into the middle and they go at it, with Xena taking the offensive while Merlin merely deflects her sword strikes. Gabrielle is standing outside the tornado, looking on.

GABRIELLE

(yelling)

Xena!

Gabrielle runs to the wall and picks up her sais, and then runs back to the edge of the whirlwind. She dances from foot to foot, as if she's trying to decide if she should dive in or not.

XENA

(yelling)

Gabrielle, stay back!

She continues to attack Merlin, and Gabrielle sees the electricity each time Xena's sword hits Merlin's staff. Xena is putting up a valiant effort, and Merlin begins to have to move around to avoid being cut.

MERLIN

I tried to do this the easy way;
now let's do it the sure way.

The vortex suddenly widens and Gabrielle is sucked into the swirl. She whirls around the room, clutching at her towel with one hand and her sais with the other.

GABRIELLE

XENA!

Merlin smiles at Xena knowingly.

MERLIN

You will help your friend,
now won't you?

Xena snarls at him and turns her back, diving headfirst into the fray, grabbing Gabrielle and holding on to her tightly. She bats at the flying debris.

XENA

Gabrielle! Hold on!

Everything becomes a blur.

CUT TO:

INT. CASTLE - NIGHT

It is the same castle from before. The tornado swirls into the entry chamber, depositing both Xena and Gabrielle on their backs, next to the fire. They both leap up and look down. Their clothing has magically come along for the ride, and they are fully dressed with their weapons in place. They glance at each other before Xena draws her sword and Gabrielle her sais.

Merlin stands off to one side, along with a few assorted men, all dressed in armor. Among them is Arthur. They stare curiously at their two newcomers.

GABRIELLE

Xena, where are we?



Xena looks around.

XENA

Good question. It sure ain't our cozy inn in Greece. You....

She steps forward, pointing her sword at Merlin.

XENA

(cont'd)

Now that you've brought us... here. You wanna tell us what in Tartarus for?



MERLIN

(nodding graciously)

Yes. I needed you here first.

Forgive me, my lady.

Both Xena's and Gabrielle's eyebrows shoot up, and they glance at each other. Gabrielle smiles and mouths silently.

GABRIELLE

Lady?

Xena pokes her in the ribs with her elbow, but lowers her sword. She steps forward, planting her feet shoulder-width apart, her attitude commanding and impatient.

XENA

Okay. Spill it.

Merlin motions to an old man in the group, urging him forward.

MERLIN

Is this the one?

The old man eyes Xena critically.

OLD MAN

Yes. That's her. I'd never forget those eyes. And you....

He points a gnarled finger at Gabrielle. Xena eyes the offending digit, then looks down at her chakram, her expression contemplative.

OLD MAN

(cont'd)

You. You were with her. Hair's shorter, but the face is the same.

His eyes narrow suspiciously.

OLD MAN

(cont'd)

How did you avoid aging?
Are you wizards like Merlin?

GABRIELLE

(chuckling)

No. It's a long story.

Her smile disappears.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

But our story can wait.
Like Xena said... spill it.

MERLIN

Let's all have a seat.

He motions to a large round table, and they all find chairs. Xena and Gabrielle study the group, consisting of the armed younger men, the one older man, and Merlin.

XENA

(impatiently)

Now that we're all gathered for this little party, you wanna tell me where we've met before and why in Hades we're here?

OLD MAN

Why, we met here, of course.
I was a much younger knight then, but I never forget a face.

XENA

And 'here' would be?

MERLIN

Camelot.

XENA

Camelot? Never heard of it.
Try again. Where... are... we?

MERLIN

Camelot is the Pendragon's castle.
The Pendragons rule Britannia.

GABRIELLE

(unhappily)

Britannia. Xena.



Her eyes widen and she scoots closer, her fingers twitching in a desire to retrieve her sais. Xena touches her arm.

XENA
It's okay.

She faces the men, her expression one of barely contained rage.

XENA
(cont'd)

There better be a damned good reason why you've brought us here. So start talking, or we're headed out to the nearest port and a boat home.

ARTHUR

It's very simple, really. Permit me to introduce myself. I'm Arthur Pendragon, son of Uther Pendragon. My father was stricken down in battle yesterday, and I'm the rightful heir to the throne.

XENA
(impassively)
So?



Gabrielle nudges her gently, and Xena reluctantly softens her expression.

GABRIELLE

We're sorry for your loss, but what does that have to do with us?

Arthur stands and starts pacing around the table.

ARTHUR

Many years ago, you were here in this castle. Xena withdrew Excalibur from the stone. We're under constant attack by the Saxons. They're re-grouping now. My father killed their king before he died, but it's only a matter of time before they attack again, and this time they'll be seeking vengeance. Upon his dying breath, my father told me Excalibur was mine for the taking, but when I tried to retrieve it from the stone, I couldn't, and I saw your face in the blade.

XENA

What's an Excalibur?

MERLIN

The sword of the
Lady of the Lake.

Xena and Gabrielle exchange glances. Then Xena stands and leans forward, bracing her hands on the tabletop.

XENA

Who is the Lady, and where,
exactly, is this Excalibur?

Arthur gestures toward the sword in the alcove.

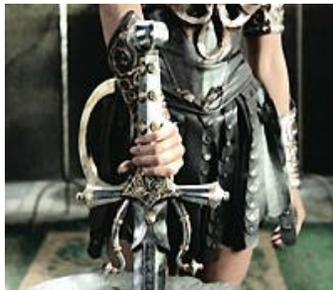
ARTHUR

Why, right over there.
You see....

Xena moves abruptly away from the table, stalking toward the sword and ignoring his words. She walks around it, studying it, and her eyes narrow in thought.

FLASHBACK TO:

"Gabrielle's Hope", and Xena pulling the same sword from the stone.



XENA

I remember this sword.
Nice piece of craftsmanship.

Xena's back is turned to the room.

GABRIELLE

(smirking)

If there's one thing Xena

knows, it's her weapons.

XENA

But I only touched it once.
No big deal, really.

She grasps the sword and effortlessly pulls it from the stone, the length of the blade sparkling in the torch-light.

XENA

(cont'd, respectfully)

Just as nice as I remembered it,
but I don't understand what this
sword has to do with....



She hears a commotion behind her and turns. All the men in the room, save Merlin, have gotten out of their chairs and dropped to one knee, bowing before her. Gabrielle is looking around in confused amazement.

XENA

(cont'd)

... me.

She stops, looking at each man in turn, then rolls her eyes upward.

XENA

(cont'd)

Come on. One of you wanna
get up and fill us in on
the rest of the story?

She moves back to the table, idly swinging the sword as she walks. Arthur finally rises, along with two other men. They bow their heads.

ARTHUR

I am your humble servant. These are
my closest compatriots, Sir Lancelot
and Sir Galahad. We are at your beck
and call for the good of Camelot.

Xena releases an exasperated breath, and hauls Arthur back to his chair by his tunic collar. She looks around, and her eyes fall on Gabrielle, who shrugs at her in response.

Merlin is standing to the side, silently observing everything, his expression pleased. He chuckles quietly to himself.

MERLIN

This one is full of fire.

XENA

(slowly)

All right.

She gazes meaningfully at Galahad and Lancelot, and jerks her head toward the table. They quickly scramble to take their seats.

XENA

(cont'd)

Everyone back in your chairs.

(barking)

NOW!

She waits until they are all seated.

XENA

(cont'd, evenly)

One more time.

Tell me why we're here.



MERLIN

For many years it was foretold by the Lady of the Lake, Viviane, that whoever removed Excalibur from the stone would possess it, and lead our people in battle against our enemies. Arthur here, as rightful heir to the throne, was presumed to be the one who would wield Excalibur. You, however....

He points a finger at Xena, who curls up a lip in response.

MERLIN

(cont'd)

You apparently got to Excalibur first.

ARTHUR

(cutting in)

According to the Lady, you're the only one who can bear Excalibur, and lead us to victory over the Saxons. It's obvious you're a warrior. Now you're our new queen.

Xena moves back to the table, standing next to Arthur. Her posture and expression suggest extreme displeasure at their circumstances. Gabrielle moves in beside her, her forehead lined in worry. She curls a hand around Xena's arm.

XENA

Now listen to me, and listen good. I don't care about your quarrel with the Saxons, and I sure as heck ain't your queen. Gabrielle and I are going to head out of here at first light, and go back home. Here. Take it. I don't want it.

She hands Excalibur to Arthur, who tries to take it. As his hand closes around the hilt, he cries out in pain, and sparks fly out from where he touches it. He drops it and it clatters against the table top. Then he shakes his hand out to rid it of the lingering stinging pain.

ARTHUR

It seems the Lady is not convinced.

XENA

(glowering)
Very well then.

She tucks Excalibur into her belt with a stalwart motion.

XENA

(cont'd)
Take me to this Lady.



FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

EXT. LAKESIDE - SAME NIGHT

It is a beautiful night with a sky full of twinkling stars. A full moon shines down, illuminating a path that goes from the castle, down a hillside, through a wooded area, and around a lake surrounded by low hills. A few wispy clouds occasionally float across the moon, but it is otherwise clear, all signs of the rain from the day before gone. We hear the calls of a few night birds, and a light wind rustles the tall marsh grass and the leaves overhead. The lake seems almost to glow in the darkness, and the wind stirs the surface from time to time.

Xena and Gabrielle are following Merlin on the path in the trees near the edge of the lake. Merlin is walking with his staff in one hand. Xena still has Excalibur tucked into her belt, and her posture fairly bristles with agitation.

GABRIELLE

So, Merlin. Where does this Lady live?
I would have thought someone important
enough to dictate the fate of your people
would rate a room in the castle.

MERLIN

(chuckling)
She's no mortal lady.

XENA

(mumbling sarcastically)
Well doesn't that just figure?



Gabrielle takes her hand and squeezes it.

GABRIELLE

So she's a goddess?

MERLIN

She's the Lady of the Lake, the
Goddess of Avalon, the link between
mankind and the Earth Mother.

GABRIELLE

Avalon? I don't believe I've ever
heard of Avalon or the Earth Mother.
Is she a goddess too?

Merlin slows his pace so they are walking three abreast with Gabrielle in the middle. The path is narrow, yet the foliage on either side magically parts back from them as they pass, so they have enough room without having to push back branches or duck under them.

Xena watches this phenomenon with a look of intrigue on her face, her eyes darting all around. Gabrielle maintains a polite attitude as if nothing is out of the ordinary. Xena occasionally glances sideways to study Merlin. She lets go of Gabrielle's hand and falls back a few paces, and finds branches snapping back in her face as she walks.

She speaks low enough that Gabrielle can't hear her, knowing Merlin can.

XENA

So only those that walk beside you
get special treatment, eh, old man?

She stops, hands on hips, and Merlin glances back at her for the briefest moment, casting the barest hint of a wink at her before he turns his attention back to Gabrielle. Xena dredges up a scowl, but after he turns his back, she shakes her head slightly, a smile tugging at her lips in spite of herself. She catches up and re-claims Gabrielle's hand, and the branches begin parting for her again.

Gabrielle looks over at her with a puzzled expression and Xena smiles briefly. Gabrielle smiles at Xena, and then turns back to Merlin.

MERLIN

Avalon is an island, sacred to the
Worshippers of the Goddess. There
was a time, Gabrielle, when the people
of these lands honored the Goddess,
the Earth and the seasons,
and the natural order of things.

GABRIELLE

Sounds like a peaceful existence.

MERLIN

Yes, for the most part. But gradually,
other people came to our shores, good
men and barbarians, some from just
across the water, and others from
halfway around the world.

GABRIELLE

Around the world? What an interesting concept.



Merlin's eyes twinkle in the darkness.

MERLIN

Isn't it? As I was saying... other religions came into our land, clashing with the older ways of the Goddess, and causing contention among men.

GABRIELLE

(thoughtfully)

Xena and I have encountered many gods and religions in our travels together. I've found most gods to be selfish, and many people seem to use religion for their own selfish gain as well. I've met only a few who served the ways of their religion with pure intent. And about the only goddess I've met who cared about people is my friend Aphrodite.

MERLIN

(eyes wide)

You're personal friends with Aphrodite?

GABRIELLE

(smiling)

Yes. We go back a long way. We weren't always friends, but she's come through for Xena and me several times. I guess you could say she grew on us after a while. You know her?

MERLIN

(chuckling)

Yes. She does get around, doesn't she?

Gabrielle laughs with him.

GABRIELLE

That she does.

Xena steps in closer, draping a possessive arm across Gabrielle's shoulders.

XENA

Is Britannia's quarrel with
the Saxons over this
clash of religions?

MERLIN

Partly. Part of it is a battle
for dominion, but yes, much of it
is a desire on the part of the Saxons
to force their ways on our people.

XENA

And what of Arthur? Does he intend
to force the ways of Britannia on
the Saxons, if he defeats them?

MERLIN

Don't you mean if YOU
defeat them, Xena?

XENA

(impatiently)

Listen, Merlin. I haven't agreed
to do anything for you, Arthur,
or Britannia. If I don't get good
answers, we're out of here.



Merlin abruptly turns off the path, and the foliage continues to make way for them. Gabrielle and Xena almost collide as they turn to follow. They clear the wooded area and come to the very edge of the lake.

MERLIN

As you wish.
Answers you shall have.

He raises his arms out toward the water, pointing his staff toward the center of the lake.

MERLIN

(cont'd)

Viviane, I bring you Xena, the warrior who bears Excalibur. She has questions for you.

Among the ripples of the wind, larger ripples appear on the lake's surface, and they begin to churn. A glowing light is seen deep down, rising to the surface at a leisurely pace.

GABRIELLE

Wow.

Xena stands slightly to the side and in front of her, in a protective stance, her fingers touching the edge of her chakram. The light continues to rise, taking shape, and a luminescent ghost-like head rises from the water, followed by a body covered in a long, flowing diaphanous gown. The Lady has long wavy hair, which flies out wildly all around her head. Her face is serious, her eyes glowing icy blue in the moonlight.

THE LADY VIVIANE

(in an echoing voice)

Xena. I've been expecting you for many years. You have questions?



XENA

(defiantly)

No. I have statements. This sword....

She draws Excalibur from her belt, and it glows in Viviane's presence.

XENA

(cont'd)

I didn't ask for this. All I did was pull it from a rock and hold it for all of a few seconds. I don't want Camelot. I don't want to lead their army, and I don't care about the Saxons. With all due... respect... for you and the people of these lands, I'm giving it back to you. Give it to Arthur. He seems like a decent fellow. He's your warrior. Me, I just want to go home with Gabrielle and pick up where we left off.

THE LADY VIVIANE

It's not that simple, Xena. The sword was meant for Arthur, but you drew it from the stone first. Now you must bear it, and the destiny that goes with it. You can't give it back.

XENA

(vehemently)

Destiny. Now there's a million-dinar word.

Xena crosses her arms, Excalibur dangling loosely from one hand.

XENA

(cont'd)

I've learned something, Lady. I make my own destiny, and I refuse this... gift. Just tell me what I have to do to give it back.

THE LADY VIVIANE

Very well. You must die in battle, after which the sword must be cast back into my lake. Then and only then will you be released from this responsibility.

GABRIELLE

(yelling)

No!

She lunges forward, and snatches the sword from Xena's surprised grasp. With a mighty heave backward and forward, she flings the sword through the air and into the water, where it floats for a moment, before it slowly sinks out of sight.

She rubs her hands together, as if cleaning them of filth, and gestures angrily with both arms. Her expression is a mixture of fear and anger.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

There! We skipped that dying step. It's all yours. Do with it what you will!



Viviane ducks below the surface, then shoots out of the water, the sword held high over her head. With one great swing of her arm, she sends it back to shore, where it lands at Xena's feet, the point embedded firmly in the soft ground.

Gabrielle reaches down and determinedly picks it up, intent on tossing it back again. Xena steps in behind her and touches her shoulder.

XENA

Gabrielle....

GABRIELLE

No! If I keep trying....

XENA

(gently)

If you keep trying, she'll just keep sending it back. We have to find another way.

GABRIELLE

(almost sobbing)

But she said....

Xena takes Excalibur from her and tucks it back into her belt. She takes Gabrielle's hands, and examines them for a moment.

XENA

Hmmmm.

She looks over at Merlin, and a knowing glance passes between them.

XENA

(cont'd)

I heard her. We'll find a way.

GABRIELLE

Xena! We can just walk away. Let them fight it out without Excalibur. Seems like they've been doing that all along anyway.

XENA

And we might do exactly that. Let's take some time to think this through.

THE LADY VIVIANE

(in a booming angry voice)

If you two walk away from this, you automatically sentence Camelot to defeat by the Saxons. Think on that.

With no further word, she disappears and the water swallows her up until there is no sign she was ever there.

Gabrielle shakes a fist toward the lake.

GABRIELLE
Auuggghhhhh!

She spins around and faces Xena. Gabrielle holds her hands out, palms toward Xena, stopping just short of shoving her.

GABRIELLE
(cont'd)
Okay. We'll find a way,
but dying is not an option, even
for a minute. You got me?

She storms off, back up the path, leaving Xena and Merlin behind.

MERLIN
Feisty, that one is.

XENA
(softly)
She can be, yes.



Her gaze follows Gabrielle, until she disappears through the trees.

XENA
(cont'd)
Merlin, Gabrielle touched Excalibur....

MERLIN
With no lightening bolts?

XENA
Yes.

MERLIN
Only a fool couldn't see that you two are
much more than friends. Even the Lady
saw it. You did notice she said if the two of
you walk away, you've doomed Camelot?

XENA

Gabrielle... she's been through things that would fell men much bigger than her. She's the strongest person I've ever known. But I'll NOT put her through pain over this, Merlin. I won't. You can tell me what it means, but I swear I'll walk away and Camelot can go to Tartarus, before I'll allow her to suffer any more than she already is.



MERLIN

The two of you share the same spirit. Thus, Gabrielle can also wield Excalibur unharmed, and this has become her fight as well.

XENA

It already was.... Now, if you'll excuse me, I need to go find her, so we can figure this out.

Merlin watches her leave.

MERLIN

And I've no doubt the two of you will.

CUT TO:

EXT. CASTLE COURTYARD GARDEN - SAME NIGHT

Xena opens a wooden gate in the castle wall, and steps into a well-tended garden. It's peaceful there, and she sniffs the air as she passes a large flowering vine that grows on the wall. She makes her way along a cobbled path, the moon lighting her way.

When she's halfway across the courtyard, she stops, cocking her head to one side, listening. Then she quickly ducks behind a tree, watching as Lancelot and a beautiful young woman comes running past. Lancelot is leading the woman by the hand, and they are both laughing merrily.

Lancelot leads her off the path and under a tree across from Xena, taking both of the woman's hands in his own. The wind plays in her hair, and he reaches up, also pushing it back from her face.

The woman's eyes dart around.

WOMAN

We must be careful.

LANCELOT

I don't feel like being careful.

He pulls her into his arms and kisses her passionately. Xena watches, smirking in amusement. The woman pushes him back, but keeps her hands on his chest.

WOMAN

We might be seen.

LANCELOT

And someday, my lady, I hope to
proclaim my love for you from
the top of the castle walls.

He pulls her close and kisses her again. It goes on for several moments, and Xena appears impatient, as her fingertips drum against the tree trunk. Finally, she rolls her eyes, and as the couple continues to tryst, she sneaks past them. Just as she passes them, the woman opens her eyes and sees Xena over Lancelot's shoulder. Their eyes meet, then Xena takes off. The woman pushes Lancelot away, as Xena reaches the side door to the castle.

WOMAN

(gasping)

Someone's out here. A woman.

LANCELOT

Where?



He spins in a circle, looking all around, but Xena has slipped inside the castle, out of sight.

CUT TO:

INT. CASTLE, BEDROOM - SAME NIGHT

The room is luxurious, compared to the sparse entry chamber. A large canopied bed is in the middle of the room against the wall, flanked on each side by ornately carved bedside tables. A privacy screen sits in one corner, and behind it is a long rack of various gowns and other articles of clothing. Next to that is a dressing table and padded chair. Off to one side is a private bathing room with a large sunken oval tub. To the other is a window and a door that leads to a balcony. A side table holds a silver pitcher of water and matching goblets, along with a platter of bread, cheese, and fruit, and a wine flask sits next to that.

Gabrielle stands at the window, staring out into the night. She's dressed in a fancy nightgown. She appears lost in thought, when Xena enters the room. She approaches Gabrielle hesitantly, her steps measured, her face sad.

XENA

Gabrielle....

GABRIELLE

(wistfully)

Remind me the next time I ask to be pampered to be a bit more specific as to the circumstances.



Xena stops completely for a moment, and her posture relaxes, as she releases a relieved sigh. She chuckles lightly.

XENA

And remind me next time we go to an inn for the night to bolt the window closed.

She closes the distance and places her hands on Gabrielle's shoulders. They both laugh together.

XENA AND GABRIELLE

(in unison)

I'm sorry....

Gabrielle turns and places her hands against Xena's chest.

Xena pulls Gabrielle closer.

XENA

I don't plan on
dying for Camelot.

Gabrielle touches Xena's face.

GABRIELLE

And I don't intend to let you.
Xena, what do we do?

They move out to the balcony and sit down on a marble bench, facing each other. The night breeze stirs their hair, and an owl hoots somewhere off in the distance.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Merlin seems wise. I don't know
why, but I trust him. And Arthur
seems like a good man.

XENA

I've still got a bone to pick with Merlin,
but I agree on both points. Still....

GABRIELLE

You'd like to get to know Arthur better?
Me too. I have a good idea of what kind
of person he is. A selfish man would have
been planning your demise before you ever
got here, not bowing at your feet. I have to
think he truly has the good of Camelot at heart.

XENA

Yes. Agreed, but I want to hear what his
intentions are; how he plans to handle the
Saxons if we do defeat them... because
I don't plan to hang around and take
care of the details for them. Assuming
I fight for them at all.

Gabrielle sits back a bit, crossing her legs on the bench and looking down for a moment. Xena's eyes roam over her, her expression pleased. She reaches out and touches a flounce on the hem of the nightgown.

XENA

(cont'd)

You look beautiful.

GABRIELLE

(smiling)

Thank you.

She takes Xena's hand, playing with it as she talks.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Xena, if Arthur is the good man he appears to be, I don't think we have a choice. The Saxons... from what little Merlin said, they sound like barbarians. I don't think I can in good conscience walk away from Camelot and doom them to that.

XENA

True, but there's that whole nasty dying problem to get around. I've got some ideas.



Gabrielle looks up, studying Xena's face, her own face reflecting her love for Xena.

GABRIELLE

Me too. I've been thinking on that. What about that poison? The one Callisto put on that dart the first time she attacked you. We sure thought you were dead, but you weren't. Maybe you could use just a little of that.

XENA

(thoughtfully)

Mmmm. Too risky. I can't control the battle. Sure, I can control it to a certain extent, but I can't control the exact timing of things. If I take the poison, and don't manage to win in time, I risk dropping on the field in the middle of the fight. If I finish things up sooner than I anticipate, I risk not dying during the battle, so to speak.

GABRIELLE

Okay. Well, we'll think of something else.

XENA

You could put the
pinch on me.

Gabrielle stares at her in outrage.

GABRIELLE

(with finality)

NO.

XENA

All right. I could put the pinch on
myself, and you could take it off.

GABRIELLE

And if I don't get to you in time?



XENA

(sighing)

Gabrielle, I've got to play dead somehow.
I have a feeling they'll actually check for a
heartbeat. How about this? As soon as
I pick off their leader, I fall down on
the field and pretend to be injured...

Gabrielle interrupts and rises partway up.

GABRIELLE

That works. Problem solved.
Let's go to bed.

Xena pushes her back down, stifling a laugh.

XENA

Hold on. They'll check. Let me finish.
I wait until you get to me, then I put the
pinch on myself, just long enough to
stop my heartbeat. Then you take
it off. How about that?

GABRIELLE

(unhappily)

Xena, I don't like it.

She scoots forward, taking Xena's other hand.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

If it comes to that, all right. I can live with that. But I think we're putting the cart before the horse here. How about I talk with Arthur tomorrow, get a feel for where he's coming from? Meanwhile, you go check out the army, see what you need to do if we do decide to fight for them. Then we can figure out the rest of the details.

XENA

Sounds like a plan.

She stands and pulls Gabrielle up with her, and leads her back inside while slowly nudging her toward the bed.

XENA

(cont'd)

Right now, I've got a plan that involves me, you, that nice big bed over there, and maybe that wine flask on the table.

Gabrielle urges her forward, pulling her head down for a kiss. They part, still standing nose-to-nose.

GABRIELLE

(softly)

Now that's a plan I have
no argument with.

They laugh and exchange a few more kisses, while they undress each other. Then they make their way to the bed as we....

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

EXT. WALLED YARD - DAY

We see a large enclosed yard. The ground is sandy and flat, and the wall is approximately ten feet high all the way around, built of thick gray stone. All across the yard, soldiers are paired off, sparring with various weapons - swords, staves, javelins, battleaxes, and maces.

Mid-yard against one side of the wall is a tall wooden observation platform with steps up on each side and a bell hanging from a rope on a pole. Standing atop the platform are several men dressed in armor that is more ornamental than that worn by the soldiers on the ground. They appear to be leaders.

At one end of the yard is a heavy wooden gate. It opens and Xena walks in, followed by Lancelot. Lancelot does not appear to be happy, and Xena has a practiced impassive expression on her face as her eyes flick around, taking in the scene before her.

XENA

Nice set-up.

LANCELOT

(proudly)

King Uther and Arthur came up
with this practice formation.

Xena stops beside the wall, leaning against it in a casual stance. Lancelot stops as well, but stands away from the wall in a more rigid pose, just out of Xena's reach. Eye contact and facial expressions tell us these two have not exactly made nice with each other.

XENA

Tell me about it.
What's the drill here?



LANCELOT

The men start out in groups of eight, with four pairs of men sparring. The winners of those rounds then pair up into two pairs, and then the winners of that round face off to determine a winner for that group.

XENA

Let me guess, then they form groups of eight out of all the winners, and start over. They keep it up until there is one winner overall. Winner gets some special privilege.

LANCELOT

(surprisedly)

Why, yes, as a matter of fact.
How did you...?

XENA

I've led armies before.
Used this same set-up myself.

LANCELOT

(testily)

And what did
your winners get?

XENA

(flatly)

They got to live.

Lancelot's eyes grow wide at this, and Xena grins wickedly.

XENA

(cont'd)

Gotcha. Actually, they got to sit at my left hand at dinner, and got first place in the chow line.

Her expression grows sorrowful for a moment.

XENA

(cont'd, softly)

Some of the losers
didn't get to live.

The sorrow disappears from her face, and she pushes purposefully off the wall. She moves to the center of the yard, mounting the platform. Lancelot follows her, trotting swiftly behind to keep up. Xena taps one of the soldiers on the back, who turns with a disgruntled face until he sees who it is. Then he snaps to attention, holding a megaphone at his side.

SOLDIER

At your service, my queen.

XENA

I'm not your queen.
But I need that.



She takes the megaphone and moves to the edge of the platform, ringing the bell to get the men's attention.

Xena yells into the megaphone.

XENA

(cont'd)

All right. Listen up!
Everyone form up in regiments
in front of the platform.

She waits, nodding with approval as the men quickly form neat even rows of ranks before her.

XENA

(cont'd)

All right. As you probably
all know, I took
possession of this....

She holds up Excalibur.

XENA

(cont'd)

... last night. Before I agree to lead this
army, I need to see what you're made of.
I want you to finish out your rounds of
sparring until you're down to eight winners.
Then send the eight winners this way.
I'm going to take them on, one by one.

The men murmur among themselves, and the word "Excalibur" can be heard prominently among the murmurs. Many of the men appear to be afraid, eyeing Xena with great trepidation.

LANCELOT

(agitatedly, to Xena)

Listen up. Most of the men have heard of Excalibur for years, though very few have seen it. Its legend is great. You've got them terrified. If you're trying to prove something, fight me. Other than Arthur, I've the most victories for these sparring matches, not to mention the games we play once a year.

Xena spins around to face him, looking him up and down. Finally, she steps into his space and stares him down at very close range.

XENA

I'm not trying to prove anything. If I'm going to lead these men, I need to see first-hand their strengths and weaknesses.

She steps back toward one corner of the platform, twirling the sword a few times.

XENA

(cont'd)

However, before I spar with them, I accept your challenge.



She looks around at the leaders on the platform.

XENA

(cont'd)

Better clear this space.
Now!

The leaders high tail it down the steps, taking their places in front of their perspective regiments. All the men look up expectantly at the platform, where Xena and Lancelot are facing off.

LANCELOT

(sarcastically)

Bring it on, my Lady.

He draws his sword and he and Xena begin to circle. Xena is in typical fighting mode, a smile on her face and a gleam in her eyes. She holds one arm out toward Lancelot, while holding Excalibur up and ready with the other.

XENA

(tauntingly)

You gonna fight or dance?

Lancelot's face clouds in anger and he makes the first move, lunging forward and slicing toward Xena's middle, which she easily deflects, almost disarming him.

XENA

(cont'd)

You're the best?

We may be in trouble.

Lancelot grows even angrier, and his face becomes a study in concentration. He engages her in a series of swift exchanges, all of which she continues to easily deflect. Finally, Lancelot cuts loose, and the fight begins, as their swords clash over and over again. At first Xena appears almost bored, allowing him to back her around the platform. After a bit more of this, she suddenly jumps up, turning a flip and landing behind him, tapping him on the behind with Excalibur. He turns around quickly.

XENA

(cont'd)

Game's over, Lancelot.



She goes on the offensive, forcing him to make tight turns, as he fights her off. He never seems to know what is coming next, as she sometimes slices down from overhead, sometimes from the sides, and at others swipes at his ankles, making him jump the blade to avoid being cut. Her blade moves so swiftly it's a blur, and it is all he can do to deflect her blows.

LANCELOT

(breathing heavily)

You're no lady.

XENA

What was your first clue?

She spins, nailing him in the gut with the butt of the sword, then spins back and gives him a little kick. She swings around with Excalibur, catching his sword and twisting her wrist, disarming him. His sword goes clattering across the platform and she backs him into a corner of the railing, forcing him to bend backward as she holds Excalibur at his throat.

XENA

(cont'd, sneering)
I can see I have my
work cut out here.

She steps away and turns her back on him, tucking Excalibur into her belt, eyeing it with a new appreciation. Lancelot gets up, rubbing his throat, although she didn't actually touch it. He glares at her as he straightens out his armor.

LANCELOT

(challengingly)
Everyone knows Excalibur
is enchanted. Bet you'd not
win so easily without it.

Xena grows completely still and then slowly turns, facing him with an icy expression. She takes Excalibur from her belt, negligently tossing it aside, as she draws her own sword.

XENA

I'll take that bet.



She walks over to his sword and with a casual step of her foot against the hilt, pops it into the air, catching it and twirling it before she tosses it to him. Lancelot barely manages to catch it, juggling it a bit before it settles in his hand. He appears completely surprised before he recovers, and they both face off, as we....

CUT TO:

INT. CASTLE ENTRY CHAMBER - DAY

Gabrielle enters the chamber, followed by Arthur and a couple of his men. They mingle around talking. Gabrielle walks around the room, studying the few tapestries on the wall. Arthur is at her side.

GABRIELLE

These are gorgeous.

ARTHUR

Thank you. They've been in
our family for generations.

He looks around.

ARTHUR

(cont'd)

We're still waiting on Galahad and a few others. Can I get you anything, Lady Gabrielle? Some water or wine, perhaps?

GABRIELLE

You can just call me Gabrielle, and no thank you. Xena and I just finished breakfast a little while ago. My compliments to your cook.

ARTHUR

(nodding graciously)

Thank you, I'll be sure to let him know. He....

Arthur pauses and looks across the room where Galahad is entering. The few pieces of armor Galahad is wearing are polished like mirrors. His hair is long and blond and shining, and his shirt is crisply white, tucked neatly into perfectly-fitting white trousers. He practically glows.

ARTHUR

(cont'd)

Ah, Galahad! Pardon me for a moment, La... Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE

Certainly.



As Arthur greets Galahad in the background, Gabrielle moves to a side table that bears a single large goblet which is illuminated by a torch. The table is covered in rich red velvet, the goblet the only item on the table. The goblet is carved from dark wood, with a few chips in its rim.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Hmmmm. Wonder why this is
on such prominent display?

She lifts the goblet and releases a quiet gasp, as it turns to gold in her hand. A wary expression on her face, she slowly peers inside. At first it is filled with murky tendrils of fog, but they gradually clear, and several scenes of breath-taking beauty appear inside it, reflected off its now gold interior.

Across the room, Galahad and Arthur are talking and gesturing, when Galahad notices Gabrielle and abruptly stops talking, shoving Arthur aside.

GALAHAD

The grail. No!

He dashes across the room, waving his arms wildly.

GALAHAD

(cont'd, frantically)

My lady, you must put it
down. It is sacred.

Gabrielle turns to face him, her expression one of dazed serenity. She shakes her head, still holding the goblet.

GABRIELLE

Excuse me? I'm sorry, did
you say something?

Galahad continues to gesture, his face growing red.

GALAHAD

The grail. Put it down
at once, please.

GABRIELLE

Grail?

She looks at the goblet in her hands.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

You mean this?

She waves it casually back and forth, and Galahad nods adamantly, holding out his hands as if to catch it in the event she drops it.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

It's one of the most beautiful things I've ever seen. When I looked inside it...



She shakes her head, at a loss for words.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Back home, they call me a bard, but there are no words to describe what I just saw. It was a thing of such beauty it brought tears to my eyes. I'm sorry if I wasn't supposed to touch it. It's magical. It must belong to Merlin. Here....

She delicately places it back on the velvet-covered stand. As she turns her back on it, it turns to wood again, chips and all. Galahad is speechless. His eyes are wide as saucers, and he appears as if he is about to blow a gasket.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

I apologize. Come on. Join us at the table. We'll begin our meeting shortly.

She smiles innocently and pats him on the arm before moving toward the table. Galahad slowly reaches out, his hand trembling as he lifts the goblet. He waits expectantly, but nothing happens. He cautiously peers inside, but all he sees is the scratched interior of a well-used wooden drinking utensil. He drops it back on the velvet and covers his face with his hands for a moment.

GALAHAD

(whispering)

No. It was mine.

He is almost sobbing, and Arthur comes up beside him.

ARTHUR

Galahad, you look rather pale.

Galahad's hands and voice are shaking.

GALAHAD

The grail ... she touched it. She saw visions. I've been preparing for months, ever since it was recovered. Fasting and praying, waiting for a sign it was my time to touch it, to look inside it and see its great mysteries. Now it's all... wasted.

ARTHUR

(chuckling)

Come now, Galahad. Surely you didn't really believe all those old myths. Perhaps she was merely exaggerating. It's just an old wooden cup. Maybe now you can move on, and concentrate on the battle at hand. We're getting ready to meet. Join us when you're ready.

Arthur claps his friend on the shoulder and moves to the table.

GALAHAD

(whimpering quietly)

But... but it turned to gold.

At the table, Arthur and a few men are taking seats. Gabrielle spots a chair, rather ornate, and padded in beautiful shining satin. Arthur takes a seat next to it.

GABRIELLE

(to herself)

Guess this is for the leader,
and since Xena isn't here....

She pulls the chair out and plops down into it, looking up as everyone at the table gasps in shock.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd, puzzledly)

What is it?



One of the soldiers across the table leans over and whispers to his companion, out of Gabrielle's hearing.

FIRST SOLDIER

She sits in the Siege
Perilous, and yet she lives.

SECOND SOLDIER

I thought Galahad had the
purest heart in Camelot. It
appears he's been unseated.

FIRST SOLDIER

(smirking)
Indeed, it does.

He leans back, crossing his arms smugly.

FIRST SOLDIER

(cont'd)
I was rather tired of the self-righteous
Sir Goody Two Shoes lording it over
us. Good on the lady, I say.

He bows in deference to Gabrielle, who, not hearing what he said, merely smiles slightly and ducks her head in return. She looks at Arthur.

GABRIELLE

Did I miss something here?

Arthur glances over at Galahad.

ARTHUR

Ah. No. Everything is
fine, Gabrielle.

Galahad looks up at this moment, and shrieks in indignation.

GALAHAD

My chair!

He runs to the table, stopping just short of Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE

I'm sorry. Did I take your
seat? I can move.

She starts to get up, but Arthur holds her back.

ARTHUR

No. Really. Galahad can take another chair.

GABRIELLE

It's no trouble. I'll just....

Galahad cautiously reaches out and touches an ornate arm on the chair, leaping back and shaking his hand as if he's been shocked.

GALAHAD

Ahhhhhhh!

He tries to touch it again, with the same result. He steps back and looks at Gabrielle in horror, then runs screaming from the room like a mad man.

GALAHAD

(cont'd)

Noooooooooooo!!!!

GABRIELLE

(mumbling)

Geez. It's just a chair.



She shakes her head as she watches him leave, then turns to face the table as if nothing unusual has happened.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

I wanted to meet with you, Arthur, and your highest-ranking men. Xena is with your army at this moment, and I'm speaking on her behalf. Before Xena came here, when you thought you were going to rule Camelot, what was your vision for your people?

Arthur appears caught off guard, and he rests his chin on his upraised hands for a moment, lost in thought. Finally, he looks her in the eye.

ARTHUR

Merlin has told you of the fracturing
in our land, of the religious
factions and the in-fighting?

GABRIELLE

Yes, he did.

ARTHUR

I wish to unite the followers of the new
and old ways, to teach them to live
together in harmony... to respect one
another. I want them to move past their
differences, and concentrate on working
together for the good of our country.

GABRIELLE

(smiling)

Go on. What of the Saxons? If you
were to defeat them in battle, what
would become of them?

ARTHUR

I have no wish to disturb their lands. The
common soldiers, I would send home to be
with their families. If there were any who
wished to join our army, I would allow them
to do so, on a trial basis. As for their leaders,
any who have committed crimes against us,
I would see that they receive a fair hearing.

Gabrielle nods in agreement.

GABRIELLE

Good. Now... if Xena leads your men in battle,
and if she wins, she wants a plan in place as to
how to deal with the aftermath of the battle.
What you want to do with prisoners and the
wounded, and how to implement the very
things you just mentioned. Let's put our
heads together, and come up with that plan.

They all lean in close, their voices murmuring together, and we....

CUT TO:

EXT. WALLED YARD - DAY

Xena and Lancelot are circling each other on the platform. Xena is holding her own
familiar sword and appears completely at ease.

XENA

(smirking)

You wanted a fair fight?
You got one.



LANCELOT

Quit talking, Xena, and
let's get this over with.

Xena goes completely silent and watches him like a panther watching its prey. With a sudden snarl she lunges, taking the offensive and engaging him, their blades connecting over and over as she backs him toward the stairs on one side of the platform. She slowly forces him backward down the steps, as they continue to fight.

As they reach the bottom steps, she leaps up in the air, flipping over him and landing on the ground behind him. He spins around and she takes him on again, their blades flying in a blur as she works them around in front of the platform, where the men can watch. Lancelot is sweating, while Xena is calm and cool, obviously in her element enjoying the fight.

He begins to falter, his parries becoming sloppy. She sees an opening, taking it and knocking his sword from his hands. It goes flying through the air, landing several yards away. Xena leaps up, kicking off with both feet from one of the platform's pillars, and turns another flip, kicking Lancelot on his back as her feet connect with his chest.

She lands next to him and places a foot on his chest. Her eyes are wild and she raises her sword with both hands, twirling it once and impaling it into the ground a hair's breadth from his head.

XENA

(smiling wickedly)

Satisfied?

LANCELOT

(sheepishly)

Yes, my Queen.

Xena appears to consider his words, then shrugs, and offers him a hand up. He warily takes it, standing and brushing himself off. The soldiers in the ranks break into thunderous cheers and applause for their presumed new leader.

XENA

Remind me to commend you
to Arthur for your loyalty.



LANCELOT

(surprised)

Huh?

XENA

(quietly)

I know where your loyalty lies.

She peers toward the gate where Gabrielle is entering.

XENA

(cont'd)

Your devotion to Arthur is admirable.
But believe me, Lancelot, we're
on the same side. I have no
desire to take Arthur's place.

Lancelot bows slightly.

LANCELOT

I'll try to remember that from now on.
Um, can you show me how you do that
backward spinning move with your sword?

XENA

Sure. Later.

She leaves him, and makes her way toward Gabrielle. Gabrielle takes one look at her,
and then at Lancelot beyond, and shakes her head.

GABRIELLE

Been showing 'em who's
boss, I see.

XENA

I'm just getting started. What
did you find out from Arthur?

Gabrielle reaches out, brushing some dirt from Xena's face.

GABRIELLE

Xena, Arthur's heart is in the right place. He cares about his people.

XENA

And his advisors?

GABRIELLE

Also good.

She looks thoughtful, and we see an overlaid vision of Galahad running from the room again.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

A few of them are a bit odd, but they're good men, and they came up with sound plans to deal with the aftermath of battle. Xena, Arthur has the potential to build a great and peaceful nation. I can feel it.

XENA

From what I've seen of his army, it's more of the same. Good men... good fighters, loyal and ready to follow their leader into battle.

They exchange a long glance, and Gabrielle touches her on the arm.

GABRIELLE

Are you going to be that leader?



XENA

(nodding slightly)

Yeah. The sooner we get this over with, the sooner we can go home.

Gabrielle strokes Xena's arm with her thumb.

GABRIELLE

What about dying in battle?

XENA

We'll get to that. First, I promised these men some more sparring.

GABRIELLE

(exasperatedly)

Xena, you need to talk to Merlin. You've been at it all morning here.

She stops, as Xena smiles at her charmingly.

GABRIELLE

(resignedly)

All right. But we need to talk to Merlin. Tell him what we've decided.

Merlin appears in a sparkling flash of light and steps forward, as the soldiers murmur excitedly at his appearance.

MERLIN

No need. I heard it all.
Xena....

He moves to her side, walking with his staff.

MERLIN

(cont'd)

You may want to cancel sparring, and concentrate on preparing for battle. The Saxons are re-grouping, even as we speak.

Gabrielle curls her hand around Xena's arm, and stands next to her, her expression worried. Xena's gaze falls on her and she reaches across, tracing Gabrielle's face with her fingertips.

XENA

(softly)

One battle, Gabrielle, and we can go home.

GABRIELLE

Promise?

XENA

Promise.

GABRIELLE

I'll be there at your side, you know.

XENA

I wouldn't have it
any other way.

They walk to the gate in silence, followed by Merlin. Xena opens it and looks out toward....

CUT TO:

EXT. SEASCAPE - DAY

Just outside the gate is a cliff, and below it is the shore. Xena looks down at the waves crashing on the shore, then stares out to sea.

XENA

(quietly to herself)
Always one more battle.



FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

EXT. CLIFFSIDE SEASCAPE - NEXT DAY

These are the same cliffs and shoreline we saw at the end of Act Three. Standing atop the cliffs are Xena, Gabrielle, and Arthur. Behind them is the castle. Out at sea are several battleships moving slowly toward shore. Xena is dressed in heavier armor than usual, and Gabrielle is similarly attired. Xena has her usual sword and scabbard at her back, with Excalibur tucked into her belt.



GABRIELLE

They won't try to climb
up here, will they?

XENA

Not if they have two brain cells
to rub together. All we'd have
to do is stone them to death.

GABRIELLE

I figured as much.

She glances over to one side, where Arthur is standing a bit apart from them. He's holding his helmet under one arm, and the sea breeze is blowing his hair back off his face. His eyes are closed as if he's meditating.

Gabrielle looks up at Xena, and their eyes meet. She nods a little toward Arthur and Xena nods back at her. Gabrielle walks over to Arthur and stands at his side, looking out to sea.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

If not for those ships, I'd say
this was a beautiful view.

Arthur slowly opens his eyes but doesn't look at her, his eyes still fastened on the horizon.

ARTHUR

It is.

GABRIELLE

(gently)

Were you thinking about
your father just now?



ARTHUR

(softly)

Yes. How did you know?

GABRIELLE

Just a hunch ... I know
what it's like to lose your
parents to barbarians.

Arthur looks at her.

ARTHUR

Oh. I'm sorry, Gabrielle.
I didn't know.

His face clouds in anger, and he looks back out at sea, his jaw firmly set.

ARTHUR

(cont'd)

My mother died when I was young, and
my sister was taken away to Avalon to
learn the ways of the Goddess. It was
just my father and me for a very long
time. There's a part of me that wishes
I were the one slated to go up against
their leader. I'd like so much to....

GABRIELLE

I wanted vengeance too. And came
very close to extracting it. Xena went
through Tartarus for me over that.

She glances back, knowing Xena can hear them. Xena appears not to be watching them,
but we see from her eyes that she is listening.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Funny thing, when the opportunity finally presented itself, I realized something.

ARTHUR

(bitterly)

And what was that?

GABRIELLE

That it wouldn't bring my parents back.
All it would have done is make me
like him... a cold-blooded murderer.

She turns slightly, placing a hand on his arm.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Arthur, whatever you do today, do
it for the future, not for the past.
Does that make sense?

ARTHUR

It does, in theory. In practice, it may be
much more difficult. Thank you, Gabrielle,
to you and Xena. I think with Xena leading
us, we can drive the Saxons back. You see,
I have to believe that. If we lose, the future
my father was building toward is also lost.

GABRIELLE

(confidently)

We won't lose.

ARTHUR

You're that certain?

GABRIELLE

Yes. If you'll excuse me....



She smiles and makes her way back to Xena's side. Xena places an arm lightly across her shoulders and Gabrielle looks up at her, placing her own hand over the one on her shoulder.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Is it time?

XENA

Yeah, almost. They'll come ashore over there.

She points toward a beach that can be seen off to one side.

XENA

(cont'd)

From there, they'll march around through the woods and past Viviane's lake, then up that open hillside below the castle on the other side. We need to keep them from getting very far up that hill.

She swallows hard and we see her throat working, as her face grows pensive.

XENA

(cont'd)

After I take out their leader, I'm going to use that pig bladder full of blood trick we used on Iolaus way back, when we fooled Ares and Zeus... make it look like he got me right before I got him. Soon as you see blood, if you aren't already nearby, you need to get to my side pretty quick, before anyone else does. Get there before you count to thirty, will ya?

She chuckles a little at her own levity.

GABRIELLE

I'll be close by. Xena, when it comes time to play dead, don't put the pinch on yourself.

XENA

(gently)

Gabrielle....

GABRIELLE

Just hear me out.

XENA

You gonna put it on me?



GABRIELLE

No.

Gabrielle turns, facing Xena and placing her hands on Xena's hips. Xena leans in closer, and places her hands on Gabrielle's shoulders. Gabrielle looks down for a moment, as if she's gathering her thoughts, then looks back up.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

I've worked out a plan so
you won't need the pinch.
Do you trust me?

XENA

(fiercely)

With my life. So... do I need
to do anything differently
than we discussed?

GABRIELLE

No. Pig bladder. Blood.
Fall down. Play dead.
All good. Just no pinch.

Xena ducks her head and kisses her lightly on the lips, then pulls back. Gabrielle's eyes are closed.

XENA

No pinch. Got it.
You ready?

Gabrielle's eyes flutter open and she licks her lips.

GABRIELLE

Ready.

XENA
(louder)
Arthur, it's time.



Arthur stares out at sea for a long moment, then turns and nods at her and puts his helmet on. His demeanor changes, and he stands tall and proud.

ARTHUR
Let's go.

They walk around the castle out of sight.

CUT TO:

EXT. HILLSIDE BATTLEFIELD - DAY

It is the same hillside battlefield from the Teaser. This time it is bright and sunny, and battalions of soldiers are lined up in formation, waiting. Xena, Gabrielle, Arthur, and Lancelot are at the front on horseback. Behind them are the mounted soldiers, and behind them the foot soldiers. At the bottom of the hill, just inside the tree line, we see Merlin.

Xena still has both swords. Gabrielle's sais are tucked in her boots, and she has a staff in one hand.

We hear the crunch of many marching feet, and the clapping of hooves. Then at the bottom of the hill, the Saxon army appears and begins marching uphill. At the front of the army is a large man on a huge horse. He pulls off to one side. Arthur leans toward Xena and points toward him.

ARTHUR
That one, he'll be Prince Chretien, or
actually, he's King Chretien now.
My father killed his father in battle.

XENA
(calmly)
Big fellow.

Xena leans toward Gabrielle.

XENA
(*cont'd*)
I miss Argo.



GABRIELLE
I miss Greece.

XENA
Well then, let's do this
thing, and go home.

She turns her horse and raises Excalibur high in the air. Every soldier stands in silent readiness, straining to hear, and the horses move from hoof to hoof restlessly, chomping at their bits.

XENA
(*cont'd, yelling*)
For Camelot!

She turns and kicks her horse's sides, and suddenly the entire field is in motion, with both armies yelling and driving toward each other. They meet in the middle and the battle ensues, with loud clanking of weapons colliding, men yelling, and horses whinnying. Chretien has held back, observing and allowing his men to go ahead of him, as he sits on his horse near the bottom of the hill. We see Merlin watching him.

Xena charges down the hill, with Gabrielle behind her. Arthur follows, but is quickly engaged by a mounted Saxon soldier, and Lancelot also falls back to assist him. Xena and Gabrielle continue on without them.

XENA
(*cont'd, yelling gleefully*)
Aiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii!!!!

As they make their way toward Chretien, they each take out several soldiers. Gabrielle uses the staff to easily knock soldiers from the saddle, while Xena fights with Excalibur in one hand and her own sword in the other, using her legs to guide her horse.

Xena knocks some men out, while she kills others as she clears a path toward her goal. At last they reach the bottom of the hill where Chretien and another soldier are waiting expectantly. However, when they are finally close enough for him to see their faces, his eyes widen.

CHRETIEN

What's this? Where's
Arthur Pendragon?

XENA

(sneering)
Busy.



She slides her own sword into its scabbard and lifts Excalibur, as her horse dances sideways in anticipation. Gabrielle turns her horse a bit, ready to cover Xena's back, as she warily watches Chretien's fighting partner.

CHRETIEN

(angrily)

I came to avenge my father's
death. Give me Arthur!

XENA

You want Arthur, you've gotta deal
with me first. Sheeee-yahhhh!

She charges forward and takes the offensive, as their swords clash over and over in a flash of sparks. The sun glints off their blades and armor, and their horses are sweating and foaming at their mouths.

Gabrielle waits, her staff ready, as Chretien's partner charges her. Just before he reaches her, Gabrielle looks past him and sees Merlin at the tree line. They make eye contact, and Merlin nods at her. She smiles slightly and nods back, then takes the first sword blow with her staff, easily shoving the soldier back. He comes at her again and she continues to hold him off, sweeping the staff around from one side.

The battle is in full force, with men and horses scattered across the field in skirmish. Many have already fallen. Arthur and Lancelot have moved on, fighting foe by foe in turn.

Meanwhile, Xena and Chretien continue to face off in a fierce exchange of parries, in what appears to be a stalemate. They are both breathing hard, but Xena is smiling, enjoying the challenge, while Chretien is huffing and puffing, starting to show signs of strain.

CHRETIEN

Who are you, to take
Arthur's rightful place?

She swings at him with Excalibur.

XENA

Now there's a
good question.

She deflects a blow from overhead and counters with a wicked slice to his leg, drawing blood.

XENA

(cont'd)

If I figure out the answer,
I'll let you know.

Chretien snarls and follows suit, slicing her across the same place on the same left upper arm that should be covered in scar tissue by now, but isn't. He laughs in satisfaction as she looks down at the blood running down her arm. His smile disappears as she charges him with renewed fury.

XENA

(cont'd)

Yah!!!

They circle in another round of sword clashes. Off to the side nearby, Gabrielle and Chretien's partner are still fighting, both of them growing weary. At last, Gabrielle gets the upper hand and with a mighty sweep of her staff, knocks him out of the saddle. As he falls, he grabs her leg, taking her with him, and they roll several times as they hit the ground, then come to a stop with Gabrielle on top. She leaps up and swings down hard with her staff, knocking his sword from his hands.

GABRIELLE

Sorry for this.

She swings again, and hits him hard enough to knock him unconscious, and his eyes roll back in his head, then close. Chretien sees this and glances at Xena, then suddenly turns his horse and charges toward Gabrielle, his sword tip aimed at her back.

Xena's eyes grow wide. She grits her teeth, then yells.

XENA

Son of a bacchae.
Gabrielle! Watch out!

Xena clicks to her horse and takes off after Chretien. Gabrielle hears Xena and spins around, and sees Chretien barreling toward her. She holds up her staff in readiness, but just as he reaches her, Xena catches up, their horses almost touching. She stabs him just under his ribs and then tackles him, and they both fly off their horses, landing on the ground. Xena feels his wrist for a pulse.

XENA
(cont'd, resolutely)
Dead. Let's finish
this, shall we?

The horses fly past Gabrielle, blocking her view for a moment. When they pass, she sees Xena hovered over Chretien. Xena turns toward her, then presses her hands against her stomach, crushing the hidden pig's bladder. Blood spurts out and she stands, staggering around dramatically before she drops Excalibur, stumbling and falling next to Chretien.

GABRIELLE
XENA!

She runs to Xena's side and drops to her knees, looking down at her. Xena's eyes are open, as no one else has caught up to them yet. Xena speaks, her lips barely moving.

XENA
Work your magic.

GABRIELLE
Not my magic.

She looks up and spots Merlin, who holds up his staff. He's still hidden in the trees, but a pale mist drifts out from the end of his staff, and falls over both Xena and Gabrielle, before it disappears from view. Xena jerks slightly, her eyes still open.

XENA
What was that?

GABRIELLE
When they come to check you, they
won't be able to see you breathing,
or feel your heartbeat or your pulse.

She places one hand over Xena's heart.

GABRIELLE
(cont'd, teary-eyed)
But I will. Let's see if we can
fool them. Wish me luck.



Xena places her hand over Gabrielle's and closes her eyes, smiling slightly.

XENA

(whispering)

You can do it, sweetheart.

Xena grows completely still and her smile disappears. Gabrielle looks uphill where several soldiers are running toward them, Arthur and Lancelot included. She draws a deep breath and looks up at the sky yelling in mock despair with a vehemence that isn't complete feigned.

GABRIELLE

NOOOO!!!!!!!

She leans over, laying her head against Xena's heart. A tiny smile plays at her lips, and we hear the sound of a heartbeat for a moment. The smile vanishes and she begins to sob loudly, as the men reach her.

ARTHUR

No.

He sees all the blood and steps closer and kneels down, feeling Xena's neck.

ARTHUR

(cont'd, his voice breaking)

I'm sorry, Gabrielle.

LANCELOT

She's dead?

GABRIELLE

(wailing)

No!!!!

She beats Xena's chest, as Merlin steps from the trees and makes a show of gently pulling her away from Xena. He leans down and feels Xena's heart. He stands and Gabrielle moves back to Xena, resuming her position, sobbing loudly.

MERLIN

(yelling)

The queen has fallen!

Behind them, the battle is dying down, as the Saxons once again begin to retreat. The army of Camelot is giving chase, and their voices rise up in victorious cheers, as the Saxons begin running down the path.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHORELINE - DAY

We see Saxons boarding their boats, and shoving away from shore.

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. HILLSIDE BATTLEFIELD - DAY

Gabrielle stands, with tears running down her face. She picks up Excalibur and runs down the hill and through the trees, reaching the edge of the lake.

CUT TO:

EXT. VIVIANE'S LAKE - DAY

With a great swing, Gabrielle heaves Excalibur into the lake and waits expectantly as the sword slowly sinks. Nothing happens.

GABRIELLE

I call upon you, Lady.
Xena has fallen in battle.
Come see for yourself.

The surface of the lake ripples and churns, and we see Viviane rise. She begins to walk across the surface of the water with Excalibur in one hand.

THE LADY VIVIANE

So I heard. I would have thought
a great warrior like Xena would
not be so easily defeated.

GABRIELLE

(bitterly)

We weren't defeated.
She did what you wanted.
I hope you're satisfied.



Gabrielle stomps off back up the hill to Xena's side.

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. HILLSIDE BATTLEFIELD - DAY

After a few moments, Viviane appears through the trees. By now, most of the army has gathered around Xena's fallen body, standing at a respectful distance. We hear a collective gasp as they see Viviane, along with murmurs of her name. Many of them drop to one knee and bow their heads.

Viviane walks over to Xena and Gabrielle, water pooling in her wake. She kneels down and feels Xena's heart.

THE LADY VIVIANE

No heartbeat, just as you said.
A great warrior has fallen today.

She emphasizes the word fallen, and reaches over to touch Gabrielle's heart. She leans close and it appears she is consoling Gabrielle.

THE LADY VIVIANE

(cont'd)

Interesting. You have no
heartbeat either, Lady Gabrielle.

Gabrielle's eyes grow wide, and Xena's eyelids flutter but remain closed. Viviane stands and gives Gabrielle the barest ghost of a wink, then holds Excalibur out toward Arthur.

THE LADY VIVIANE

Arthur, come claim your birthright.

Arthur solemnly walks toward her, his hand trembling as he reaches for the sword. Slowly, his fist closes around it, and he raises it skyward, as a few tears track down his cheeks.

ARTHUR

(yelling)

Long live Camelot!

The men who remain standing join their comrades in kneeling at his feet. He turns toward Xena and crosses Excalibur over his chest.

ARTHUR

(cont'd, softly)

To a mighty fallen warrior.
Gabrielle, we're ever so sorry.
If you need a home....

Merlin clears his throat and interrupts.

MERLIN

This old wizard has a
few tricks left yet.

He raises his arms and staff over Xena, and closes his eyes, mumbling under his breath. Gabrielle takes Xena's hand and holds it against her own heart.

GABRIELLE

(whispering)

Is it beating?

Xena quirks one eyebrow and smiles. Gabrielle sighs with relief and kisses Xena's hand.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

I think you're supposed to
come back to life now.

Xena nods just a little and her eyes flutter open. She stretches and yawns, then slowly sits up.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd, joyfully)

Xena!

Gabrielle takes her in her arms, holding her close, as she looks up at Merlin.



ARTHUR

It's a miracle! Merlin....

THE LADY VIVIANE

(suspiciously)

A miracle indeed.

She pauses, as if considering something, then turns to Arthur.

THE LADY VIVIANE

(cont'd)

Go in good health, Arthur.
Excalibur is yours to use,
as you lead your people.

Arthur humbly bows his head.

ARTHUR

As I serve my people.
Thank you, my Lady.

THE LADY VIVIANE

Merlin... I trust I'll see
you on Avalon soon?

MERLIN

Most certainly.

Viviane seems satisfied, and she begins to walk back toward the trees and the lake,
disappearing in a mist before their eyes.

MERLIN

(cont'd, to the crowd)

Go on inside and prepare the feast.
I'm certain Xena and Gabrielle
need a moment alone.

After a few long stares, the men disperse and begin walking up the hill toward the castle.
Xena and Gabrielle slowly stand, helping each other up.

GABRIELLE

Merlin, our hearts....

MERLIN

They beat as one. As Xena's
heart goes, so goes yours.

Xena takes Gabrielle's hand and squeezes it.

XENA

Can we go home now?

GABRIELLE

The banquet....

Xena rolls her eyes and appears to be almost in pain.

XENA

Oh, all right.
After the banquet?

MERLIN

After the banquet, I'll send
you anywhere you want to go.

He moves between them and drapes his arms across their shoulders, and they begin to
walk uphill toward the castle.

CUT TO:

INT. BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

The hall is full of revelers and tables are covered in mostly empty dinner plates. Wine is flowing freely, and out in the middle of the tables, musicians are playing lively tunes while a few couples dance off to the side.

Xena and Gabrielle are standing in the doorway, looking on.

XENA

Glad that's over.



GABRIELLE

Me too. The party was fun, though.

XENA

(chuckling)

Yeah, but a few more toasts, and I think both of us would be toasted.

They laugh, as Arthur and a beautiful young woman approach them. It's the same woman Xena saw trysting with Lancelot in the garden on their first night in Camelot.

ARTHUR

Xena, Gabrielle. There you are. Are you about to leave?

GABRIELLE

As soon as we can tear Merlin away.

Over in a corner, Merlin is doing magic tricks, to the delight of several children.

ARTHUR

You'd be welcome to stay, Xena, both of you. I could always use someone of your caliber in my army.

XENA

Thanks, but no thanks. Camelot...
and Britannia... are all yours.
You'll be a fine king, Arthur.

ARTHUR

Thanks to you and Gabrielle. Before
you go, I'd like you to meet my fiancée.
This is the Lady Guinevere. We're
to be married in the spring.

Guinevere recognizes Xena, and has the good sense to blush in shame.

GUINEVERE

Pleased to meet you.

GABRIELLE

Pleased to meet you, too.

XENA

(mumbling to herself)
Hoo boy. I've fixed all the
problems I intend to fix here.



GABRIELLE

Did you say something?

XENA

(with a fake smile)
I said, pleased to meet
you, Lady Guinevere.

Xena and Guinevere stare at each other awkwardly, as Arthur and Gabrielle look on in
puzzlement. They are saved as Merlin approaches them.

MERLIN

Do you two want to stay
the night, or leave now?

XENA AND GABRIELLE

(in unison)
Leave now.

Everyone laughs.

ARTHUR

Goodbye and farewell to both of you. Come visit if you ever find yourself this way again.

GABRIELLE

We will. Good luck.

MERLIN

Ready?

Xena eyes the still blushing Guinevere.

XENA

You've no idea.

MERLIN

Very well. Think of where you want to be, and I'll send you there.

Xena and Gabrielle clasp hands and Merlin waves his staff in front of them. They disappear in a shower of sparkles.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR

TAG

FADE IN:

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - NIGHT

The moon shines down through the trees into a tiny clearing. Overhead are a million twinkling stars. A fire burns in a neatly made fire ring, and a double set of sleeping furs is spread out beside the fire. A travel bag is hanging from a low tree branch, and a saddle is tossed over a log next to the tree. A pot of water is simmering over the fire.

Off to the side, Argo is munching on grass. Her ears prick up and she whinnies in startlement, as Xena and Gabrielle appear in a shower of sparkles. When Argo realizes it's them, her placid expression returns, and she goes back to grazing, as if this is an everyday occurrence. Xena and Gabrielle look around and then at each other and smile.

GABRIELLE

Home. Thank the gods.

XENA

You can say that again.

They go about stowing armor and weapons, and Xena plops down on the bedroll. Gabrielle spots the now boiling water.

GABRIELLE

You want some tea?

XENA

Sure. That would hit the spot.

Gabrielle moves to their travel bag and opens it, reaching inside. She feels something and frowns, and pulls it out. It's the grail, though it remains in its wooden state.

GABRIELLE

What the...?

XENA

What's wrong?



GABRIELLE

Nothing. Just hunting
for the tea leaves.

She carefully peers into the grail, and Merlin's face appears in a smoky vision. He winks at her once and the vision vanishes. She drops the grail into her bag as if it's bitten her, and hastily finds tea leaves and mugs, moving to the fire and setting them to steep.

She looks back at the bag once more and shakes her head, then joins Xena on the furs. They lay back next to each other, ankles crossed and arms behind their heads, looking up at the stars.

XENA

Remind me to be careful
what I touch from now on.

Gabrielle stares at her, then at her bag, then back at Xena again. She settles back on the furs and sighs.

GABRIELLE

Me too. Do you think the
world is really round?



Xena points up at the moon.

XENA

Moon's round. Sun's round. If you
look at the horizon at sea, it looks
sort of round at the edges. Could be.

Gabrielle seems satisfied with this.

GABRIELLE

That makes sense. But it
seems like the people on the
bottom would fall off.

XENA

(chuckling)

Not that I'm complaining, but I
wonder why Merlin sent us here?
I figured he'd send us back to
the inn he took us from.

GABRIELLE

(smiling)
Oh, that's easy. He said to think
of where we wanted to be, and
this is what I thought of.

XENA
No kidding?

GABRIELLE
No kidding. One night in that
castle made me miss... this.

She turns on her side facing Xena, and props her head up on her hand.

GABRIELLE
(cont'd)
Question is, if you thought
we'd end up at the inn, how'd
we both end up here?

Xena mimics her posture, leaning close and tracing Gabrielle's arm with her fingertip.

XENA
That's easy too. I wasn't thinking
of the inn. I was thinking I wanted
to go wherever you wanted to go.

Gabrielle gives Xena a charmed smile.

GABRIELLE
Really?

Xena pulls her close and kisses her, then pulls back, touching noses.

XENA
Always.

They kiss again, as we

FADE OUT.

DISCLAIMER
No legendary relics were harmed during the making of this episode;
however, Galahad is rumored to be in therapy, seeking a new life purpose.