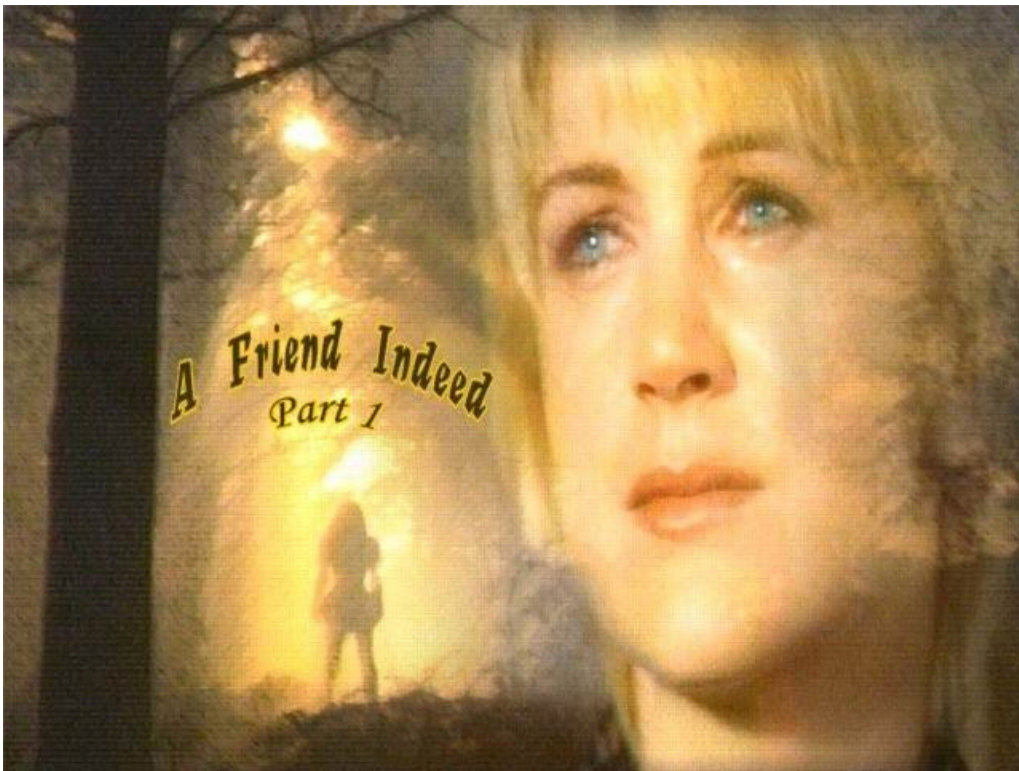


Xena: Warrior Princess - Subtext Virtual Season 7



Production #V701 - A Friend Indeed - Part 1

Virtual Airdate - October 31, 2002

STORY BY

Melissa Good

TELEPLAY BY

Susanne Beck & TNovan

SCREENGRABS

Judi Mair

PRODUCED BY

Carol Stephens

ARTWORK

Lucia

DIRECTED BY

Denise Byrd

TITLE GRAPHIC

Judi Mair

Xena: Warrior Princess is a trademark and copyright of 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. CAMPFIRE - FOREST CLEARING - NIGHT

GABRIELLE is seated on her furs. A plate of untouched food is on her right. An unfurled scroll sits in her lap. She has on a fur cloak on which she pulls around her face, inhaling deeply. She sighs, her breath covering her head in a mist, and her shoulders slump, defeated.

A noise is heard in the trees, and Gabrielle turns her head quickly, her eyes narrowing. The sound repeats itself, a rustling in the leaves, and Gabrielle's hands move toward her SAIS.



GABRIELLE

(softly, plaintively)
Xena?

An OWL screeches from the tree above her and takes flight into the night sky. Gabrielle turns away sadly and looks back down at her scrolls. Rubbing her eyes, she finds her place and begins to read over what she's just written.

GABRIELLE

(VO)

It's been two months since Japa and Xena's death. And instead of getting easier, it's only gotten harder. When she's not here, I see her everywhere. When she is, all I see is a ghost. I can't live with the nightmares that sleep brings, and I don't know when the last time was that I ate something. My mind is full of so many questions, questions I long to ask, but can't.

And my heart...
(a beat, quieter)
My heart is empty.

A single tear rolls down Gabrielle's cheek.



GABRIELLE

(VO)

"Even in death, Gabrielle, I will never leave you,"
she said. How could something that was once
a blessing have turned into such a curse?

Gabrielle carefully rolls up the scroll and tucks it into her bag, where it rests next to the URN carrying Xena's ashes. Stretching out on her furs, she settles in for another fruitless attempt at sleep.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SAME CAMPSITE - SUNRISE

Gabrielle is awake, and in the light of the new day, it is obvious how the past two months of her life has taken its toll on her. Her hair is limp and dull. Her eyes are sunken, red-rimmed and lack their sparkle. She is very thin and her clothes seem to hang on her. As she turns to watch the sun rise over the trees, XENA appears on the other side of the campsite. She frowns slightly, then pads silently across the campsite, to enfold Gabrielle in an embrace from behind.



Gabrielle stiffens, and Xena pulls away, her frown deepening.

GABRIELLE

(softly, without emotion)
Hey.

XENA

(concerned look)
Is there something wrong?

GABRIELLE

(a beat, as if she's fighting against something)
No.
(smiling half-heartedly)

Nothing's wrong at all.
Beautiful morning, isn't it?

Without waiting for a response, Gabrielle walks back to the center of the camp and begins to pack. Her movements are quick and precise, not betraying her exhaustion, but Xena can see through the act.

Xena takes a step forward.

XENA
Gabrielle?

Ignoring the question, Gabrielle passes Xena and loads her gear on ARGO. She takes one last look around.

GABRIELLE
Well, I guess it's time to head out.
The 'girl with the chakram' needs
to get herself to Egypt.

She easily mounts Argo, then extends a hand. For the first time, she looks directly at Xena.

GABRIELLE
You coming?

Xena hesitates for just a moment, then crosses the camp and grasps Gabrielle's hand, allowing herself to be pulled aboard. A soft click to Argo, and they're on their way.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PATH - SAME DAY

Xena is walking along side Argo, whose pace has slowed to a walk. Gabrielle is slumped in the saddle, half asleep. To their left is a thin stand of trees, the last such grouping for miles. Ahead lays the beginnings of the vast EGYPTIAN DESERT.

Xena reaches up and gently shakes Gabrielle's thigh.

GABRIELLE
(*fuzzily*)
What? What is it?

XENA
(*fondly*)
You're falling asleep up there.
I think it's time to pack it in for the night.
Start out again after you've gotten
a good night's sleep.

GABRIELLE
(*sarcastically*)
Sleep? What's that?

XENA
Gabrielle....

GABRIELLE
No, I'm fine. I need to keep going.

XENA

What you need is sleep. And some dinner.
Egypt isn't going anywhere.



GABRIELLE

(heatedly)

You don't give the orders around here
anymore, Xena! You're dead, remember?
(a beat, off of Xena's hurt look)
You've made your choices.
Now let me make mine.

XENA

Gabrielle, listen....

Gabrielle holds up her hand. It's obvious she's reached her limit. The lack of sleep and food and the emotional torment she's been under has taken its final toll. Her words come out in an almost breathless tumble.

GABRIELLE

No, Xena, you listen. I don't need food and I don't
need sleep. What I need is to be left alone.
I need to grieve. Don't you understand?



Tears fall unhindered down her face. She doesn't seem to notice.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

You just...left me. And I need to come to terms with that.
But how can I when you keep popping back into my life
as if nothing's wrong? Well, there is something wrong!
You're dead! You're dead and you're not coming back!
I need to accept that, and I need to deal with it.
Alone.

She turns her head away, looking off into the far distance for a long moment.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

I stood by and let you make your choice, Xena.
Now I need you to stand by and let me make mine.



(a beat)

Let me go. Let me grieve. Please.

Xena stands immobile, shock written plainly on her face. It's clear she wants to say something, anything, but the pain of what she's hearing has stilled her tongue.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Goodbye, Xena. I love you.



Xena stands and watches as Gabrielle urges Argo into a fast gallop. A single tear traces its way down her cheek.

XENA

(whispering)

Goodbye, Gabrielle.



FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. DAY - CAPITAL

Gabrielle approaches the city. She's dusty, sunburned, and travel-weary. The city itself is in even worse shape. Smoke from untended fires rises like a pall into the deep blue sky, and the smell of burning and death hangs heavy in the air. She's passed several groups of enemy soldiers scattered about outside the city walls during her journey, but has managed to evade them all with an ease that surprises her.

Slipping through the unguarded gates poses no problem, and as soon as she's inside, she dismounts and pats Argo's sweaty neck.



GABRIELLE

(to Argo)

I know you're thirsty, girl.
Soon, I promise.

She walks slowly through the city, Argo in tow. Carnage is everywhere. There are several small fires burning, debris in the streets, carts and merchant stands have been over turned or smashed to bits.

The streets are deserted and eerily quiet. It's readily apparent that she's being followed, but she senses no danger, and so continues ahead, face set and grim. A noise sounds off to her left, and with a smile devoid of humor, she darts in that direction and plucks a young boy from his hiding place behind a wrecked cart.

GABRIELLE

Why are you following me?

BOY

*(struggling, points to the
chakram at Gabrielle's hip)*
I was sent to bring the one who
wields that weapon to my Queen.

GABRIELLE

Your Queen? And who would this be?

BOY

(frightened, but trying not to show it)
Queen Zenobia.
I am her best scout!

GABRIELLE

(peering closely at the struggling boy)
Aren't you a little young?

BOY

All of the men are busy fighting the enemy.
(a beat)
The ones who are still alive, that is.

GABRIELLE

(grimly)
I see. Take me to see your Queen.

BOY

Could you let me down first?

Her expression sheepish, Gabrielle releases the boy, and follows as he runs on ahead, leading her deeper into the decimated city.

CUT TO:

EXT. MISTY LIMBO

Xena walks slowly through a gray void. All around her, a colorless mist hangs, obscuring her view in every direction. She walks on, unconcerned, having long ago gotten used to the formless limbo that holds her soul when she is not with Gabrielle. Occasionally, the mists will part, like a curtain, giving her a glimpse into the land of the living, and Gabrielle.



When they part again, she stops to view her soulmate following a half-grown boy through the burnt-out remains of an Egyptian city. As she watches, the two pass a crumbled building from the depths of which comes a pack of slat-thin dogs, mad with hunger, who snarl and snap at them both.

Without thought, Xena's hand reaches for her hip, and she knows that all she has to do is to take one step into the void and she'll be at Gabrielle's side, helping to fight off the starving pack.

As her hand passes through the space where her chakram used to hang, Gabrielle's voice fills the void, and she freezes, an instant before making the leap to her lover's side.

GABRIELLE

(VO)
I stood by and let you make your choice, Xena.
Now I need you to stand by and let me make mine.
Let me go. Let me grieve. Please.

Xena's intent expression crumples and an agonized misery stamps itself on her face. She stands by and watches as Gabrielle beats off the dogs, then continues on her way deeper into the heart of the city.

She reaches a hand out, almost touching the view before her, then drops it and bows her head as Gabrielle moves beyond her sight.



XENA
(whispering)
I'm so sorry.

CUT TO:

EXT/INT. DAY - ABANDONED TEMPLE

The boy leads Gabrielle to the remains of an abandoned temple. At the bottom of a short ramp is a thick door, and the boy points to it as he starts down.

GABRIELLE
Wait. My horse. She needs water.
And tending.

BOY
As soon as I present you to my Queen,
I'll return and tend to her.

Gabrielle nods and tethers Argo to a rail, then follows the boy down the dirt ramp. He knocks twice, then stands back as the door slowly opens, illuminating the form of a large, scruffy man armed with a spear.

BOY
(cont'd - self importantly)
Let me in by order of the Queen.
I have returned with the warrior.

After a moment, the guard steps aside, and Gabrielle enters, still following the young scout. The smell of sickness and unwashed bodies is almost overpowering, and Gabrielle takes several deep breaths to steady her stomach before proceeding further into the dark room. People are packed in all around her, and stare at her through glazed eyes all but devoid of hope.

She is led into another, smaller room. The boy stops suddenly and bows deeply.

BOY
(cont'd)
My Queen, the warrior you seek is here.

ZENOBIA

(ahead, from the shadows)
Thank you. Now leave us.

BOY

Yes, my Queen.

ZENOBIA steps forward into the flickering torchlight. Slightly older than Gabrielle, she is tall and slender, with a regal bearing still evident despite the tattered robes she wears. Her hair and eyes are very dark, and her face, though dirty, is quite beautiful.



Without speaking, she circles Gabrielle, examining her as one would a prize animal at the market. Stopping at Gabrielle's right side, she looks down at the chakram, then into Gabrielle's eyes.

ZENOBIA

You are different than the
legends describe you, Xena.

GABRIELLE

My name is Gabrielle.

ZENOBIA

(surprisingly)
The Battling Bard?

GABRIELLE

Some call me that.

ZENOBIA

And Xena?
Do you no longer travel together?

GABRIELLE

(swallowing heavily)
She's dead.

ZENOBIA

(concernedly)
When? Where? How? Our legends
say she could not be defeated.

GABRIELLE

Two months ago. On an island far to the east.
(a beat)
And how is something I would rather not think about.

ZENOBIA

And yet you are here?

GABRIELLE

(firmly)

Xena made a promise.

I'm here to keep it.

Zenobia takes a step back, her weariness now evident in the lines of her face.

ZENOBIA

This... complicates matters.
As you can see, we are in the middle
of a war. I had hoped to engage
the talents of the Warrior Princess in
order to defeat the enemy.

GABRIELLE

Before she... died, Xena taught
me everything she knew about
the art of warfare. I traveled with
her and fought by her side for
six years.

(a beat)

I'd like to help, if I can.

Zenobia stares into space for a long space of seconds, apparently lost in thought. Then she turns and eyes Gabrielle frankly again, a slight smile gracing her features.

ZENOBIA

I suppose there are worse fates than
having Xena's finest student
at one's side during a war.

GABRIELLE

(softly, in pain)

Far worse, trust me.

ZENOBIA

(opening arms)

Welcome, Gabrielle, and thank you.

Egypt accepts your offer.

Lowering her arms, the smile fades from the Queen's face as she looks around at the hovel that has become her palace.

ZENOBIA

As you can see, we are somewhat lacking in
accommodations at the moment. However, I can
offer you some food, hot water for a bath, and clean
straw to make your pallet. I would guess you could
make use of all three, after such a long journey.

GABRIELLE

(half-heartedly smiling)

They would be welcome.

Thank you.



ZENOBIA

Think nothing of it. I'll take my leave of you now. If you wish something, simply ask one of my guards, and it will be granted if it is within my power to do so.

Gabrielle nods in thanks as the Queen slips back into the shadows.

CUT TO:

EXT. MISTY LIMBO

Xena sits atop a small boulder whose very tip juts out from the thick ground mist. Her eyes shine with a bottomless grief, and it is written large across her face. Voices fill the space around her, cutting through the still air like a sharp blade. Each voice adds a note of condemnation to the misery already seething in her soul.

Though part of her wants desperately for the voices to stop, she bears their taunts stoically, knowing this to be her true penance.

Her own voice, stating long ago thoughts, stands out from the rest, forcing her to listen.

XENA

(VO)

If there was a reason for our travels together, it was because I had to learn from you the final, the good, the right thing to do.



The final four words of Xena's declaration echo in the void, eclipsing the other voices so that nothing exists but herself and those words, far more mocking than the worst accusations thrown at her.

XENA

I was so sure I was right. The souls of all
those people depended on me to make the
first unselfish choice of my life.

(a beat)

But how can something
so right feel so wrong?

The mist seems to darken, then part as a STRANGER enters. He's a wizened old man, dressed in formless robes, who seems neither evil nor good.

STRANGER

(smiling)

Life's eternal conundrum.

His smile broadens.

STRANGER

(cont'd)

Right and wrong. Two sides of the same coin.
Who really knows which is which?

Xena's eyes narrow as he approaches, but she doesn't move to block his path. If anything, his voice and presence are welcome distractions.

XENA

Who are you?

STRANGER

A friend, perhaps.

XENA

(scowling)

I have no friends.

STRANGER

Not now, but once, yes?

XENA

Go away, old man.
I'm in no mood for games.



STRANGER

Where would you have me go?
This is my home.

XENA
(sarcastically)
Nice choice.
(a beat)
What do you want?

STRANGER
I desire nothing.
But you... what is it that you desire?

XENA
(flatly)
To be left alone.

STRANGER
I'm afraid that isn't possible.
Consider me... a guide, if you will.
Someone who leads the lost
ones on to their destiny.

XENA
The lost ones?

STRANGER
(gesturing at the void around them)
Yes. Stuck between this world
and the next; a part of both, and
yet of neither. With only the
thoughts of the dead for company.
(beat)
Whose thoughts do you hear?

XENA
None of your business.

STRANGER
Why do you hide from the light by seeking
the darkness? Are you afraid?

XENA
(eyes narrowing)
I'm afraid of nothing.

STRANGER
Then you must choose your path.

XENA
(sarcastically snorting)
I've made too many choices in my life.
Most of them were wrong.
(softly)
She was the only right one.

STRANGER

I see more clearly now.
The choice you made cost you
someone very dear to you, didn't it?
(beat)
I can feel the love in you. The grief.
The anger. They tether you to this
place as strongly as any cord.

XENA

(soundlessly snarling)

STRANGER

You know I speak the truth. You must purge yourself
of these emotions. Even the love in your heart.
It keeps you here in the world between worlds,
and harms both you and the one you hold dear.

XENA

Spare me your truths, old man. I've been
through this before. There was a time when I
condemned myself to that damnable cross.

(beat)

And now I'll spend the rest of my existence
knowing I've hurt the only person who
meant more than life to me.

(silent laugh)

Hades himself couldn't have thought
up a worse Tartarus for me.

STRANGER

And the one you love? Would you have her
suffer your fate as well as her own?
Is that the truth you hide from?

Xena stares at him, profoundly shocked, but doesn't have the words to answer.

The stranger stands and waves his arms. The mist clears, and two paths are shown, stretching into
the distance. At the end of one is a brilliant light. At the end of the other is rotting blackness.

STRANGER

(cont'd)

To save you both, you must purge your emotions
and move onward into what is meant to be.
There is no other way.

The stranger fades into the mists.

STRANGER

(cont'd)

(VO)

Choose wisely, Xena of Amphipolis.

After a long moment, Xena stands and begins to walk down an invisible line midway between the two wildly divergent paths. As she walks, a window into the living world opens, and she stops, watching the scene before her unfold.

Gabrielle walks slowly down narrow, twisting corridors, following a large man armed with a heavy spear. Xena watches as her soulmate enters a small bathing chamber and is left alone to slowly disrobe. As Gabrielle's clothes slip from her body, Xena sees, for the first time, the true devastation that her death has wrought. Gabrielle's once sleek, muscled body is wasted and emaciated. As she bends down to slip off her boots, Xena sees the knobs of her spine poke through the flesh upon which her tattoo is drawn.



Swallowing hard against a fresh onslaught of tears, Xena continues to watch as Gabrielle slides listlessly into the steaming water. She wants nothing more than to reach out and comfort her beloved, but, once again, Gabrielle's words still her actions. And for the first time, the truth of her choice fills her soul.



XENA

(voice choked with tears)
I can't go back.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. WASHROOM - DAY

Stepping out of the tub, Gabrielle winces as her feet make contact with the chilled floor. She grabs a piece of threadbare linen and starts to dry herself off, looking elsewhere as she does so, so as not to see what her body has become from months of misuse.

As dry as she can possibly make herself, she reaches for and dons her clothes, smoothing out the wrinkled fabric with the palms of her hands, and taking in a deep breath before releasing it as a weary, saddened sigh.

Taking a last look around the tiny room, she slings her pack over her shoulder and steps out into the dimly lit corridor, looking first left, then right, trying to decide on a direction. The scent of cooking food comes from the left, and though her stomach voices its displeasure, she turns in that direction, her promise to help these people spurring her on.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The kitchen is small and crowded with people who give her blank, and sometimes reproofing, stares as she passes by. Though no one is outwardly rude, it's obvious that she's seen as just another unwelcome mouth to feed, and a foreign mouth at that.

The line moves forward, and she grabs a plate, holding it out as a washed out old woman ladles something undefinable onto it. At the end of the table are wooden mugs filled with cool water, and she grabs one, then shuffles away from the swarming mass of people, determined to find a quiet place to eat, but unsure where to find such a spot.

A hush falls over the room as a tall, thin, and dark man enters. He spots Gabrielle immediately and changes direction to come to her side.

AMUN

I am Amun, her Majesty's advisor. A space has been prepared for you. If you will follow me, I will take you to it.

GABRIELLE

(gratefully nodding)
Thank you.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BEDCHAMBERS - DAY

The space is surprisingly large. Even more surprisingly, it is empty. Ten pallets are laid in orderly rows along the floor. Gabrielle is sitting in the one farthest from the door, in a semi-lit corner, her gear spread around her.

Away from prying eyes, she lays her mostly full plate on the ground and forgets its presence as she reaches into her travel bag and pulls out her scroll and quill. Unfurling the scroll, she stares down at it, willing the words to come, but her mind refuses to issue them.

GABRIELLE

Great. Even my muse has left me.



She slowly rerolls the scroll and places it carefully back in the bag. Her hand brushes against the urn that carries Xena's ashes, and after a small pause, she lifts the urn from its confines and sets it in her lap, both hands cradling it protectively.

She stares down at for a long moment, lost in thought, before lifting her head and blinking away tears of fresh grief.

GABRIELLE

(whispering)

Xena?

(pausing)

I know, wherever you are, you can hear my thoughts. And I want you to know that even though we're not together right now,

I still love you

(beat)

with all my heart. And I miss you.

More than you will ever know.

A teardrop falls on the urn, marring its pristine black surface, and she brushes it away with a careful thumb.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

I know you might not understand why I asked you to leave. I don't understand it myself, sometimes. But I know that I need... this.

This time to be alone with my thoughts.

And my feelings. And it hurts... so much.

But I know it's for the best.

(agonizingly whispering)

It has to be.

She breaks down for a moment, then gathers herself with the inborn strength so characteristic of her.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

I remember once, a long time ago, when you tried to teach me about healing. And you told me that I always had to remember to remove a bandage gently, because if I moved too harshly, I would reopen the wound, and it would take longer to heal.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd - beat)

That's what I am now, Xena. An open wound.
And with you just... popping in and out of my
life like you were, there was no way that wound
could heal. So I had to send you away, so that I
could heal. I only hope, one day, you'll understand.

Lifting the urn almost reverently, she places a gentle kiss on the lid, then cradles it against her
cheek.



GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Remember once when I told you about there being
two kinds of tears, Xena? The kind for those who
leave you, and the kind for those you never let go?
Well, I mean those words now more than ever.
And I won't say goodbye, Xena.
Because we'll be together again. One day.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MISTY LIMBO

Xena turns and looks back and forth between the two choices. She takes a step toward darkness.
Then she stops, a brow goes up and she looks over her shoulder at the light.

XENA

It can't be this easy.
(contemplating)
Choose wisely?

She looks back to the rock where she and the old man had been sitting.

XENA

(cont'd)

(questioningly)

Tries to hide from the light....

She looks to the light.

XENA

(cont'd)

by seeking the darkness. Of course,
it's a test. To find what I truly want,
the real answer is in the light.

With that she turns and walks toward the light. As she gets closer, it flashes. It seems to envelop her and she disappears. Once she is gone, the light dims and grows black while the blackness grows brighter.

The stranger reappears and simply shakes his head as he looks first to the darkness that has swallowed Xena, then back at the now transformed bright light.

STRANGER

It was for the best, Xena.
(beat)
You know that in your heart.

CUT TO:

INT. DEPTHS OF HELL

From within the very depths of Hell, LUCIFER stands hunched over what appears to be a flat-topped rock, cackling with glee at whatever it is he's seeing. Behind him, a heavy door opens with a loud squeal, and the sounds of footsteps echo in the cavern. He ignores the intrusion, and continues to look downward.

DEMON #1

(off camera)
My lord, we've brought you a woman
who was loitering outside the gates.

LUCIFER

(still turned away)
Throw her in the pits with the others.
I'm busy.

DEMON #2

(off camera)
But, my lord....

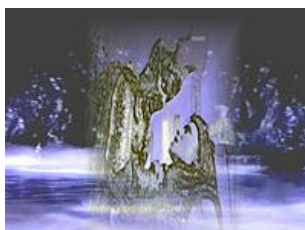
LUCIFER

I'm busy, I said! Now get out of
here before you join her!

XENA

(VO)
Aww, c'mon "Lucy".
Is that any way to treat an old... friend?

Hearing the voice, Lucifer spins, enraged. Xena is standing between two demons, looking listless and gaunt. Her eyes are soulless, dead, devoid of any emotion. Snarling her name, he flies across the room and grabs her around the neck, squeezing her throat with all of his strength.



Being a ghost, the maneuver isn't very effective against Xena, and realizing this he stops, but doesn't release her.

LUCIFER

Do you know how long I've
waited for this? How many times
I've dreamt of your eternal torture?

XENA

(dryly)

I've got a pretty good idea.

LUCIFER

And now, at last. You're mine.
Body. And. Soul.

XENA

(conspiratorially)

I'd look into getting my dinars
back if I were you. You got
a pretty bum deal.

LUCIFER

(laughing)

Death hasn't changed you, Xena. You're still
the same bitch with the rotten attitude.

He strokes her cheek with a long nail.

LUCIFER

(cont'd)

You'll make a lovely little pet in my zoo.

Xena smiles, though it's devoid of humor.

XENA

I didn't know you were into exhibitionism.

LUCIFER

(laughing)

Oh, I'm into many things, Xena.
Most of which you taught me.

(beat)

Now... why are you here?

XENA

(shrugging)

I was in the neighborhood. Just thought I'd
drop by. Catch up on old times. You know.

LUCIFER

I do. I do indeed.

(looking around)

And where's your tasty little girlfriend?
I'd love to get my claws into her too.

XENA

(unconcernedly)

I died. She didn't. C'est la vie.

LUCIFER

(grinning)

It's like that, is it? Poor, poor Xena, doomed to spend eternity alone while her sweet little soulmate continues on with a new life, new love. Soon, you won't even be a memory.

Lucifer releases his grip on Xena and covers the place on his chest where his heart would be, if he had one.

LUCIFER

Kinda gets you right here, doesn't it?

XENA

(unmoving)

Believe what you want.



LUCIFER

Oh, I will. I will. An eternity of watching you suffer. I'd almost think it was a gift from

(pointing up)

'Him'. You weren't exactly one of his favorite people in the end, were you?

(off of Xena's silence)

Why are you really here, Xena?

XENA

(smiling)

Maybe I just wanted to go somewhere where a dead chick like me can still kick a little ass.

Lucifer's laughter fills the cavern. He slides an arm around Xena's shoulders, pleased when she doesn't resist.

LUCIFER

You know, I'm tempted to give you a personal tour of my favorite hot spots,

(chuckling at his own humor)

but you'd probably like that too much.

XENA

(shrugging)

What can I say? I have many skills.

LUCIFER

Indeed you do. Skills I'm sure I could put to good use. But it's not like I can trust you, now is it?

XENA

You got me.

(beat)

I will admit, the last time we were together I was a little....

LUCIFER

(cutting her off)

Conniving? Traitorous? Deceitful?

XENA

Just the type of person you need down here. Come on, Lucy. Give me another chance.

LUCIFER

A chance?!? You?? Like the chance you gave me before betraying me and throwing me down into this stinking pit??

XENA

(heatedly)

Oh, come on, Lucifer. Tell me you're not enjoying playing King down here. Lording it over everybody, playing your sadistic little games with their souls.

(beat)

Or did you really think you were ever going to become anything more than a second-rate angel? Still answering to the top dog in the kennel.

(beat)

If anything, you should be thanking me for doing you the biggest favor of your life.

Lucifer releases his hold on Xena and crosses his arms over his belly, literally doubled over with laughter. Xena looks on, her face expressionless, as his mirth slowly plays itself out and he is able to straighten up once again.

LUCIFER

Xena, I hate you. I hate everything about you. But by everything unholy, you are the most brazen being I have ever met.

(beat)

I like that in a woman.

XENA

I'm glad you approve.

LUCIFER

Oh, I do. Not enough to buy into the line of bull you're trying to sell me, but I approve just the same.

XENA

What would it take to convince
you of my... sincerity?

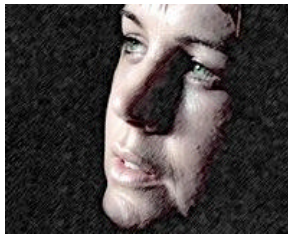
LUCIFER

Let me get back to on that.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

With a gasp, Gabrielle sits up from her furs, panting. Her body and hair are wet with sweat. Her eyes, large and frightened, dart around the darkened room until they come to rest on the urn that sits to her right near her head. Her stomach twists in revulsion as the last remains of her nightmare flow from her waking mind period. It's the same one she's had every night since Xena's death. Her nightmare joins with the present reality, which speaks to the truth of her dream.



She grits her teeth against a rage building within. A rage that urges her to smash that complacent, silent urn. To smash it and scatter its contents to the four winds so that she never need look upon it again and be reminded that her reality is far worse than her dreams could ever be.

Instead, she takes the urn and pulls it to her in an almost desperate embrace as she wills her breathing to calm and her thoughts to quiet.

GABRIELLE

Time to get it together, Gabrielle. You cannot
keep simply existing like this. You need to
heal and move forward with life.

(beat)

You will heal.

(beat)

All these people are counting on you to help.
And you can't do that if you're one step
away from falling apart all the time.

She takes a deep breath, then lets it out slowly. Her expression hardens to one of firm resolution, and she nods to herself.

Her hands are steady as she holds the urn up to the torchlight, and a small smile curves her lips as she brushes a speck of dust from the shiny finish.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

You always did like getting dirty.

Sniffing away the last of her tears, she carefully stows the urn back in her bag, then rises up from her bed and slings the bag over her shoulder, determined that this day will end better than it began.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAPITAL CITY - DAY

Gabrielle and Zenobia along with a handful of guards are walking through the city. Gabrielle is clearly disturbed by the destruction surrounding her. Fires still burn in various places, and the stench of death and decay under the hot sun is almost intolerable. Swarms of flies invade the city, and their annoying drone adds to the already dismal atmosphere.

GABRIELLE

Such a waste. It must have
been very beautiful once.

ZENOBIA

Very beautiful. It was a jewel of my empire.
One of many, perhaps, but no less
precious because of it.

GABRIELLE

How could something like this happen?

ZENOBIA

A common warlord. He calls himself Brakus.
He came from the west. From your homeland.

GABRIELLE

(surprisingly)
From Greece?

ZENOBIA

Yes. He apparently heard the legends of the
gold in our temples, and the treasures buried
with our fallen Pharaohs and decided
to take some for himself.

GABRIELLE

But how could a common warlord stand up
against the might of the Egyptian army?

ZENOBIA

(frowning)
That I do not know. He has bested us at nearly every
turn, invading at will. He takes what he wants, and
kills anyone who stands in his way. Men, armed and
unarmed, women, children. It matters not to him.

Reaching out, Gabrielle plucks a piece of tattered, common cloth from the shattered spokes of a wagon wheel. She rubs the cloth between her fingers, deep in thought. Then she looks over the crumbling city wall to where the warlord's forces are still camped. Their bright, well-made tents give a counterpoint to the enormous destruction within the city.

GABRIELLE

(pondering)

Why is he still here? It's pretty obvious there's nothing much left to be gained here.

ZENOBIA

My advisors, those that are left,
believe he will only be satisfied
when we are completely destroyed.

GABRIELLE

Do you believe that?

ZENOBIA

(sighing)

I... do not know what else to think. It is as if
he has a personal vendetta against this
city, and perhaps, Egypt as well.

GABRIELLE

(nodding)

And do you have any idea what that could be?

ZENOBIA

None.

Gabrielle crumples the cloth she's holding in her fist. Her shoulders straighten and her chin lifts. She looks Zenobia directly in the eyes.

GABRIELLE

Well, I don't know about you, but I'm
not about to let some two-bit warlord
with an attitude problem destroy
this city and her people.

(beat)

Let's figure out how to send
this idiot back where he belongs.

After a moment, a rare, delighted smile spreads itself over Zenobia's beautiful features. Her dark eyes light with a sparkle of hope that had been absent for months. She draws herself up regally, slowly and deliberately, and bows her head in deference to Gabrielle.

Gabrielle stares back, stunned at the honor she's been accorded, then turns away to the wall, letting the cloth drop from her fingers.

She rests her hands on her hips looking over the village and trying to decide the best way to mount a defense. Suddenly her hand shoots out and she catches an ARROW that would have found its way directly into Zenobia's chest. She looks at it, as shocked that she caught it as that it was launched in the first place. She then drops it quickly, eyes scanning the perimeter.

GABRIELLE
DOWN!



Gabrielle pushes Zenobia towards a wall where she is protected by two of the guards traveling with them. Gabrielle and the other three guards take up defensive positions. SWORDS and SAIS are drawn as they scan for their attackers.

Looking toward the top of a wall, Gabrielle sees movement. She motions for the guards to stay put and she cuts right, moving quickly. She tucks her sais against her forearms and takes a leading run, jumping from the base of a wall, then to the top of the wall.

She balances herself as she moves along the wall to get closer to the attackers. She can see as she approaches, there are three scouts. One is armed with a sword. The other two are armed with BOWS. Getting solid footing, she grins.

GABRIELLE
Hello, boys. Nice
day for a fight.

The three men are startled by her appearance but recover quickly. One draws his sword and charges, while the other two string arrows. Gabrielle is quick to block the first blow from the charging man with her sai. She wrenches the sword from his hand sending it to the courtyard below.

GABRIELLE
Now that's not very nice.

She grabs the man and tosses him from the top of the wall. He lands, unmoving outside the village wall. Gabrielle turns to the others, who both release their arrows at the same time. She dodges from side to side letting both arrows fly past her, harmlessly embedding in a wooden wall behind her. She throws the sai in her right hand, hitting one of them in the chest. He falls inside the village walls. As her hand comes back up, she has the CHAKRAM in it, and the grin is back on her face.

The last archer looks up as he strings another arrow. The blood drains from his face as he sees the chakram in her hand.

GABRIELLE
Ah, ah, ah.
You don't want to do that.

He looks nervously toward the tree line, tipping Gabrielle off immediately. She sees about a half dozen more men hiding in the tree line.

GABRIELLE

(shaking head)

Of course. They never learn.

Tired now of playing with them, she moves to the last man on the wall and delivers a roundhouse kick, knocking him from the wall. Then she turns and releases the chakram.

It bounces first off a rock, then connects with the head of the first man. From him it flies to the second man, then off a tree to take down two more men. It then ricochets off a tree and returns to her hand. She watches as the last two men run deeper into the woods. Then she looks down to see the last man she knocked from the wall struggling to his feet. She vaults from the wall and lands over him. She pushes him back and holds the tip of her remaining sai to his throat.

GABRIELLE

You tell Brakus to leave this land
and these people in peace.

(pushing the sai against his throat)

This is his only warning.

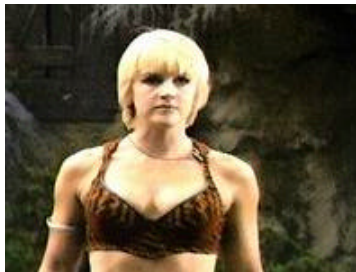
The man nods, clearly shaking.

MAN

Who are you?

GABRIELLE

Xena's finest student.



She moves away from him, allowing him to scramble to his feet and run after his compatriots.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

INT. ZENOBIA'S ROOM - EVENING

Zenobia and Gabrielle are having dinner in Zenobia's private living quarters. Zenobia watches concerned, as Gabrielle pushes her food around the plate, having consumed only half of what she was given.

ZENOBIA

(kindly)

You fought as hard as any five of my soldiers today. I would have thought you to have been well on your way to a third helping by now.

GABRIELLE

(looking up, smiling)

I haven't had much of an appetite lately. Not since....

ZENOBIA

(gently)

Xena died?

GABRIELLE

Yes. She was... my life.
She meant everything to me.



Gabrielle looks back down at her food and takes several more bites, before lapsing into her thoughts once again.

Zenobia looks on, indecision plain on her face, before she finally reaches over and gently touches the back of Gabrielle's hand.

ZENOBIA

Though you might think this a
useless platitude, I do understand
what you are feeling right now.

Gabrielle looks up, ready to dispute her words. Then she sees a flicker of grief, kindred to her own, shining in the Queen's dark eyes.

ZENOBIA

My husband was a fair and just
ruler, beloved by his people.

(sadly smiling)

Unfortunately, he was not a very good fighter.
We were visiting this very city when Brakus began
his attacks. My husband insisted on leading the
charge against him, even though his
advisors and myself begged against it.

(beat)

He would not listen.
He told us that he could not ask his men
to do something he would not.

GABRIELLE

He was killed?

ZENOBIA

Yes. The first day.

GABRIELLE

I'm very sorry for your loss.

ZENOBIA

(smiling slightly)

Thank you.

(beat)

When I learned of his death, I
thought that Ra had hidden his
face permanently from me, so dark
had my world suddenly become.

GABRIELLE

(interestedly)

What did you do?

How did you handle his death?

ZENOBIA

I didn't. I lived within the well of my grief.
It seemed... safer that way.

GABRIELLE

You're not living there now.

(pausing)

Are you?

ZENOBIA

No.

GABRIELLE

How did you...?

ZENOBIA

(softly, gently)

I was needed.

(beat)

My husband's rule fell to me, as Queen and regent to our young son. Amun, the man you met earlier, convinced me that my people could not afford to wait until I was finished grieving.

They were losing their loved ones as well.

GABRIELLE

Did that help?

ZENOBIA

Not at first, no. But eventually, I learned to put on... a mask, if you will. It separates the woman inside from the Queen the people see.

(beat)

And sometimes, that mask allows me to... forget... for a short time the grief that I bear.

GABRIELLE

(sadly)

I don't think I'll ever forget.



ZENOBIA

(wisely)

When you were fighting those men today, it seemed as if you were able to do just that.

Gabrielle looks by turns shocked, then horrified, as she realizes that Zenobia's assessment is correct.

ZENOBIA

Please do not feel guilty, Gabrielle. The capacity to forget is one of life's greatest gifts. It allows us to survive against odds we think impossible.

(pausing)

Your grief will always be there.

Sometimes it just hides away.

(beat)

There are still many nights, when I am alone in my rooms, that I long for the touch of his hand against my face, and the sound of his voice in my ear. And I know, deep within myself, that that will never go away. And I would never wish it so.

GABRIELLE

You really do understand.

ZENOBIA

I do. Just as I know that your love for Xena
burns strong, and that you honor her memory,
and her legacy, with your every breath.

(beat)

Just as I try to do for my husband.

She gives a small smile.

ZENOBIA

(cont'd)

Perhaps, for now, we can try to do it together?

GABRIELLE

(returning the smile)

Thank you. I'd like that.

ZENOBIA

(nodding)

Good. Then it is settled.

(slyly grinning)

Now, if we are to be partners in this venture,
I must insist that you finish your dinner.

Gabrielle smiles, and nods, and attacks the remaining food with a vigor unknown to her since before Xena's death.

CUT TO:

INT. HELL - SEVERAL DAYS LATER

Xena is having a look around Lucifer's domain. She is being escorted by a large demon, who doesn't appear any happier about escorting her than she is about having him right on her heels. She purposely stops suddenly causing him to nearly crash into her. He stands there not moving, breathing down her neck.

XENA

Do you mind? Ever hear of personal space?

He only growls, and Xena is not impressed. She takes a long step forward, then turns around and puts her arm out to stop his advance.

XENA

(cont'd)

You stay this far away from me. Got it?

After a moment, he nods and Xena resumes her walk down the hall. She hears loud voices echoing from a room directly in front of her. She listens, her curiosity getting the better of her as she approaches the door.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HELL - CHAMBER

A half dozen demons are standing in front of a large portal, watching what appears to be a battle. They laugh and even boo among themselves, apparently having a very good time with their entertainment.

DEMON 3

Oooh, this should be good!
I bet Brakus takes her in five minutes.

DEMON 4

Five? He'll cut her to pieces in half that time!

Xena draws closer, mischievously looking over the shoulders of two of the demons.

XENA

Is this a private party or can anyone join?

The first demon gives her an annoyed look but steps to the side, gesturing grandly. Xena steps forward and peers into the portal.

XENA

(cont'd)

What are we watching?

She looks closer at the portal, squinting. The image is fuzzy and shifts erratically.

XENA

(cont'd)

Your reception stinks.

The image clears for a moment, and Xena sees Gabrielle and a small force of Egyptian soldiers slinking along the base of a tall sand dune.

FADE TO:

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Gabrielle, one of Zenobia's commanders, YAVIN, and a handful of soldiers are at the top of a dune watching a supply train approaching the warlord camp. Gabrielle glances back, seeing that more Egyptian troops are nearly concealed and preparing for battle. Chewing on her lip she looks back at the caravan.



GABRIELLE

This is a good sign.

YAVIN

It is?

GABRIELLE

It is.

This shows Brakus wasn't prepared for a long fight.

He's not as well prepared as he could be. He's from Greece, He has no concept of desert fighting.

He needs those supplies to mount a further campaign, so we need to stop it from getting through.

Gabrielle watches as the caravan continues to move slowly through the sand. She is actually very pleased with their lack of progress. She knows that gives them more time. Yavin points to a SCOUT on horseback being called to the front by the COMMANDER.

GABRIELLE

He's going to send him ahead to tell Brakus and maybe get help moving the supplies.

We've got to stop him.



Gabrielle motions for one of the SOLDIERS. The man crawls over to her and looks to where she is pointing.

GABRIELLE

You have to stop him. Cut him off just behind that dune. Do whatever it takes to stop him.

The soldier looks to Yavin who nods his approval. The man then leaves to do Gabrielle's bidding.

YAVIN

And now?

GABRIELLE

And now, we stop that shipment. We let them get just a little ahead of our position then we start the attack from the rear and work our way forward.

Try not to destroy the supplies.

If Brakus can use them so can we.

Yavin signals his men and they prepare for the attack. Gabrielle looks to the men and waits for the caravan to move. Slowly she raises her hand, preparing to give the command. Luck is with them when one of the wagons gets caught up in a loose spot of sand and begins sinking. She smiles when the reinforcements begin frantically scurrying around to get the wagon free.

GABRIELLE

NOW!

The line charges over their concealment and begins the attack. Gabrielle is right in the front, leading the charge. She is taking down man after man, paying little attention to where they fall. She hears the battle all around her, she knows that they are being successful in the attack, but concentrates on finishing the fight. Turning, she finds the commander coming at her, there's a frustrated but determined look on her face as she uses her sais to first disarm him then to knock him to the sand. He lays there unmoving as she stands over him, looking down. She just shakes her head.

Gabrielle is brought from her thoughts by Yavin approaching. Going entirely on instinct she turns on him in defense. Then relaxes when she sees he is a friend.

YAVIN

Your plan worked well. My men will gather the supplies and bring them back to the city

GABRIELLE

Right. Make it as quick as possible.
We may not have a lot of time.

CUT TO:

INT. HELL - PORTAL

Xena and the group of demons continue to watch as the battle plays itself out.

XENA

She's impressive.

DEMON 3

She's a woman.

XENA

And?

DEMON 3

No mere woman could ever beat one man, let alone an army of them. It's impossible!

XENA

(smirking)

Ri-ight.

They all look on just in time to see Gabrielle disarm and then disable the opposing force's commander.

XENA

(wincing)

Ooh. Bet that hurt, huh, boys?

DEMON 4

(stupefied)

It must be a trick. No woman could ever defeat a man. It's unnatural.

XENA

Unnatural, huh?
(*evilly grinning*)
Care to make a little... wager on that?

DEMON 4

(*straightening*)
What kind of wager?

Xena studies her nails, pretending to consider.

XENA

You look like the big, strong, manly type.
Think you can beat me?

DEMON 4

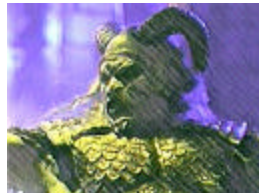
I would squash you like a bug!

XENA

(*smiling*)
Care to put your reputation where your mouth is?
(*beat*)
You against me. Right here. Right now. If I win,
you admit that women are capable of beating men.

DEMON 4

And if... when I win?



XENA

(*smiling broadly, turning seductive*)
You, and all of your close friends here, can
do exactly as you like to... show me
the error of my unnatural ways.

DEMON 4

And what is to stop us from
doing that right now?

XENA

(*dangerously soft*)
You're welcome to try.

The demon considers Xena's proposal, egged on by his friends' catcalls and jeering. Finally, he nods.

DEMON 4

I accept your wager.

He grabs a sword from his friend's scabbard, and tosses it to Xena. He then draws his own sword, twirling it in vicious, rapid arcs, grinning broadly as he does so.

DEMON 4

Any last words?

XENA

See you in Hell.

Xena launches into her attack, swinging her sword with stunning speed. The demon blocks her first strike, and their weapons clash, sparks trailing down both blades to land on the hot stone floor. Xena disengages and resumes her attack, raining blow after blow down on him. The large demon stumbles backward, but manages to keep up his defenses, though it's clear from the start that he's hopelessly outclassed.



Still, he fights gamely, even managing to swing a few blows until he is disarmed by a vicious strike.

The entire group watches as his sword tumbles through the air, only to disappear as it hits the portal.

Roaring, the demon comes at Xena, claws extended, and stops when Xena's sword enters into his chest. His eyes bulge as he looks down at his chest, then into Xena's shining eyes. He gasps with his dying breath.

DEMON 4

Un... natural

As the demon slumps, Xena removes her sword. There is a pause, and then the rent in his chest opens, and a dark, light emanates from the gaping wound. It flows out quickly, covering Xena's sword, her arm, and finally her entire body. Her body goes rigid, her head falls back, and her mouth opens wide in a soundless scream.

The light disappears, and in its place stands DEMON XENA. Her skin has turned the color of an elephant's hide. Her eyes are a glittering, glowing, eerie silver. Demon wings sprout from her back, and her hands and feet have become clawed talons.



She laughs at the looks of stunned disbelief on the faces of the demons surrounding her. Before any one of them can make a move, she turns and vaults toward the portal, disappearing as soon as she hits it.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAPITAL CITY - DAY

Gabrielle and Yavin return to find a few brave souls waiting to greet them after their victory and to assist in getting the pillaged supplies to safety. Gabrielle is doing her best to be cheerful and greets all those who offer her their hands in gratitude, but it's clear that she is not entirely comfortable with the platitudes.

YAVIN

(to the crowd)

We owe a great debt to Gabrielle, the
Battling Bard. She has led us to a
wondrous victory this day.

GABRIELLE

(demurring)

Yavin please, there is still a lot to do.
We won one small battle.
The war is far from over.

YAVIN

You are a natural leader, Gabrielle.
My troops and I will follow you at every turn.

GABRIELLE

I don't want you to follow me,
I just want us to end this conflict.

A YOUNG BOY runs to them, bowing deeply before Gabrielle.

BOY

Queen Zenobia asks that you come right
away and tell her of your victory first hand.

GABRIELLE

Of course, where is she?

BOY

In the hospice, visiting the sick and wounded.

GABRIELLE

Tell her I will be there right away,
I only want to get something to drink.

BOY

You go. I will bring it to you.

GABRIELLE

(smiling at the eager boy)

Thank you. Come on Yavin,
let's go tell the Queen.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOSPICE - DAY

Gabrielle enters the room being use to care for the wounded. A new light of respect, awe, and hope shines from almost every eye that meets hers, and she ducks her head to hide her blush at such adulation. As she continues on, she spies a pretty young girl lying along on a pallet. There is a dirty bandage wrapped around her arm. Steering herself in that direction, she comes up beside the bed and lowers herself to sit next to the girl.

GABRIELLE

What's your name?

GIRL

(shyly)

Auset.

GABRIELLE

That's a very pretty name.

AUSET

I was named after my grandmother.

GABRIELLE

I'll bet your grandmother is very proud that you're named after her.

AUSET

She died.

GABRIELLE

I'm very, very sorry.

(beat)

Does your arm hurt, sweetheart?

Auset nods.

GABRIELLE

Do you mind if I take a look at it?

Maybe I can make it feel better.

Auset looks at her bandaged arm, then back to Gabrielle and nods, her dark eyes large and frightened.

GABRIELLE

(to Yavin)

This needs changing. Bring me some of the cloth we liberated from the enemy stores.

Yavin leaves to get the cloth and Gabrielle begins gently tending to the wound. Her light is blocked for a moment, and when she can see again, a rolled cloth bandage is presented to her by Zenobia, who is smiling.

ZENOBIA

A healer too? You do have many talents.

GABRIELLE

(taking the bandages)
I learned a lot from Xena.

Zenobia settles on the bed next to Gabrielle.

ZENOBIA

So it would seem. My men and my
people think you are our savior.

GABRIELLE

I'm not a savior. Just one of many
trying to do the right thing.

Zenobia notices Gabrielle's discomfort.

ZENOBIA

I would think you would be used to the
adulation. Was it not much the same
when you fought at Xena's side?

GABRIELLE

Xena wasn't much for accolades.
(remembering)
Usually.

Zenobia nods wisely and remains silent as she watches Gabrielle carefully tie off the end of the new bandage and smile at her young patient.

GABRIELLE

All done. That wasn't too bad was it?

Auset shakes her head and smiles.

AUSET

Why do they call you the Battling Bard?

GABRIELLE

(pausing, taken aback)
Well, I suppose because I fight.
And because I tell stories.
(beat)
Would you like to hear one?

Dark eyes shining, Auset nods firmly. A murmur goes through the room, as every head is turned toward Gabrielle, eager to hear her tale.

As if just realizing the implications of her offer, Gabrielle is torn as she bows her head and closes her eyes. Her best-known tales, the ones she loves the most, are all of Xena and their travels together. She is just about to demur, not wanting to open herself up to the pain she knows telling a story of Xena would bring. She opens her eyes again, and takes in the expressions of the people surrounding her. Faces that just moments before had been filled with misery now shine with eagerness, joy and hope. It makes her struggle a fruitless one, and she gives in to the inevitable.

Gabrielle sits up straight and takes a deep breath.

GABRIELLE

All right.
I sing a song of Xena: Warrior Princess
(beat)
and my soulmate.



CUT TO:

EXT. BRAKUS CAMP - EVE

Demon Xena stands at the edge of the camp, looking at the men who are starting to settle in around campfires. She smiles and cracks her knuckles.

XENA

Time for a little mayhem... Xena style.

She moves into the camp and as the men stand to challenge her she proceeds to toss them all over the camp, until finally because of the noise, BRAKUS exits his tent with his SWORD in his hand.

BRAKUS

WHAT IS GOING ON HERE?

Xena is currently holding two soldiers about a foot off the ground by their necks.

XENA

Not much.
Just a surprise training exercise.

Brakus' eyes widen and he drops to one knee, with his head bowed and his sword stuck in the ground.

BRAKUS

Forgive me.
I've been expecting you.

XENA

You have?

BRAKUS

Yes. I knew when Our Lord
saw my defeat he would
send a servant to punish me.

The look on demon Xena's face is priceless. An odd cross of amusement and orgasmic pleasure.

XENA

(quietly)

Punish you?

Oh, the game gets better all the time.



She drops the soldiers and steps toward the kneeling man. She hooks him under the chin with a nail, and raises his head.

XENA

Dear boy, I'm not here to punish you. I'm here to help you.

BRAKUS

(puzzling)

Help me?

XENA

I'm afraid you're right.
Our Lord is not a happy camper.
And when Lucifer isn't happy...
No one is happy.
(beat)
So here's what we're gonna do.

Xena draws him up and leads him back to his tent.

XENA

Got any wine?
I could really use it.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPICE - EVE

Gabrielle and Zenobia have spent most of the day tending the injured and talking about both Xena and Zenobia's husband. Both women now wear smiles that they haven't worn since they met.

ZENOBIA

(laughing)

My husband had a horrible habit of
never getting the mud from his boots.

GABRIELLE

(nodding)

I had nearly the same problem with Xena.
She would always put her boots on the table.
I didn't have to worry about it all the time
but when we were settled for somewhere
for a time, I couldn't get her to keep her boots
off the table. Used to drive me insane!

They both laugh and then look to each other.

GABRIELLE

This is good isn't it?
Thinking about things I'd want
to kill her for, then wishing she
were here so I could yell at her.

ZENOBIA

Absolutely.
They loved us, Gabrielle.
They would want us to go on.

GABRIELLE

I hope so.
It just doesn't feel right
trying to go on without her.

Before Zenobia can respond, Yavin bolts into the room waving to them.

YAVIN

My Queen. Gabrielle.
There has been an
attack on the south wall!

Gabrielle whirls on Yavin, jumps to her feet, and grabs him by the front of his armor.

GABRIELLE

An attack? When?
Why didn't anyone come for me?

YAVIN

There wasn't time! It... it happened
so fast! We never saw it coming!
(pausing)
The fortifications you had us put up, the
defenses around the city, all of them, gone.
(shaking his head)
It was as if... Never mind.

Gabrielle feels a tendril of something she can't define skitter down her spine. The hairs on the back of her neck stand up, and she feels her heart rate accelerate as a chill sweat breaks out over her skin. She grabs Yavin's armor tighter, almost shaking him.

GABRIELLE

No. You tell me. It was as if what?

YAVIN

Nothing. Nothing, I assure you.
Just the overworked imaginations
of tired soldiers, that's all.

GABRIELLE

(gritting teeth)
Tell me.

YAVIN

Some of... some of my men say that
they saw some sort of... demon
leading the forces against us.
(ruefully laughing)
I told you it was....

GABRIELLE

(over Yavin)
By the gods.



Releasing Yavin, Gabrielle darts out of the hospice at a dead run, leaving the others behind to stare after her.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAPITAL CITY - NIGHT

Gabrielle runs into the heated night and up the steps to the top of the city wall, pushing soldiers out of her way as she does so. Her eyes are wide, and almost frightened, as she looks around the perimeter. Only part of her is assessing the damage caused by the attack. The rest of her is concentrating on the darkness beyond, and the sounds behind the sounds.

Her instincts are saturated, giving her conflicting information, while her mind is telling her things that cannot possibly be true.

Her intense concentration is broken as Zenobia and Yavin join her atop the wall. Zenobia lays a gentle hand on Gabrielle's shoulder, frowning at the cold sweat dampening her skin.

ZENOBIA

Gabrielle?
(louder)
Gabrielle?

Gabrielle spins quickly, and almost knocks Zenobia off her feet as she does so. Reaching out, she steadies them both, and attempts a smile.

GABRIELLE

I'm sorry. I was just....

ZENOBIA

(concernedly)

I understand.

(softly)

What is wrong?

GABRIELLE

It's... nothing.

(to Yavin)

We'll need to get these reinforcements
back up as quickly as we can. See if
you can get some of the uninjured
civilians to help. I'll join you shortly.

Yavin nods and jumps down from the wall, shouting orders to his men in rapid succession. Zenobia remains behind, the concerned look still present on her face.

ZENOBIA

You're hiding something,
Gabrielle. I can feel it.

GABRIELLE

(impatiently)

It's nothing, Zenobia.

I... I just need time to think.

(more kindly)

Why don't you get back down
to the hospice and try to get
some sleep? It's been a long day.

Zenobia turns away from Gabrielle and looks doubtfully into the darkness surrounding them.

ZENOBIA

Do you think they will
be back?

GABRIELLE

(firmly)

Not tonight. This was just a warning.
But tomorrow... G'wan.
Get some sleep, ok?

After a long moment, and against her best instincts, Zenobia finally gives in and descends from the wall, leaving Gabrielle to her thoughts and unvoiced concerns.

Gabrielle turns back to face the darkness in the direction she knows Brakus' camp lies. Her mind is a whirling torrent of indecision, but her tongue gives voice to the only truth she knows.

GABRIELLE

(whispering)

I can feel you.



FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. HELL - DAY

Lucifer is pacing wildly, storming back and forth in his throne room. The doors open and two demons escort demon Xena in. She looks at her guards and a wicked smile curls on her lips right before she growls at them, causing them to take a step away.

Lucifer charges Xena, and she straightens to meet him. He stops just short of grabbing her.

LUCIFER

WHAT DO YOU THINK....

XENA

Save it. I was helping you.

LUCIFER

Helping me? How could you possibly help me?

XENA

By helping your troops in Egypt.

LUCIFER

My troops.

XENA

You know, playing innocent was never one of your strong suits, so don't try it now. Brakus spilled his guts. So why are you waging a campaign against them?

LUCIFER

I don't think that should concern you.

XENA

It does concern me. Because you see, you have a big problem out there.

LUCIFER

Your little blonde friend?

XENA

That would be the problem.

LUCIFER

My forces will prevail.

XENA

No, they won't. The mortal men that you sent couldn't beat her with a stick.
(proudly)

I should know. I taught her everything she knows.

LUCIFER

One mortal woman, even one trained by the
'great Xena' will not stand against an
entire army of men loyal to me.

XENA

Here's a clue, Lucy.
She's already doing it.



Xena puts her arm around his neck and turns him to walk toward the table. She pats him on the chest as she guides him over.

XENA

Now come on, Lucy. You've got to tell, Xena
what's wrong if you want me to help you.

LUCIFER

I don't recall asking for your help.

XENA

No, but you need it. So why don't you tell me
exactly why we're going to crush them.

LUCIFER

Ever hear the story of the
scorpion and the swan?

XENA

(rolling her eyes)

Do you guys only know one story?
Not good enough. Now come on.

He storms to his chair and sits.

LUCIFER

I don't need a reason.
I'm the KING OF HELL!

XENA

There's always a reason, Lucy.
I can see it in your beady little eyes.
And I'm not going to tell
you how to defeat them unless
you let me in on the secret.

LUCIFER

They simply need to be taught that
there is a stronger, higher power
than those they place their faith in.

XENA

Or lower as the case may be.

LUCIFER

As the case may be.

XENA

The fly in your ointment, Lucifer,
is my former partner. She's gonna
kick your butt all the way to Rome.

LUCIFER

(laughing)

You seem to forget, Xena, that
I rule down here. And it's a very
nasty place. I've thought up ways
of defeating my enemies that you
would never dream of attempting.

(examining Xena)

Well, maybe you would, but...
You're not the only one who knows
how to win wars, Xena.

XENA

No, but I'm the only one who knows how
to get rid of your little problem for ya.

She faces his private portal.

XENA

(cont'd)

Your enemy has grown a new heart, Lucifer.
Look at her. She's rallying the troops and
the people are standing behind
her. She's given them hope again.

LUCIFER

(disgustedly)

Hope. Do you know how much I
hate that disgusting little word?

XENA

You and me both, buddy. But it's
gonna be your downfall unless
you rip it out by the roots.

(beat)

And I'm the only one who
can do that for you.

LUCIFER

I think not. I was winning
this war without you, Xena.
I'll finish it without you.

XENA

(shrugging)
Suit yourself.

LUCIFER

Guards! Get her out of
my sight.



The guards do as they are told, and Xena leaves with them, smiling a secret little smile that Lucifer can't see.

After Xena leaves, Lucifer turns back to the portal, frowning as he watches Gabrielle work her magic on a people once beaten and one breath from dying. His claws tap loudly, repetitively, on the table as his rage seethes within.

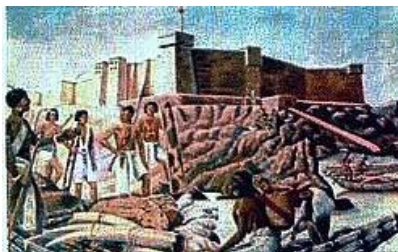
LUCIFER

(to self)
I won't say you're right, Xena...
but a little insurance never hurts.
(shouting)
Guard! Bring Baltazar to me.
I have a little job for him.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAPITAL CITY - DAY

Gabrielle, Zenobia and Yavin are back atop the city wall. The fortifications are back in place, though it's taken all night and most of the morning to get them up, and they're not nearly as strong as they once were. The workers, mostly Egyptian soldiers stand tired but resolute, awaiting Gabrielle's next command. She smiles at them. They nod back and straighten, proud of the gift of her acknowledgement.



YAVIN
(facing outward)
Great Ra, protect us.

Gabrielle turns quickly at the sound of awe, mixed with fear, in Yavin's voice. Her eyes widen as she stares at a long line of enemy soldiers standing atop a sand dune. They are impeccably dressed in BLACK ARMOR with matching SHIELDS and HELMETS. The armor is so dark that it seems to absorb the brilliant light of the sun, and casts the entire dune into a gloomy pall.

ZENOBIA
Reinforcements must have come in the night.
Merciful Isis, how will we ever defend against that?

Hearing something very close to panic in the Queen's voice, Gabrielle reaches out and clasps Zenobia's wrist.

GABRIELLE
I know it seems bad, but don't give up hope.
They're just men, and they can be defeated.
(softer, to self)
Somehow.
(to Yavin)
Let's get below. I think I remember seeing
something in the boxes of supplies that
we got that might help us with this.

Yavin nods his assent, and both turn to step off the wall. Both freeze as they take in the sight before them.

Where a group of tired, but willing, soldiers once stood, now stands a large group of men, women, and older children, looking up at her with determined expressions. As she watches, more join the group, coming out from hiding places deep beneath the city. To a person, they are dirty and gaunt, but their eyes are lit by a fierce, proud glow. Some wear bloody bandages over various wounds. Some lean on the strong shoulders of their brethren. Most are armed. Some with slings and stones, some with pitchforks, some with bows and stout sticks, and some with rusty, half broken swords.

GABRIELLE
(whispering)
By the gods.

MAN
We know what you are doing for us,
and for our city, great warrior. We
ask for the honor to stand beside
you and fight for what is ours.

Gabrielle and Yavin exchange glances. Yavin smiles, then nods. Gabrielle bites her lip, then turns back toward the ever-growing crowd, summoning her brightest smile.

GABRIELLE
It is I who am honored. I don't...
(heartfelt)
Thank you.

CROWD
(cheering loudly)
Gabrielle! Gabrielle! Gabrielle!

CUT TO:

INT. UNDERGROUND HIDEOUT - DAY

Gabrielle and Yavin crouch among several large, opened WOODEN CRATES. Rummaging through one, Gabrielle pulls out a large, heavy, and greasy jar, holding it in both hands carefully, and staring down at it, undecided.

GABRIELLE
How many archers do we have?

YAVIN
(considering)
Among the soldiers, perhaps fifty.
Perhaps another fifty among the civilians.

Gabrielle nods, then lapses into silence. Yavin watches closely, before deciding to speak.

YAVIN
Do you have a plan?

GABRIELLE
(hesitating, then nodding)
The beginnings of one, yes.

YAVIN
(carefully)
And it has to do with... what
you're holding there?

GABRIELLE
(nodding)
Greek Fire. You can bathe arrow tips
in it, and light them. It sticks...
and burns. Water can't put it out.

YAVIN
(smiling broadly)
That's wonderful!
(beat)
Isn't it?

GABRIELLE
(eyes close, remembering)
I've seen what Greek Fire can do to people
who get in its way. And I'm not sure I can
let that happen...even to an enemy.

YAVIN

(thoughtfully)

Our archers are some of the best in the land.
Even the civilians. Perhaps if we gave it to
the best of them, and had them aim for
the enemy's shields? Perhaps we
could force them back that way.

(beat)

Our remaining archers could fire
regular arrows when the enemy
drops their burning shields.

GABRIELLE

That might just work.

(beat)

All right, let's get these topside.
We've got a battle to win.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAPITOL CITY - EVE

Gabrielle looks on quite pleased as the preparation are finished up for the upcoming battle. She takes a moment to take a drink of water from a bucket as she looks over the top of the wall at the waiting troops. Yavin stands next to her.

YAVIN

Why are they waiting?

GABRIELLE

Because they have the ability to wait us out.
They know our resources are limited.
They're trying to wear us down.

YAVIN

Then they'll be in for quite a surprise.

Gabrielle drops the ladle into the bucket.

GABRIELLE

I hope so. That's an element we
can certainly use right now.

YAVIN

It'll be dark enough soon.

GABRIELLE

(quietly)

Yes.

(sincerely)

Yavin, I want to thank you. Your support has been
important. I want you to know, that if something should
happen, you do have the ability to defeat this man.

YAVIN

I know, Gabrielle.
And WE will defeat him. Together.

Gabrielle nods and watches as the sun makes it's final descent below the horizon.



GABRIELLE

It's time. Let's get ready.

Yavin signals for the archers to take their positions. As the archers climb to the top of the wall, Gabrielle and Yavin make their way down to the courtyard. Troops are assembled and prepared to march outside the wall and fight hand to hand.

Carefully, Gabrielle and Yavin move the troops to the gate and wait for the firefight to begin. Gabrielle takes a deep breath and nods. Yavin gives the signal and within seconds the first arrows are lit and fired.



They both watch as a second volley is fired. A captain on the wall gives the signal and the gates are opened. Gabrielle and Yavin lead the charge out the gates. She is pleased to see that the plan to force them to relinquish their shields has worked for a majority of them. They are far more defenseless than she could have hoped for.

She signals her troops to stand the line and wait for the next volley of regular arrows.

GABRIELLE

Take any that get through, but don't charge
their line. And watch for their archers.

Two more volleys are fired and then the remaining line charges toward the city.

GABRIELLE

STAND FAST!

The opposing troops charge hard and fast engaging Zenobia's troops. Gabrielle is right at the front of the battle leading the troops by example. She and Yavin are fighting side by side taking down man after man. Gabrielle ducks a swing from a man, coming back up to knock the sword from his hand. She delivers a fist to his chin, snapping his head back. As he falls back into the sand, she turns and takes another man down with a kick to his chest.

Taking a moment to catch her breath, she sees one of her men fighting three soldiers and about to be beaten down. She runs to her man and dodges between two of the attackers to protect the man's back. She can tell he's tired from the sound of his panting.

GABRIELLE

I've got you! Keep at it!



Gabrielle stays busy with the two in front of her. As the second man falls she notices that things are getting very quiet. She lowers her sais and listens, there is a hard sound of air being moved and swept around. She draws a deep breath as she remembers exactly what causes that sound.

GABRIELLE

TAKE COVER! GET INSIDE!

She begins herding her remaining troops toward the gate. Yavin joins her as they stop and push men ahead of themselves.

YAVIN

What's going on?

GABRIELLE

You really don't want to know!

The sound grows louder and in the light of the moon and the remaining fires a shadowy figure with a huge wingspan descends from the sky. Gabrielle turns and draws her sais. Her fears are realized, but it is with overwhelming relief that she realizes it's not Xena who is coming for her.

GABRIELLE

YAVIN, INSIDE NOW!

YAVIN

(drawing his sword)

I stand with you Gabrielle!

GABRIELLE

This is my fight!

YAVIN

Then it is mine as well!

Gabrielle spins around and shoves Yavin away, pushing him hard to the ground, where he lays, stunned, staring up at her with wide, dark eyes.

GABRIELLE

I don't have time to argue!

With her back turned, Gabrielle's attention is drawn away from the demon descending for her. As he extends his talons to make contact with her body, a BRIGHT LIGHT begins emanating from her back, burning through her clothes and running into the body of the demon. Gabrielle looks as if she is in great pain, but Yavin is afraid come to her aid, for fear of being caught in whatever is taking place.

The demon screams in agony as the light engulfs him. A long eerie howl is heard as the demon flies overhead, flames consuming him until there is nothing left but ashes.

Gabrielle collapses to the ground on her hands and knees, panting hard. Yavin looks down now to see the DRAGON TATTOO on her back. He takes a deep breath and reaches down to help her to her feet.



YAVIN

Are you all right?

GABRIELLE

Let's get inside. I can't handle
two of those in one night.

The enemy troops retreat in fear as Gabrielle and Yavin run inside the city walls and slam the gates behind them. Gabrielle leans against the gate, still breathing hard, her eyes tightly closed.

YAVIN

So what my men saw last night was true.
There really was a demon that led the forces.

GABRIELLE

(nodding)

There's something more than
meets the eye going on here.

YAVIN

Do you know who sent
these demons?

GABRIELLE

I think I might.

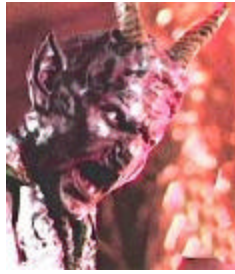
(beat)

But, by all the gods, I hope I'm wrong.

CUT TO:

INT. LUCIFER'S THRONE ROOM

Watching the battle through his private portal, Lucifer has become more and more enraged. His breathing is heavy, and he snarls each time his soldiers take a hit from the opposing forces.



As he watches Baltazar, the strongest demon in his realm burst into flames, he howls in rage. Jumping up from his throne, he begins destroying the room and everything in it. This includes the two unfortunate guards who were unlucky enough to be standing inside the door.

All of Hell shakes with his righteous anger, and soon there isn't a thing in his room, save for the portal, which isn't shattered to dust-sized bits.

His anger ebbing just slightly, he whirls back to the portal, and watches. A crowd of cheering Egyptians greet their savior and hoist her on their shoulders. They parade her down the ruined streets of the city.

The sound of his fangs grinding together is loud in the otherwise silent room.

Xena's previous warning comes to him in a thought.

XENA

(VO)

Your enemy has grown a new heart, Lucifer. Look at her. She's rallying the troops and the people are standing behind her. She's given them hope again. It's gonna be your downfall unless you rip it out by the roots.

LUCIFER

Been there, done that, Xena. Didn't work.

An idea comes to him.

LUCIFER

(cont'd)

Unless....

A smile comes to his face then; a cold and rotting one deserving of gracing the lips of the King of Hell.

LUCIFER

Unless... Guards! Bring me Xena!

CUT TO:

INT. LUCIFER'S THRONE ROOM

Xena saunters into the destroyed room, and grins as she looks around.

XENA

Love what you've done with the place.

LUCIFER

(grinning)

Xena! Just the demon I was looking for.
Come in. Come in!

XENA

(knowingly)

Yees?

LUCIFER

I'd offer you a seat, but as you can see....

XENA

Mm.

LUCIFER

(casually)

I've thought about our little talk earlier,
and I've decided to offer you a place
as my second in command.

Xena's raises her eyebrow.

LUCIFER

(cont'd)

I'm serious! It has great perks, Xena.
All the ass you can kick, all the
souls you can torture. Weekends off.

XENA

Why the sudden turnaround? Last time we
talked, you weren't interested in a word I said.

LUCIFER

Let's just say I've had a change of... heart.

XENA

(smiling darkly)

Let's.

(beat)

What's the catch?

LUCIFER

(pretending shock)

Catch?! Xena, you wound me! Can't we just
say I'm returning a favor and leave it at that?

XENA

We could... but I won't. C'mon, Lucifer,
you're the King of Hell. There's
always a catch. So spill it.

LUCIFER

(relenting)

Well... there's a tiny catch.
But I assure you it's one you'll enjoy.

XENA

Go on.

LUCIFER

(muttering)

I want you to get the little
blonde girlfriend out of the way.

XENA

(grinning)

Kicked the tar outta your army, didn't she?

LUCIFER

(growling)

XENA

(examining her nails)

I'm sorry Lucy, but no can do. My earlier offer
was a one time only kinda thing. So, if you'll
excuse me, the guys downstairs just got in
a new shipment of the damned and I'm
gonna help plan their eternities for 'em.

Waggling her taloned fingers at him, Xena turns to leave.

LUCIFER

WAIT!

Xena stops, then turns.

XENA

Yes?

LUCIFER

(thinking furiously)

How about something to sweeten the deal?

(grinning)

I know! We all know that when
blondie dies, she's gonna go...

(pointing up)

while you'll spend eternity...

(pointing down)

But if someone, say for instance me,
was to tell you the exact location

LUCIFER

(Cont'd)

of the souls' waiting area, an industrious
demon like yourself just might be
able to grab her before 'He' sends
his little do-gooders after her.

(grinning widely)

She'd be trapped with you forever. Just like
you planned the last time you were here.

XENA

(darkly smiling)

Sounds tempting.

Lucifer grins triumphantly.

XENA

But too easy. There's something
that you're not telling me.

LUCIFER

Xena!

XENA

Lucy, I think we know one another well
enough by now for you to realize I
don't fall for things quite that easily.

(beat)

That'd be your department.

LUCIFER

(growling)

XENA

You offer me a delicious package, all wrapped
up in a pretty little bow, and present it to me
in exchange for doing something you
know I've already offered to do?

(rolling her eyes)

Please. I didn't fall off
the turnip cart yesterday.

LUCIFER

Well....

XENA

I knew it. So spill it or I walk.
Those guys downstairs aren't gonna
wait long, and I really was looking
forward to a game of 'whip the infidel.'

LUCIFER

All right, all right. It seems
your little girlfriend has developed
a skill you didn't teach her.

XENA

And that might be?

LUCIFER

You had the ability to kill
gods. Seems she now has
the ability to kill demons.

XENA

Ya don't say.

LUCIFER

Oh, I do. I do. And in a
very nasty way, too. Didn't
know she had it in her, frankly.

(beat)

So, in order for you to get close enough
to kill her, I'll... have to make you mortal.

Temporarily, you understand. You
just kill the blonde, get yourself
back to my portal, and

(snapping his fingers)

I make you into a demon again. You
get command of my armies and her soul.
I get Egypt, and everybody's happy.

XENA

(thoughtfully)

I dunno, Lucy. I've gotten
very comfortable with this form in
the short time that I've had it. How
do I know you won't double-cross
me after I've done what you asked?

LUCIFER

(rolling his eyes)

Come on, Xena, you should know me
better than that. I've waited all this
time to get you in my clutches. Do you
really think I'd just let you waltz out of here
as a mortal if I didn't have every
intention of bringing you back to me?

XENA

(considering)

You have a point.

LUCIFER

Of course I do.

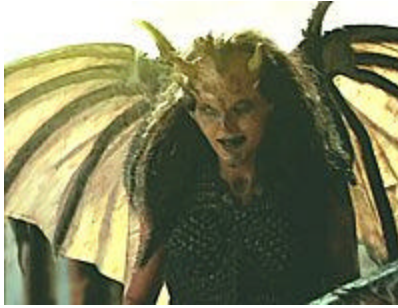
(beat)

So, do we have a deal?

Several moments pass as Xena considers Lucifer's offer. Then a dark smile, truly evil curves her lips and she nods.

XENA

I think that can be arranged.



FADE OUT.

TO BE CONTINUED....

DISCLAIMER

Hell was scandalized during the production of this episode but Egyptian tattoo parlors made a killing.