

Xena: Warrior Princess - Subtext Virtual Season 9



Production #V907 – X Marks the Spot – Part 2

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TEASER

FADE IN:

INT. ARGOS TEMPLE - EARLY EVENING

Gabrielle is walking slowly around the temple, making preparations for her meditation ritual.

A space around the fire has been cleared away, and a small water skin sits to one side. She lights the few candles she was able to find.

When she is finished, she clasps her hands together and brings them to her lips. She blows out a breath, then sits down and closes her eyes.

GABRIELLE

All right, Xena. Let's see if
we can make this bond
work in our favor.

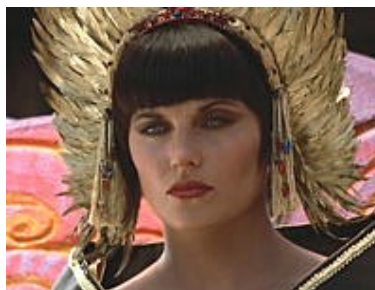


Her breathing slows as she falls into a meditative trance, and her soul begins its search for its other half.

CUT TO:

EXT. CORINTH TEMPLE - LATE AFTERNOON

Judgments are over and the Conqueror goes back to her palace. Her gaze lingers on the hooded figure that stands on the temple steps as her caravan passes by, then passively turns to the crucifixion fields that dot the landscape on the other side of her carriage. Her eyes fix on one cross in particular and close briefly. We see momentary pain, then the blue eyes shutter behind the walls the Conqueror has generated.



Xena waits until the royal procession is lost from sight, then re-enters the temple and searches for the priest she spoke to earlier. She is still wearing her cloak and hood, only her blue eyes visible. A tingling up her spine causes her to straighten and turn, pinpointing a singular spot near the front altar.

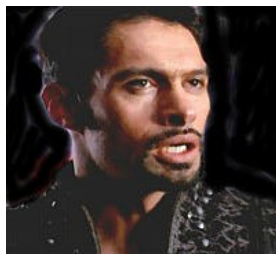
XENA

Show yourself, Ares.

With a poof and a sparkle, the GOD OF WAR materializes beside a statue of himself. He circles Xena like a cat, flicking his fingers at her cloak.

ARES

New look, Xena? I didn't think you did the commoner thing any more.



XENA

I get around easier this way.
No one sees a need to bother
me except you, apparently.

ARES

Really? I didn't realize you still did
that. And why did you come here
if not to speak to me, hmm?

He reaches out to stroke her cheek. She steps back from his touch and ignores his question.

XENA

Was there something in
particular you wanted,
Ares? I have things to do.

Ares drops his hand with a snarl.

ARES

Still upset I see. Well, you'll get over
it and come back to me soon enough.
I've got all the time there is. You
did the right thing... the blonde
bitch would have betrayed you, and
cost you everything you've gained.

It occurs to Xena that Ares is not aware she is not Xena the Conqueror.

XENA

Ares, if you've got nothing constructive
for me, make like the wind and blow.
I really don't have time for this.



Ares' eyes narrow.

ARES

One day, Warrior Princess, you
are gonna push me too far.

He disappears with a flash before she can utter another word.

Xena glances around, realizing that no one noticed her conversation with the god of war.
She spots the priest, and makes a beeline for him.

XENA

C'mere, buddy.
We need to talk.

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. CORINTH HILLSIDE - CROSS - SUNSET

The priests from the temple walk along the rows of crosses, reverently releasing the dead, and placing them into the wagon that accompanies them. The soldiers stationed on duty here pay them little mind, and do not notice the new acolyte. Their job is simply to insure that the populace does not attempt to rescue anyone.

Row by row they go, until reaching the last where those who were just judged still hang. Moaning can be heard coming from several victims, and the soldiers laugh derisively.

SOLDIER

I don't think they've been here
long enough to die, old man.

PRIEST

(solemnly)

Nonetheless, it is my
sacred duty to check.

The soldier looks at him for a long moment and nods. It is the same conversation they have had countless times before. He waves a hand at the priest, even as he walks away.

SOLDIER

Whatever makes you happy, old
man. It makes no difference to
me... or to the Conqueror.

The priest continues his work and when he reaches Rebel Gabrielle, he nods to Xena.

PRIEST

(murmuring)

She is still alive. She has
a very strong spirit.



Xena moves a ladder into place and cuts the ropes that hold Gabrielle in place. Gabrielle moans at the movement even though she is unconscious. The soldier glances at them, and gets up, walking back over to them.

SOLDIER

Let me check her.
I know the Conqueror
was pretty angry with her.

Unseen, Xena jabs a pressure point that stops Gabrielle's breathing. The man holds his fingers under her nose, unwilling to touch the dead body.

He smiles grimly and shakes his head, then sits down to resume his evening meal. Xena immediately undoes the pinch.

PRIEST

(cont'd, whispering)
You'd better be right
about this or it will mean
the death of all of us.

XENA

(muttering)
I'm right. I just have
to convince the
two of them of that.

CUT TO:

INT. CORINTH TEMPLE - BACK ROOM - EVENING

This is a small back room, evidently part of the priest's living quarters. It is sparse but clean. There is a pallet made up on the floor, a small table that is holding an empty pitcher and cup, and a single chair and cot.

Rebel Gabrielle lies on the tiny cot still unconscious. Her legs are splinted and she appears to be naked beneath the light covering that is draw up over her.

Xena sits on the floor beside a basin of dirty water. The cloak rests on the chair nearby. Her hand lightly covers Gabrielle's and she is talking in quiet tones.

XENA

I know you're not my
Gabrielle, but you are still
the Gabrielle that I love.



She shakes her head ruefully.

XENA

(cont'd)

It doesn't make much sense,
but it's the truth. You remind
me a lot of my Gabrielle
when she was younger. You
have the same fire... she's
just learned to temper hers.

Xena looks into the very young face of Rebel Gabrielle. She gently combs her fingers through the wavy long hair.

XENA

(cont'd)

Of course, I think she's had
a lot more years and a lot
more practice at it as well.

A knock on the door interrupts Xena's conversation with the still unconscious woman. Without releasing her hold on Gabrielle's hand, she opens the door.

The priest stands frozen for a moment. Xena raises her eyebrow at him.

XENA

(cont'd)

You gonna stand there
staring at me, or are
you gonna let me
have that clean water
to finish bathing her?

PRIEST

Oh, gods. Sorry.

He extends the bowl to her, then accepts the bowl with the dirty water. He hesitates in the doorway.

PRIEST

(cont'd)

I just cannot get over
the resemblance.

XENA

(wryly)

So you keep saying.
I plan to make it
work in my favor.

The priest looks ready to question her, then decides discretion is the better part of valor. With a shake of his head he exits the small room. Xena turns her attention back to Gabrielle, and begins to gently bathe her.



XENA

(cont'd, muttering)

I hope my Gabrielle understands
this may take a day or two.

She finishes Gabrielle's bath, then stands and covers her with the sheet and light blanket the priest left earlier. She checks Gabrielle's forehead, smiling slightly and nodding approval at the lack of fever.

Another knock on the door causes her to frown and she opens it just slightly. The priest stands there with a fresh pitcher of water, and several packets of herbs.

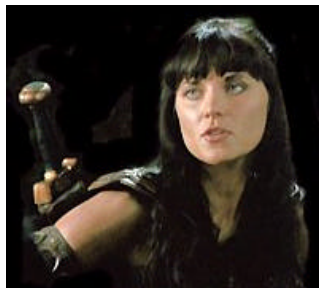
PRIEST

I wasn't sure what
you needed, so....

He trails off, and she nods her head and accepts the supplies.

XENA

These will be fine, thanks.



She sets the things down on the table and he closes the door softly.

She steps over to her small pallet, noticing that she and Rebel Gabrielle are almost within touching distance the room is so tiny. She pulls off her sword and chakram, laying them to one side of her bed. She removes her boots and armor, placing them at the table with the cloak.

Then she lies down on the pallet and stretches out, almost groaning in the relief she feels in being able to relax just the slightest bit. She closes her eyes and reaches out towards her Gabrielle through their bond, hoping that time and distance will not hinder their ability to find and connect with one another.

FADE TO:

INT. ARGOS TEMPLE - EVENING

Mere minutes have passed for Gabrielle, and she is just entering the beginning stages of her meditative trance. Suddenly her eyes open, and she looks around.

GABRIELLE

Xena?

She realizes that she felt and lost Xena in the same moment. She slaps the ground in frustration, then picks up the water skin and takes a long drink. She scrubs her face, and closes her eyes again, consciously slowing her breathing.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

All right, Gabrielle. Focus. You did it once. You can do it again.



She begins to relax back into the meditative state she had reached before. Her breathing slows even farther, and soon the only sound we can hear is the crackle of the fire.

FADE TO:

INT. CORINTH TEMPLE - BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Xena smiles briefly in a light doze before a whimpering sound jerks her awake. Startled, she sits up and looks at Rebel Gabrielle, who is stirring and moaning in pain. She moves to the table and sorts through the packets, placing small pinches from several in the cup until she is satisfied with the mixture.

She adds water and swirls it, then steps to the cot. Xena lifts Gabrielle's shoulders, places the cup to her lips, and she starts to drink. Her green eyes flutter open, then widen in startlement. Unsure whether to bolt, choke or scream, Gabrielle opts to close her eyes and deal with the unreality of her situation in the morning.



Xena sighs in relief, and she lowers Gabrielle back to the cot. It only takes a moment, and Gabrielle's breathing becomes deep and rhythmic. Xena pats her shoulder and moves back to her pallet.

XENA

Well, tomorrow should
be interesting, at any rate.

FADE TO:

INT. CORINTH TEMPLE - BACK ROOM - DAWN

Xena stirs. The unfamiliarity of her surroundings and missing her Gabrielle makes sleep a futile exercise at best.

Rebel Gabrielle begins to waken at the same time, the pain making it impossible to rest. Xena steps to her side, sitting on the edge of the cot and placing her hands on Gabrielle's shoulders to keep her from moving too much.

Gabrielle's eyes open, and widen.

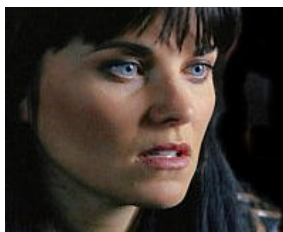
REBEL GABRIELLE

(hissing)
YOU!

She draws a deep breath to yell, but Xena places a hand over her mouth.

XENA

Yeah, me. But I'm not who
you think I am. So cut me
some slack and I'll try to
explain it to you, all right?



Gabrielle looks into Xena's eyes and sees compassion and caring where before there had been only cold arrogance and disdain. She relaxes slightly and nods her head.

XENA

(cont'd)

Besides, you're supposed to be dead. Only the priest and I know you're here alive.

She removes her hand from Gabrielle's mouth. Xena snags the cup from the table and hands it to her.

XENA

(cont'd)

Here. Drink this. Then we can trade stories, Gabrielle.

Gabrielle looks at Xena suspiciously now.

REBEL GABRIELLE

What is this stuff??
How do you know my name??
Who are you??

XENA

Plain water... no drugs until we're done talking. You need to be coherent for this. That's part of the long story.
And my name is Xena.

Gabrielle's eyebrows shoot up her forehead at the last answer, and she swallows the water in a single gulp.

REBEL GABRIELLE

I can't wait to hear this.

FADE TO:

INT. CORINTH TEMPLE - BACK ROOM - MORNING

Rebel Gabrielle looks at Xena with something akin to bewilderment in her eyes.

REBEL GABRIELLE

Wait just a damn minute here.
You're joking, right?

XENA

(shaking head)

No. I'm not the storyteller in our partnership.

REBEL GABRIELLE

I'm a bard?



XENA

Yeah, you are. One of the best there is actually.

REBEL GABRIELLE

(quietly)

Wow. I always wanted to be a bard.

Xena pauses, remembering the slave Gabrielle she had seen when the Fates offered her a different life. Remembering the playwright Gabrielle she'd met as the Empress of Rome when Caesar bound the Fates to change his destiny.

XENA

All right. Now you tell your side, 'cause I know there is more going on that I'm not clued into yet. Ares said as much.

REBEL GABRIELLE

What would you like to know?

XENA

Everything. But start with how you know the Conqueror.

REBEL GABRIELLE

You don't waste any time, do you?

XENA

(smirking)

So I've been told.

A knock on the door interrupts them. Xena motions for quiet and goes to the door. The priest is standing on the other side with a trencher of food. Xena takes the tray from him.

PRIEST

How is she?

XENA

See for yourself.

She opens the door a little wider and he peeks into the room. He nods at Gabrielle and then looks at Xena.

PRIEST

I will be back later. Do you
still want to sneak into
the palace tonight?

XENA

Yes. The sooner I can take
care of things here, the
sooner I can go home.



He nods again, and she shuts the door behind him.

She sets the trencher on the table.

XENA

(cont'd)

What would you like?

Gabrielle's jaw is clenched in pain, and she shakes her head mutely, biting back a groan.

Xena quickly sifts through the packages and mixes a couple herbs together in the cup. She hands the mixture to Gabrielle, who hesitantly reaches for it.

XENA

(cont'd)

It's just something to take
the edge off the pain. I'm
sorry the pressure points
aren't helping you as much
as I hoped they would.

Gabrielle swallows the concoction down without even a grimace at its taste.

REBEL GABRIELLE

(muttering)

They were fine until I
tried to move. Bad idea.

Xena puts a bit of bread, butter and cheese together, and hands it to Gabrielle. She accepts it, and begins taking tiny bites. Xena sees her start to relax, and watches her while eating her own breakfast.

XENA

You think you're
okay to talk now?

REBEL GABRIELLE

Yeah. I'll just lay here and
not move while I do it.



Gabrielle takes another bite of her breakfast while she considers her story. Xena waits patiently, having seen this process in her Gabrielle before. She knows when Gabrielle nods to herself, she will be ready to talk.

REBEL GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Several months ago, a call went out
through the city for scribes. I was
a scribe here in the temple, so I
had no choice in the matter.
I couldn't NOT go. So I went.

She shrugs her shoulders and Xena nods understanding.

REBEL GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

I was assigned to do some
personal writing for Xe... I mean,
the Conqueror. It was sporadic,
though, and I was allowed to keep
my position as a temple scribe.

She stops to clear her throat, and Xena hands her another cup of water.

REBEL GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Thanks. Uh, so I would go to the palace whenever I was called, which was less at first, but increasingly more often as time wore on. Slowly, she began to open up to me, just the slightest little bit... until she seemed... almost... human. I thought we were becoming... friends.

She snorts softly and hangs her head.

REBEL GABRIELLE

(cont'd, bitterly)

I guess I was wrong.



Xena turns back to the table she's been leaning against and begins mixing another dose of medicine.

XENA

(softly)

I don't think you were.

REBEL GABRIELLE

(angrily)

Huh? Look, Xe... um, Xena, I don't know how friendship works where you come from, but that's not how friends treat one another here. We stand by each other. We don't crucify them.

XENA

Wait. Let me explain it another way.

Gabrielle waits, her arms folded across her chest.

REBEL GABRIELLE

All right. I'm listening.

Xena finishes stirring the medicine, and sets the preparation on the table. Then she begins to pace the two steps between the table and the door. She takes a deep breath and glances at Gabrielle, then turns her attention to the floor.

XENA

Do you know the story of
how soulmates were created?

REBEL GABRIELLE

Yes, of course.

XENA

Do you believe it?
(beat)
Do you believe in the
possibility of soulmates?

REBEL GABRIELLE

I... I... I don't know. I'm
not sure I ever really
considered the possibility.

XENA

What if I told you that they
are more than a possibility?
Would you believe me if
I told you they were real?



Gabrielle stares hard into Xena's eyes, finding a truth there she never expected to see.

REBEL GABRIELLE

You make me want to
believe it, but....

XENA

But it's hard isn't it? Even
for you, here in this place.
(pausing)
The truth is, I think you scared
the Conqueror, and she reacted.
Ares put an idea in her mind, and
her fear convinced her it was true.
And now you suffer because of it.

Gabrielle sits silently, wondering at the relativity of the two conversations and pondering Xena's words.

XENA

(cont'd)

Ares told her she would
lose everything if
she let you stay around.

(beat)

She dismissed you from
her service, didn't she?

She waits for Gabrielle to reluctantly nod her agreement.

XENA

(cont'd)

So when you showed up
yesterday speaking out against
her, she reacted exactly the way
she's always done... harshly
and without apparent remorse.

Xena lifts the cup to her lips before the pungent medicinal scent reaches her nose. She sets it down and lifts the water skin instead, taking a long draught.

XENA

(cont'd)

I saw her face when she left
the square. You got to her, and
she has no idea how to handle
someone being that close. No one
has been that far inside since Ly...

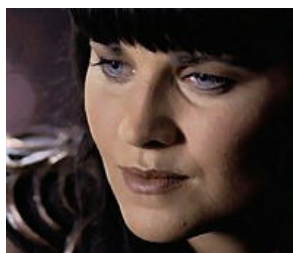
REBEL GABRIELLE

Lyceus died. I can accept that,
as far as it goes, but how
did I scare her? I never....

XENA

(quietly)

Because, you are soulmates.
And that possibility
scares the life out of her.



Gabrielle smiles just a little at the tone in Xena's voice.

REBEL GABRIELLE

You sound like you
speak from experience.

XENA

I do. And it is at the same
time the most wonderfully
fulfilling and terrifying
experience I have ever faced.

REBEL GABRIELLE

So you think Xe... the Conqueror
and I may be soulmates?



XENA

I think it is a real possibility.
It explains a lot... especially
why Ares needs you gone.

Gabrielle looks her question at Xena.

XENA

(cont'd)

Ares knows you are the
balance to the darkness
she maintains. If you are
out of the picture, she
is his. But, if you are
a part of her life....

REBEL GABRIELLE

I can see that I guess. But
I don't have to like it or
pretend to understand it.

XENA

No, but I think I may
know a way to fix it...
to give you a chance to
become friends at least.

She sighs silently, and makes intense eye contact with Gabrielle.

XENA

(cont'd)

The question is... do
you want me to try?



CUT TO:

EXT. CORINTH MARKETPLACE - AFTERNOON

The market place is very colorful and busy, but surprisingly quiet. Vendors do not hawk their wares, and business is transacted almost solemnly. The palace sits in stately grandeur at one end of the market, and a lone figure can be seen standing on a balcony overlooking the city.

Xena, wearing an acolyte's robe and hood, meanders slowly through the shopping area. She consults her lists and makes the occasional purchase, but this exercise is mostly to give her a layout of the grounds surrounding the palace. She's inordinately pleased with the well thought out security the conqueror has arranged, even as she makes her plans to get around it later.

CUT TO:

EXT. CORINTH TEMPLE STEPS - LATE AFTERNOON

The priest is waiting on the steps as Xena approaches. She continues up the steps and into the building as he accompanies her through the smaller atrium area.

XENA

How is Gabrielle?

PRIEST

Resting. How did your
reconnaissance go?

XENA

Very well. I....

She stops speaking and straightens. Ares' priest and four guards step from behind the divider wall.



ARES' PRIEST

So the Conqueror was right. We
do have a traitor here. Get them!!

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. CORINTH TEMPLE ANTEROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Xena quickly assesses the situation and pushes the priest to the far wall where he is out of danger. She flips off her robe and gets the reaction she wanted as the guards stop their forward motion.

The confusion in their faces registers as they see who they think is the Conqueror before them. Taking advantage of their inaction, she reaches for her chakram and sends it ricocheting off their helmets, knocking them unconscious. Then she addresses Ares' priest.

XENA

Any questions?



Ares' priest shakes his head in the negative, totally confused.

XENA

(cont'd)

Good.

Xena slugs Ares' priest, sending him unconscious to the floor with the others.

Xena and the priest drag the now bound and gagged bodies to the small storage room. They shove guards and priest in and shut the door, locking it before leaning up against it with a sigh.

XENA

(cont'd)

C'mon. I wanna go check on Gabrielle before I have to get ready for tonight.

CUT TO:

INT. ARGOS TEMPLE - EVENING

Only a short amount of time has passed here. Gabrielle has felt intermittent warmth from Xena, and a short, single burst of what felt like ice-cold fury. Gabrielle's forehead scrunches up in frustration.

GABRIELLE

What is going on with you
Xena? Why can't I find you?



FADE TO:

INT. CORINTH TEMPLE BACK ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Rebel Gabrielle stirs when Xena crosses the threshold.

XENA

How do you feel?

REBEL GABRIELLE

I've definitely had better days.

XENA

I'll bet.

(beat)

It'll be dark soon.

REBEL GABRIELLE

Yeah... um, are you
sure about this?



XENA

As sure as I can be. Let's
get you some more medicine
so I can get ready to go.

CUT TO:

EXT. CORINTH PALACE - NIGHT

Xena is moving from shadow to shadow in her cloak and hood. She has managed to elude the roving guard in town and has reached the outer walls of the palace. There are two stationed at the gate and several staggered intermittently along the wall.

XENA

Time to get to work.

Xena confidently strides toward the two guards stationed at the gate. Recognizing their leader, they salute.

Xena stops between them and looks to the guard at her right inspecting him. He stands in fear, looking straight ahead. Xena nods and then clobbers the guy with a solid right jab and at the same time grabs the guard on her left with a chokehold.

As the first guard slides to the ground, Xena turns to the other one and growls.

XENA

(cont'd)

Pretty sloppy guard
work if you ask me.

She removes her dagger and knocks the guard out. Still holding onto the second guard, Xena picks him up and fixes his armor on the door hook to make him appear to be standing.

Then she affixes the first guard in a like manner on the other side of the gate. Before leaving she gags both with a dark cloth, satisfied that their beards and cloth blend well together.

XENA

(cont'd)

Two down. Wonder how
paranoid I am here.



She checks her supply of treated needles and hopes she has enough. The potion she dipped them in will put the guards down quickly. She pulls the first one out and attaches it to the ring holder she fashioned at the temple.

Entering the castle, Xena drops her hood and approaches the first guard with the same confident swagger.

Seeing his commander approach, he salutes.

GUARD

Nightly check, Mistress?

Xena nods and places her hand on the exposed neck of the guard, inserting the needle. As he begins to buckle, she props him up between the battlement he was standing next to, then heads to the next guard.

Within five minutes all the guards are sound asleep at their positions. She double checks each, making sure that they will not draw attention to themselves.

Moving slowly to the darkened courtyard, Xena pulls the hood of her cloak over her head again, avoiding the circles of torchlight. The kitchen area comes into view, and she heads toward that light.

CUT TO:

INT. CORINTH PALACE KITCHEN - NIGHT

The kitchen is torch lit, and full of workers. The scents wafting makes Xena's mouth water, and she smiles to herself. The staff is eating.

Xena slips into the kitchen area. The cook steps into her path to stop her, and she raises a hand to move her aside. Xena's cloak slides down just enough to reveal her bracer, and the cook drops to the floor at her feet.

Xena looks at the distraught woman.

COOK

Apologies, Majesty. Please
have mercy. I didn't realize
it was you. I thought....

XENA

Rise.

The woman stands and looks back at her fearfully.

XENA

(cont'd)

You did the right thing.
Well done. Carry on.



The cook looks at her, astonished, and nods her head dumbly.

COOK

Yes, majesty. Thank you.

Xena walks to the stairs without another word, and the entire kitchen staff watches her in silence until she disappears from view. Then they look at each other in wonderment. The cook shakes her head, and motions for them all to get busy with their dinner again.

COOK

(cont'd)

Let's not give her a
reason to lose that mood.

FADE TO:

INT. CORINTH PALACE HALLWAY - NIGHT

There are two guards stationed outside the Conqueror's room.

Xena is out of needles and has to do this the old fashioned way.

She approaches the guards at a fast pace. She drops the hood of her cloak again and they stare at her with startled expressions, then look at each other, thinking this was another of the Conqueror's many security tests.

They cross their spears in front of the door to block her entry.

FIRST GUARD

Password?

XENA

How about this?

She reaches out with both hands grabbing each guard around the neck and smashes their bare heads together. The sound of the impact is a muted thunk, then she helps them glide silently to the floor.

Xena brushes her hands off and leans an ear toward the door. The silence is reassuring but she draws her sword anyway, and gently opens the door.

CUT TO:

INT. CONQUEROR'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Xena pulls the hood of her cloak back up before entering the chambers, sword at the ready. Three steps into the room she feels her double's presence and turns her blade to meet the one coming at her back.



Quickly deflecting the oncoming blade, Xena turns and unleashes a kick to the abdomen of the oncoming Conqueror. The blow is partly deflected by a side step and the Conqueror swings her left hand at Xena's hooded head. Xena catches the fist and pushes it back towards its owner, then swings her sword up to meet the Conqueror's blade on a follow-through stroke.

Their blows are matched stroke for stroke as though each is anticipating the other's moves, but Xena is in better shape than her alter ego, recovering and attacking with more force. The two warriors exchange places with intricate flips through the air, while their blades keep up the rapid pace.

CUT TO:

EXT. COURTYARD BELOW CONQUEROR'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Two roaming guards are looking up at the conquerors bedroom and listening to the sounds of swords clashing.

FIRST GUARD

It sounds like her majesty has taken up nightly drills again.

SECOND GUARD

Aye, and I'm glad it's not me that pulled that duty. I bear the scars of one of those nightly drills already.

FIRST GUARD

It's been a long time since she's practiced at night. Wonder what's got her dander up this time?

CUT TO:

INT. CONQUEROR'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Xena sees an opening and does a turning flip, landing behind the Conqueror. She flips her sword over and is about to knock out her double with its hilt, but is the recipient of an elbow to her abdomen. This causes her to step back to deflect another advance of the Conqueror's blade as she twirls it to a reversed position for a backward plunge.

The near miss makes Xena feel she is losing ground. Xena realizes she has to match darkness with darkness and allows herself to block out the light in her soul. She charges at her double with renewed energy.

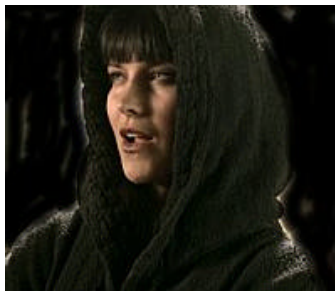
The fear in the Conqueror's eyes is evident as Xena's blows come harder than any she has ever felt before. Their fight finally has the Conqueror backed up to a wall.

In a simultaneous motion, Xena flips her sword to her left hand and pins the Conqueror's sword arm to the wall with it. Then Xena lands a right hook to the Conqueror's chin with her right fist. Only one punch is needed as the Conqueror slithers to the floor in a heap.

Xena looks at the Conqueror lying unconscious on the floor and shakes her head. Xena sheathes her sword.

XENA

Pathetic. All this high living
made you soft, Conqueror.



Xena binds the Conqueror's hands as a prudent precaution. She grunts as she lifts the Conqueror into her arms and moves her to the huge canopied bed. Xena drops her doppelganger rather gracelessly onto the mattress and moves to the bathing chamber.

XENA

(cont'd, muttering)

Ya know, it's a little unnerving
to know how predictable I am.

She removes the medical kit, and walks to the table. She picks up the pitcher of port left from the evening meal and pours it into a cup. Then she adds a couple herbs from the pouch and mixes them together.

Xena walks to the Conqueror's side, and forces her mouth open. Two pressure points later and the Conqueror swallows the mixture. Xena cuts the ties and sits back to wait for it to kick in.

XENA

(cont'd)

Time to make reality a
dream, Conqueror.

FADE TO:

INT. CONQUEROR'S BEDROOM – A FEW MINUTES LATER

Xena leans over the Conqueror and shakes her. Then Xena moves back from the bed to stand in the shadows. After a moment, the Conqueror blinks her eyes open, and looks around, disoriented.

She sits up and rubs her jaw, still sore from Xena's knockout punch.

CONQUEROR

What a weird dream.

The Conqueror throws the covers back and goes to stand. Xena steps from the shadows.

XENA

Dream's not over
yet, Conqueror.



The Conqueror's eyes widen, and her face twists in a snarl of rage.

CONQUEROR

GUARDS!! Who are you? How
did you get in here? What
do you want? GUARDS !!!

XENA

They're not going to answer you...
this is all a dream. As for the
other, well, we need to talk.

CONQUEROR

This really is a bad dream isn't it?
Note to self... no more chocolate
covered cherries before bed.
What do WE need to talk about?
Who the Hades are you?

XENA

I am who you could be...
with your soulmate...
with Gabrielle.

The Conqueror gasps and sits back down on the bed, rubbing her temple with one hand. Pain flickers through her eyes followed by a blast of rage.

CONQUEROR

(scathingly)

Soulmate?!? That nonsense
is for fools and weaklings!
The thought of having
another human being who
completes you is absurd
and completely unrealistic.

XENA

Depends on how you
look at it, doesn't it?

Xena glances around the room until her eyes spot a beautifully ornate, well-crafted dagger and a small purse. She walks over to them and removes a single coin from the bag and picks up the weapon.

Then she makes her way back to the Conqueror, and sits down within touching distance. Xena hands both objects to the Conqueror. The Conqueror contemplates them speculatively, then looks at Xena, still unable to see her features under the cloak.

XENA

(cont'd)

Don't even think about
it, or I'll make it hurt
for real next time.



The Conqueror turns her attention back to the objects in her hands, her jaw reminding her she doesn't want this to be any more real than it already is.

XENA

(cont'd)

Look at the coin... the front is one complete picture. The back is another. Two comprehensive wholes brought together to create a new whole that is valued for its own completeness and worth.

CONQUEROR

Look, I don't know who you think you are, but one person cannot complete another. No one is going to make you happy all of the time.

XENA

That's true... You have to do that from within first.
But when you do....

CONQUEROR

NO!! You're waiting for someone to come along and fill in all of the gaps in your heart and mind and that's just not possible. It's a trap.
(whispering)
It makes you weak.

XENA

No, it doesn't. It makes you strong enough to survive... anything.

The Conqueror stares at Xena for a long time, trying to understand the hidden meaning in her tone. Her shoulders slump in defeat.

CONQUEROR

(whispering)

Not anything.

XENA

Are you so sure, Conqueror?

Xena pauses and stands, stepping away from the bed.

XENA

(cont'd)

Tell me, Conqueror... why did
you send Gabrielle away?

(beat)

Because Ares promised you
ultimate power if you did?
You already rule the world.
How can he offer you something
he doesn't have himself?

Xena pauses, waiting to see if her counterpart will answer. Silence is its own answer, and she continues with her analysis.

XENA

(cont'd)

What can he offer you that he
hasn't already? Ambrosia?
Please... how many times has he
offered you immortality? How many
times have you turned him down?

Xena peers at the Conqueror from underneath the hood, watching her own blue eyes follow her speculatively. She keeps eye contact, knowing she is treading a thin line and wanting to be ready... just in case.

XENA

(cont'd)

So, even though Ares wanted
Gabrielle gone, and he told you
to get rid of her... you didn't do
it for him, did you? No, you
did it to keep her safe...
because you cared about her.

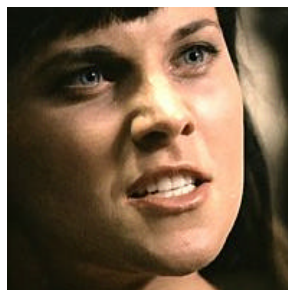
(pausing)

You did it because you
felt something for her.

CONQUEROR

(growling)

You don't know what
you're talking about!



Xena continues speaking as though the Conqueror hasn't interrupted.

XENA

And then she spoke out against
you publicly, and you couldn't
bear that, could you?

Xena tenses and bounces on the balls of her feet, knowing the Conqueror is just about ready to explode.

XENA

(cont'd)

In your mind she betrayed
you, and you crucified her.
And it's been eating you
alive hasn't it? HASN'T IT??

With that, the Conqueror goes over the edge, and gives a mighty roar before tackling Xena to the ground.



FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

INT. CONQUEROR'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

Xena is ready for the attack and goes easily to the floor using the Conqueror's force against her. Xena continues to fall into a backward roll and winds up on top of her attacker, pinning her shoulders to the floor.

The Conqueror fights back violently. In her anger and grief, she brings her hands up between Xena's and grabs Xena by the throat.

Releasing the Conqueror's shoulders, Xena executes a quick jab to pressure points on each forearm allowing the grip on her neck to loosen sufficiently to escape the hold. Standing, Xena hauls the Conqueror up and tosses her back toward the bed and taking in a gasp of needed air.

The Conqueror regains her balance quickly and charges at Xena with renewed force. Xena side-steps the charge and pushes the Conqueror toward the wall behind her as she passes. The Conqueror slams into the wall with her shoulder, grunting with the blow.

Xena turns and grabs the Conqueror by the shoulders once more, and smacks her body hard up against the wall.

XENA

Had enough?

Two sets of cerulean blue eyes search each other, one set projecting empathy, the other, projecting the pain of truth.

The Conqueror, weakened by her grief and the reality of Xena's words, begins to sob as she slides to the floor.

When all is said and done, Xena cradles the Conqueror in her arms while she struggles to regain her composure. Finally, the Conqueror draws a ragged breath and speaks.

CONQUEROR

(whispering)

How did you know?



Xena slowly pushes back the hood that she has hidden behind the entire time. The Conqueror gasps in recognition.



CONQUEROR

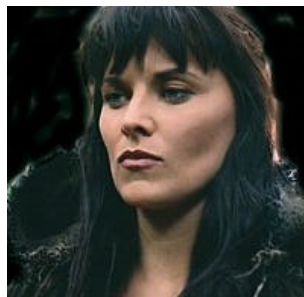
Bu... but... y...y...
you're...you're ME.

XENA

I could have been... once.

(beat)

I made the decision not to be,
and allowed someone into my
life that makes every day that I
share with her worth... everything.



CONQUEROR

It is too late for me... for us.

XENA

What if it's not?

Xena looks at the Conqueror with compassionate eyes.

XENA

I want you to think about it. I want you
to think about what you would do if you
had the chance to make things right.

She motions to the room around them, taking in the ornate tapestries, the elegant furniture, the marble floor.

XENA

(cont'd)

Would you risk everything ...
give all this up for a
chance with Gabrielle?



CONQUEROR

It doesn't mat....

Xena holds up a hand to halt her speech, and moves to the door.

XENA

IF it were... If ANYTHING
were possible... Think
about it, and when you
have an answer, send
word to the temple.

As the Conqueror turns and gazes out the window in contemplation, Xena steps silently across the threshold, and makes her way unseen into the night.

The Conqueror stares out the window for a long time after Xena has gone, thinking hard about what she said. Then she moves to the bed and climbs in.

CONQUEROR

Wonder how much
of this I'll remember
in the morning?

CUT TO:

INT. CORINTH TEMPLE BACK ROOM - LATE NIGHT

Rebel Gabrielle is dozing fitfully in the fading firelight. It is otherwise dark in the room. It is unclear whether her restlessness is due to her concern for Xena and the Conqueror or the pain caused by her broken legs.

She is wide awake the minute Xena steps into the small room.

REBEL GABRIELLE

How did it go?

She looks Xena over, noting a few scratches, a couple bruises, and swollen knuckles. There is a large tear in the cloak, but Gabrielle sees no evidence of blood.

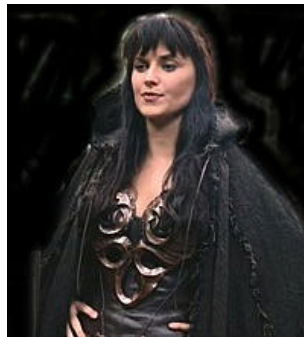
REBEL GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

How does she look? You didn't hurt her too badly, did you?

XENA

I expect she'll feel it in the morning... on a lot of levels. But no, I didn't really hurt her. I just gave her some things to think about.



Xena shrugs out of the cloak and tosses it to the chair. Then she steps to the table and begins mixing herbs in the cup.

Gabrielle watches her with a combination of despair and relief.

REBEL GABRIELLE

Do you think it will make a difference?

Xena recalls vividly the anguish in those familiar blue eyes.

XENA

(thoughtfully)

Yeah... I think it will.

Xena offers the medicine to Gabrielle, who accepts it without hesitation. Gabrielle swallows it down without protest, then settles more comfortably on the cot.

Xena moves to her own pallet and removes weapons and armor before sliding beneath the sheet. She begins searching for the warmth she ascribes to her own Gabrielle. Smiling, she allows herself to relax, and fall into a light doze.

REBEL GABRIELLE

Xena?



Instantly Xena is awake and on her feet, sword drawn.

XENA

What?? What is it?

Gabrielle chuckles.

REBEL GABRIELLE

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to startle you.
There's nothing wrong. I just wanted
to say thank you. No matter how this
turns out, I appreciate all you've done.

Xena relaxes and puts the sword to one side of the bed again. Then she walks to Gabrielle's cot and takes a seat gently, so as not to jostle her legs. She reaches out and covers Gabrielle's hands with her own.

XENA

Have a little faith, Gabrielle.
I think this is gonna
turn out all right.



Gabrielle smiles up at Xena with tears in her eyes.

REBEL GABRIELLE

I hope you're right.

Xena kisses her forehead and moves back to her own pallet. She slides back under the covers and turns on her side toward Gabrielle.

REBEL GABRIELLE

(cont'd, sleepily)

By the way, the priest and acolytes moved the guards and Ares' priest back to the main hall. Apparently they were very confused when they woke up there.

XENA

Good. One less thing to worry about. Good night, Gabrielle.

Soft snoring is her only answer.

She focuses on the warmth she feels from her own bard.

XENA

Good night, love.



CUT TO:

INT. CORINTH TEMPLE - THREE DAYS LATER - LATE MORNING

The Conqueror strides into the temple giving the impression of a confidence she does not feel. She is met by Ares' priest. He bows and smiles at her in an attempt at an engaging manner.

ARES' PRIEST

Welcome, Majesty. You honor us. It has been a while.

CONQUEROR

Leave me.

The man bows and nods, shooing the acolytes and lesser priests out before him.

ARES' PRIEST

As you wish, Majesty. You have but to ask if you are in need of anything.

The Conqueror waves her acknowledgement to the man, and waits until the main chamber is empty before she begins searching the room with her eyes.

The secondary priest has seen her enter, and he steps out of his small atrium area towards his tiny residence.

CUT TO:

INT. CORINTH TEMPLE BACK ROOM - SAME TIME

Gabrielle is sitting in the room's lone chair, and Xena is kneeling at her feet.

Xena and Gabrielle are slowly working through some exercises. Between Nicklios' acupuncture therapy and Lao Ma's meditation techniques, Gabrielle has a nice cushion between her awareness and the pain.

Still, Xena moves her very slowly and gently. She has no desire to hurt Gabrielle further.

REBEL GABRIELLE

Xena?

XENA

Hmm? Lift it just
a little higher.

Gabrielle complies, moaning a little when Xena lowers the leg back down.

REBEL GABRIELLE

Can I tell you something, and
you won't get offended?



XENA

Gabrielle, even though you
are not my soulmate, I am
still glad I could make a
difference for you. If we're
lucky, you and your soulmate
will get second chance.

REBEL GABRIELLE

How did you know?

XENA

Because you are much like
my Gabrielle was years ago.
You and she are different people,
just as the Conqueror and I are.
My Gabrielle is my better half,
just as you are the Conqueror's.

REBEL GABRIELLE

Your Gabrielle is a
very lucky woman.

XENA

I think we all are.

Gabrielle smiles, and Xena lifts her gently and tucks her into bed.

Xena moves to the table and begins mixing the herbs for Gabrielle,

REBEL GABRIELLE

Not too much.

Xena raises an eyebrow in question.

REBEL GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

The pressure point needles
and the mind techniques
seem to be holding their
own against the pain for
now. I'd like to try to stay
alert for a while if I can.

XENA

Okay. How would
you like to soak in a
tub for a bit then?

Gabrielle's smile is answer enough.

XENA

(cont'd)

All right. Let me see
what I can arrange.

Xena reaches for the door handle just as a knock sounds. She doesn't even flinch, but opens the door to the waiting priest.

PRIEST

She's here.

XENA

Show her back. And
could we get a tub
and some hot water?

The priest nods and leaves. Xena turns back toward the bed.

Gabrielle's eyes are wide.

REBEL GABRIELLE

She came?

XENA

She came. You ready?



A decisive nod is her answer.

CUT TO:

INT. CORINTH TEMPLE MAIN HALL - SAME TIME

The Conqueror is alone in the main chamber not sure what to do next. She has spent several days in solitary contemplation, and has decided she has nothing to lose by coming here.

A familiar tingling makes her skin crawl, and she sneers.

CONQUEROR

Show yourself, Ares.

ARES

Well, the wanderer has
returned to the flock.
Welcome back, my dear.

CONQUEROR

I am not here to see
you. I told you we
were done. I meant it.

ARES

I don't think so.
You belong to me.



CONQUEROR

No. I belong to no one but
myself. And possibly a little
blonde if I am very, very lucky.

The last is said on a whispered breath.

Ares' face is an interesting study in rage. His eyebrows furrow, and his lips thin and curl back in a snarl. His eyes literally burn, and the Conqueror feels the heat of his stare.

ARES

Excuse me?
(beat)
I thought I told you
to get rid of her.

CONQUEROR

I DID!!! I sent her away!
And she still stood up to
me, even when she knew
it could cost her everything.
I crucified her, DAMN YOU!!!

Ares evil laugh echoes across the hall in great ringing waves.

ARES

And you think she is going
to forgive you for this??
You think you can become
friends... or more??

Ares snorts in disgust. The Conqueror's hands twitch, and she balls them into fists.

ARES

(cont'd)
You are a fool. She will
cost you everything.

He extends a gloved hand to her, and looks at her with a form of compassion.

ARES

(cont'd)

Forget about her,
and all is forgiven.

CONQUEROR

She is the only one who can
offer forgiveness for this.
And she is worth everything.



Ares drops his hands and steps back a pace.

ARES

Then you are a greater fool.
When you are ready to
beg MY forgiveness, you
know where to find me. Until
then you are on your own.

CONQUEROR

Hold your breath, Ares.
I don't need you any more.

Ares disappears in a shower of flame.

The priest, who had been watching the entire exchange, steps from his alcove and extends a hand towards her.

PRIEST

Majesty, if you would
follow me, please....

The Conqueror turns and follows him on unsteady legs.

The hall is lit by the daylight that streams in through the slit windows along it. They stop in front of an unremarkable door.

The Conqueror draws a deep breath, then draws a second as she wills her heartbeat under control.

PRIEST

(cont'd)

Are you all right, Majesty?

The Conqueror nods her head in the affirmative, but doesn't say a word. The priest raises his hands and knocks softly three times.

CUT TO:

INT. CORINTH TEMPLE BACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

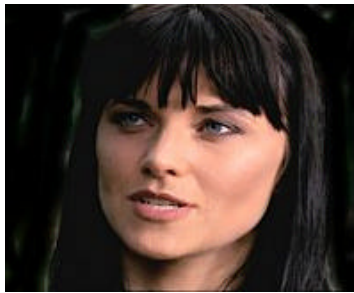
The knock sounds loudly in the small chamber. Xena looks at Gabrielle before crossing the two steps to open it.

With her hand on the latch, Xena looks at Gabrielle once more to make sure she is ready. Gabrielle nods and gives a tremulous smile.

Xena smiles back at her and opens the door.

XENA

Welcome, Conqueror.
We've been expecting you.



FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

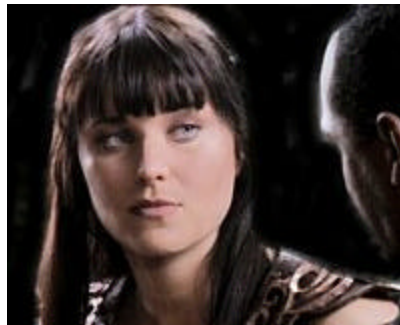
INT. CORINTH TEMPLE ALCOVE - SOME TIME LATER

There is no one here, save Xena and the priest. He dismissed his own few acolytes earlier when the Conqueror came in. Everything is spotless though, and the offerings are neatly arranged on the altar.

Xena left the back room almost immediately upon the Conqueror's arrival, at Gabrielle's request. Now she and the priest are sitting on the pristine white benches talking softly. There is the sound of a fountain in the background. Otherwise, it is silent.

XENA

You are Aphrodite's
priest, aren't you?



PRIEST

I serve all but Ares, but
she is my patron, yes.
How did you know?

Xena just smiles enigmatically at him.

XENA

I recognized her fine hand.
But that's a good thing. In
another life, she's my friend.

The priest opens his mouth to comment, but is stopped by the opening of the back room door. Instead, he and Xena rise and wait for the verdict.

It takes a moment, and they hear Gabrielle moan softly. There is a scuffling of steps, and then the Conqueror comes into view, cradling Gabrielle gently in her arms.

Blue eyes meet blue in a long moment of understanding before the Conqueror turns to the priest.

CONQUEROR

You did a fine thing, Priest,
and you will be well
rewarded for your service.



PRIEST

Gabrielle is my friend, Majesty.
That she finds happiness
is reward enough for me.

Amazingly, both the Conqueror and Gabrielle find this embarrassing, and twin blushes color their features.

CONQUEROR

<ahem> That is something
I plan on working on. But I
believe there will still be some
sort of reward for you as well.

The priest bows his head in acceptance.

PRIEST

Thank you, Majesty.

CONQUEROR

Now, if you don't mind,
Gabrielle and I have come
to an understanding. We still
have things to work out, but
for now, I would like to
take Gabrielle home... with
me... to the palace, I mean.

The Conqueror flushes slightly at her stuttering, but the priest simply nods his acknowledgement of her words. The Conqueror turns her attention back to Xena.

CONQUEROR

(cont'd)

Will you walk out with us?



FADE TO:

EXT. CORINTH TEMPLE - MID AFTERNOON

The carriage is large and ornate. The footman doesn't even twitch at seeing the Conqueror's double. He simply opens the door for them. He does manage to slyly wink at Gabrielle when the Conqueror isn't looking.

The Conqueror deposits Gabrielle gently on the cushioned seat. She steps back to allow Xena the chance to say goodbye.

REBEL GABRIELLE

Thank you so much.
You have no idea....

XENA

Yeah, actually, I do.
I'm glad it worked out.

REBEL GABRIELLE

Me too. I think this may make
all the difference for us here.

She leans forward and gives Xena a soft kiss on the lips.

REBEL GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Thank you. Tell your
Gabrielle she is very blessed.



Xena doesn't answer with words. She simply smiles and squeezes Gabrielle's hands before stepping from the carriage.

CONQUEROR

This has been quite the
learning experience.

XENA

Let her continue to help you.
You can learn together.

The Conqueror nods and steps up into the carriage. Then she turns to face Xena.

CONQUEROR

I have one question... you
know where the Ring of
Zeus is, don't you?

Xena doesn't even twitch, her face a mask of impassivity.

CONQUEROR

(cont'd)

You see, no one really
wants me to have it.
And I really can't imagine
how else you got here.

XENA

Does it matter? What
you have with Gabrielle is
worth more than anything.

The Conqueror looks at the woman in question. Gabrielle cannot hear their conversation, but smiles brightly at the Conqueror when she turns to look at Gabrielle.

The Conqueror returns Gabrielle's smile and brings her attention back to Xena, her eyes shining with tears.

CONQUEROR

True, and even more precious
when I think how close
I came to losing it.

(beat)

Thank you, Xena, from
the bottom of my heart.

This is a debt I will
always, gladly carry.

XENA

Just let it make a difference.



The Conqueror nods, and settles into the carriage. With a wave and a nod, she and Gabrielle head back to the Corinthian palace.

Xena watches them until they are some distance away, before turning her thoughts and attention towards going home. She can feel Gabrielle's warmth reaching out to her.

XENA

(cont'd)

Finally... it's time. I'm ready to
get back to my Gabrielle.

She opens the pouch without touching the ring.

XENA

(cont'd)

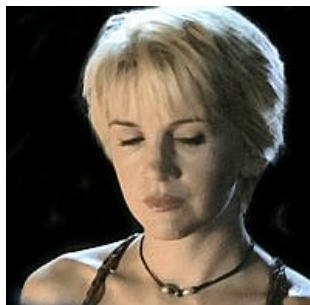
And you are the key to that.
Let's hope this works in reverse.

Xena closes her eyes and concentrates. A small smile crosses her face as the warmth that is Gabrielle invades her soul. She takes a deep breath and places her hand in the pouch, reaching for the ring.

FADE TO:

INT. ARGOS TEMPLE - EVENING

Less than an hour in this timeline has passed. Gabrielle is sitting in the lotus position in the temple. There is a small fire in front of her, and her eyes are closed in meditation.



She focuses her energies on Xena, concentrating her love to seek out the other half of her soul. She smiles as she begins to feel the reciprocal warmth from Xena.

FADE TO:

EXT. CORINTH - MID AFTERNOON

Xena touches the ring, and almost immediately is engulfed in lightening. She never sees the attention she draws, or the contemplative raised eyebrow of her counterpart.



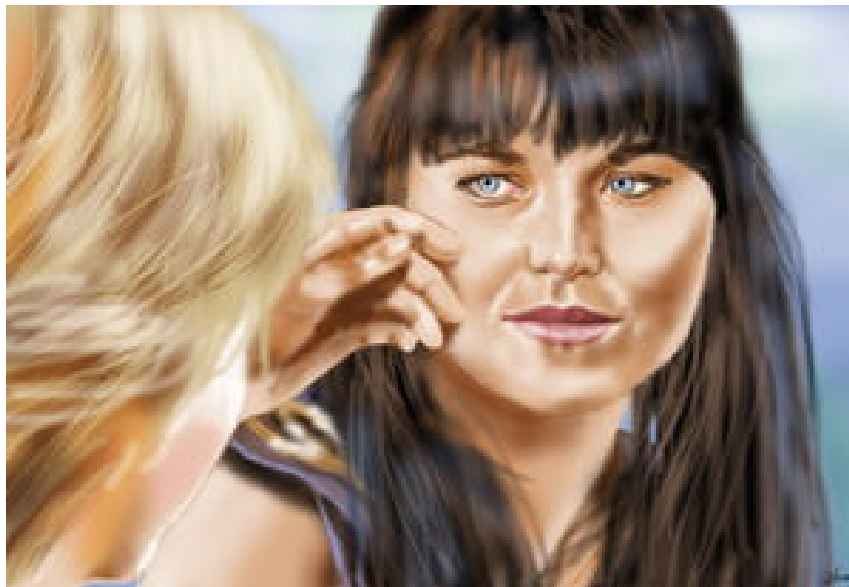
The Conqueror watches the show and smiles to herself in satisfaction. Then she refocuses her attention on Gabrielle, whose head is lying in her lap.

CUT TO:

INT. ARGOS TEMPLE - EVENING

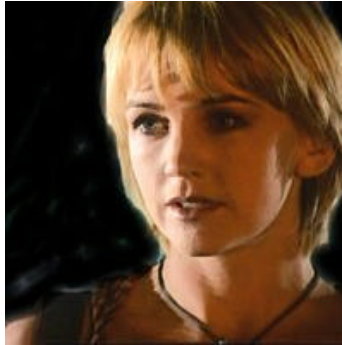
Gabrielle hair stands on end seconds before Xena drops down beside her. Xena groans. Gabrielle moves immediately to her side. Xena pulls Gabrielle into a strong hug that she is happy to return in full measure.

Gabrielle pulls back slightly, running her eyes and then her hands along Xena's form as she reassures herself that Xena is indeed alive and real.



GABRIELLE

(softly)
You okay?



She brushes her lips on Xena's forehead.

XENA

Ugh. There has to be a better way to travel.

GABRIELLE

I vote not to travel that way at all.

XENA

I can go for that.
(beat)
Thanks for leading me home.

GABRIELLE

(smiling)
Anytime.

Gabrielle leans down and Xena reaches up, and their lips meet for a timeless moment.

Xena sits up, an odd expression on her face.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)
You wanna talk about it?

XENA

Later. We've gotta get rid of this damn ring first. There are some things a person should never see.

Gabrielle wonders at the vehemence in Xena's answer, but nods her agreement.

GABRIELLE

Okay. Um, you do know that part of the Cronos stone is in that ring, right?

XENA

Figured it was something like that. C'mon.

She gets to her feet and holds out her hand.

XENA

(cont'd)

Let's make sure no one can ever find this thing again.



CUT TO:

EXT. ARGOS - LATE EVENING

The city is celebrating. People are drinking and dancing once again, dressed in their very finest. Nessos is presiding over the festivities, and has crowned a winner in the scavenger hunt. It is the woman from the swamp.

Xena and Gabrielle walk into town dirty and disheveled, and they stand out noticeably from the crowd. The people part for them as they approach the dais.

Nessos looks at them hopefully.

NESSOS

You have good news?

GABRIELLE

(shaking head)

No. There was nothing but quicksand and snakes.

The King shudders at the description and shakes his head in despair.

NESSOS

How am I ever going
to be a great king?

GABRIELLE

You already are. Your city is
prosperous. Your people love
you. What else do you need?



XENA

No one needs the
kind of power you
were seeking, Nessos.

He looks at Xena, and sees something in her eyes he finds disturbing. It gives him pause.

NESSOS

(thoughtfully)

Perhaps you are right.

He looks around at the happiness apparent in the populous.

NESSOS

(cont'd)

Sometimes greed and
temptation make you
miss what is right in
front of you. Thank you
for reminding me of that.

(beat)

Can I offer you the
hospitality of the palace?
A hot bath perhaps?

GABRIELLE

That sounds lovely.
Thank you.

CUT TO:

INT. PALACE BATH - NIGHT

The water is steaming and jasmine scented, and Xena and Gabrielle are relaxed against the sides of the large pool. Gabrielle looks at Xena, who still wears a disturbed look on her face.

She pushes Xena forward to slide in behind her, rubbing her shoulders with a firm touch. Gabrielle smiles as Xena relaxes into the massage.

GABRIELLE

That must have been very
strange... running into people
who were us, but not.

XENA

Yeah. It made me realize
that even with everything
we've been through, we
have a lot to be thankful for.



GABRIELLE

We sure do.
(pausing)
You think they'll be as
happy as we are?

XENA

I think the odds
are in their favor.

It is quiet for a bit as Gabrielle continues to massage along Xena's neck and shoulders. She can still feel tension in the muscles, and leans forward until her lips are pressed to Xena's ear.

GABRIELLE

(softly)
What's still bothering
you about all this?

XENA

I can understand his temptation.



GABRIELLE

Xena, *I* can understand his temptation. But we both know that we don't need it. What we have is much stronger than anything the gods left behind.

They smile and reach for one another as we...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR

TAG

FADE IN:

EXT. VOLCANO'S EDGE - SUNSET

Even riding Argo, it has taken two full days of traveling to reach the lava flow. Already, they are contemplating the time it will take to get to somewhere more comfortable.

It is hot here. Steam rises and hisses at odd intervals, and the smell of sulphur hangs heavy in the air. Noses crinkle reflexively at the odor.

Xena looks down into the crater. The lava flow is sluggish but moving.

XENA

It won't destroy it, but
hopefully it will keep the
ring out of human hands.

GABRIELLE

It's the only way, Xena.



Xena removes the pouch from her waist, and drops the whole thing into the pit. They watch as the leather burns away and the lava begins to flow around and cover the ring.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

With a little luck, people
will forget about it. Soon,
the Ring of Zeus will
be nothing but myth.

XENA

One day we will all
be nothing but myth.

GABRIELLE

I can live with that.

They smile at one another.

XENA

C'mon. I'll bet we can
find more trouble to
get into down the road.

GABRIELLE

Okay.

(beat)

You are an animal with
long and short hair.
Do you walk on two legs?

Xena laughs as they join hands and turn away from the volcano. Xena takes Argo's reins, and we watch them walk away. The camera pans away from them slowly, and our final shot shows the hardened lava that the ring is now covered in glowing just slightly before we...

FADE OUT.

DISCLAIMER

No alternative timelines were harmed in the making
of this motion picture. They were just improved upon.