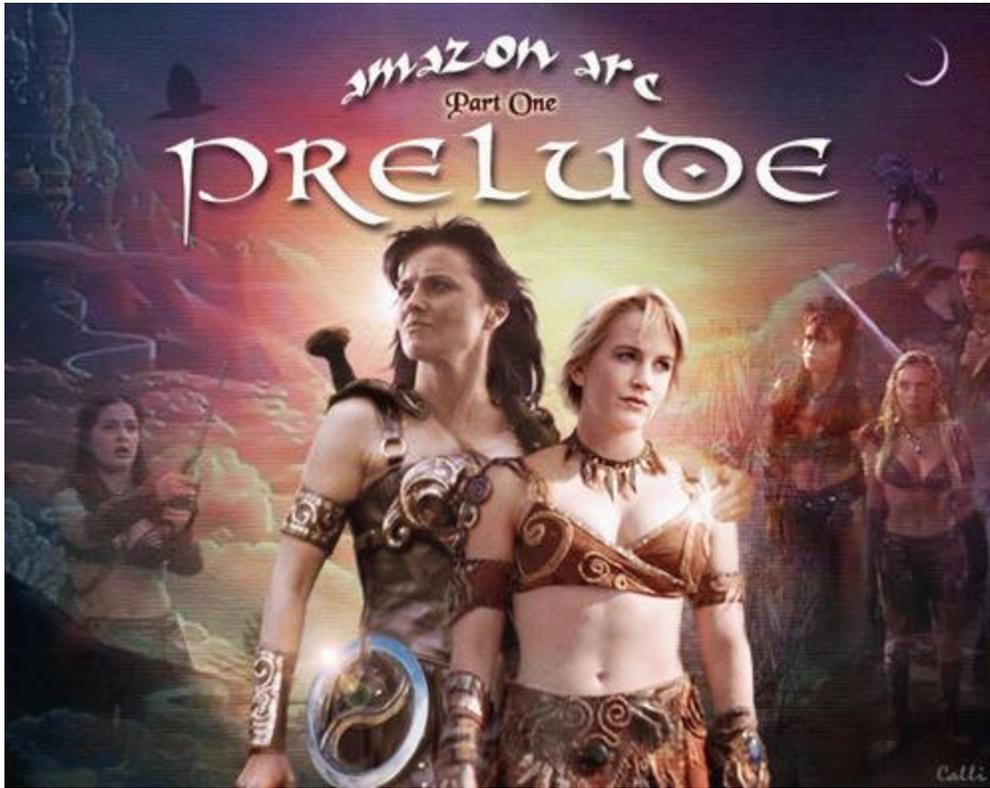


Xena: Warrior Princess - Subtext Virtual Season 7



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TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. MEADOW - MORNING

Xena and Gabrielle are mounted on horses, riding slowly through the field that once had Amazon huts standing on it. Now all that is left is burned out shells. The ground is torn to shreds, and it looks as if the entire area has been scorched. Xena is dressed in her normal leathers and armor. Gabrielle is now wearing Amazon leathers and her rank of Queen. Except for the destruction around them, it is otherwise a beautiful day, but both Xena and Gabrielle have very preoccupied looks on their faces. Gabrielle appears to be deep in thought, and Xena is scanning every possible place for trouble.

XENA

I'm not wild about you being out here like this, Gabrielle. You never know who is lurking around.



GABRIELLE

Xena, I have to see what has happened in order to decide the best way to proceed.

XENA

You know the best way to proceed. These women need to get off this land.

GABRIELLE

I know.

XENA

You know what the biggest problem is?

GABRIELLE

The fact that they're so damn stubborn?

XENA

(chuckling)

Yeah, that would be it. We both know that the only option is to get them to move. They have to get off this land. They can't defend it any longer. And these raiders are just going to keep getting closer and closer. The Amazons will be trapped in their own village, like rats on a sinking ship with no way out and not enough enforcements to defend it properly.

GABRIELLE

I know. Some of them understand that.
Then there are the others....



XENA

Who are vocal and hate me.

GABRIELLE

They do not hate you.

XENA

Wake up and smell the goats milk, Gabrielle. The ones who refuse to give up the land hate me. Haven't you noticed that every time I say something or make a suggestion, they have to look to you for confirmation?



GABRIELLE

I'm their Queen.

XENA

That has nothing to do with it. These are the Amazons who don't remember Ephiny or the promises I made to her. They have no desire to give up this land, and they have no desire to listen to anything I say.

GABRIELLE

Yes, but some of the older members of the tribe are ready to follow us anywhere. They understand the situation we're in here. They may be able to sway some of the more troublesome women.

XENA

And then again, maybe not. You know how headstrong young Amazon warriors can be.

GABRIELLE

Then we'll have to do our best to convince them.

XENA

And if we can't?

GABRIELLE

Then we'll figure out plan Beta.



XENA

I think we'd be safer if we came up with Alpha, Beta, Gamma, and Delta before we make another move.

GABRIELLE

You're such an optimist.

XENA

(teasingly)

That's me... always looking for the bright side of things.

GABRIELLE

I certainly hope that there is a bright side this time, Xena. The rate that we're losing land here means we have to convince them and fast.

XENA

I know. They've had these lands for generations. It's hard for them to think about giving it up. This is where mothers have raised daughters since they can remember. This land holds their identity. They feel like if they give it up they're giving up their personality. They'll be giving up the one thing that makes them Amazons. But look at this.

Xena gestures to the destruction around them.

XENA

(Cont'd)

It's going to get worse before it gets better. Not to mention the fact that game is so scarce around here I actually had to look for some last night. You saw that pitiful deer I brought back.

GABRIELLE

I know. It's ridiculous. It doesn't matter where they live as long as they have their families close to them.

XENA

We'll make them understand that.
It won't be easy, but we'll do it.



Gabrielle moves her horse closer to Xena, then reaches out and takes her hand. She lifts it and kisses it gently.

GABRIELLE

There are so many reasons I already love you.
Do you just have to keep adding to the list?

XENA

You betcha. I intend to keep you around for a long
time, so I have to keep giving you reasons to stay.

GABRIELLE

I only need one reason and I already
have that. You're my home.



They smile and continue riding through the meadow, still holding hands.

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. AMAZON VILLAGE - DAY

Gabrielle is walking through the village taking stock of what is there and what is not there. She stops at the area where grain is normally prepared for storage but there is no grain and no one working in the area. She leans against the fence and hangs her head, shaking it slowly.

GABRIELLE

(mumbling)

This can't continue.

A YOUNG AMAZON approaches and joins her at the fence.

SERENA

They raided the fields and what they couldn't carry away they burned.

GABRIELLE

I know. Xena and I took a ride through some of the devastated areas today.

SERENA

We need to replant.

Gabrielle looks to the young woman with some disbelief on her face.

GABRIELLE

It's not possible. Not only is it simply too late in the year to replant, and the ground will not let anything grow. Xena and I found salt in the fields. They've made it impossible for anything to grow here for years.

SERENA

Then we will find other places for our fields.

GABRIELLE

Yes, but you understand it may not be here?



SERENA

We can't give up our ancestral home.

GABRIELLE

You're willing to forfeit your life
and the lives of your children?

SERENA

Forgive me, My Queen, but this is the only
home we've ever had. History says Queen
Nicia led us here, so that we might live
as we wished, free and without being....

Gabrielle holds up her hand to stop the flow of words that she can tell is quickly becoming a rant.

GABRIELLE

I know the legend.

SERENA

It's history.

GABRIELLE

All right. I have too much to think about to argue
the semantics with you. What if Xena and I could
take you some place that would allow you to
continue to live, as you are accustomed?

SERENA

Why do we need Xena?

GABRIELLE

There are several very good reasons, but
the best is that Xena has the knowledge
to safely move a large group of people.

SERENA

Knowledge from leading her armies
through their various battles and....

GABRIELLE

(angrily)

All right, that's enough! You will
not speak of Xena in those terms.
She has done more for this nation....



SERENA

Yes, like killing our Queens and
decimating our people.

GABRIELLE

Stop!

SERENA

Our people won't follow her, and we won't leave our land. I'm sorry if this is not what you wanted to hear, My Queen, but it is the truth.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVER BANK - DAY

Xena is sitting on the bank pulling in a fishing net. She smiles when she sees a half dozen good size fish trapped inside. She opens the net and tosses the fish into a basket with another six or so fish already there.

An OLDER AMAZON walks slowly down the bank leaning on a walking stick and smiling as she watches Xena toss the net.

ADELIA

Catching them with your hands too slow?

Xena turns and smiles as she takes a seat on a rock.

XENA

Much. Lots of hungry mouths to feed in the village.

Adelia stops and seats herself next to Xena, leaning on her walking stick and looking out over the river.

ADELIA

Thanks you for helping Esme and the others and for brining Queen Gabrielle back here.

XENA

It's where we needed to be.

ADELIA

This is true. Seems you always come to us when we are needed most.

XENA

Funny how that works out.

ADELIA

I don't think it's necessarily funny. Fate maybe.

XENA

(grinning)

Oh, don't use the F word.



ADELIA

You know there are many of us who will follow you. We remember what you have done for us in the past.

XENA

I made a promise. I'd like to keep it.

ADELIA

Some of our more strident members think we should fight for this land. They are also the younger members and not necessarily the wise ones.

XENA

Yes, but are they the strong ones and the ones most likely to put up a fight?

ADELIA

Very good point.

XENA

Gabrielle won't want to move the tribe unless she thinks she can move all of you. She won't want to leave anyone behind to face certain death.

ADELIA

This is what makes her a good queen. She is concerned for all her people. No matter how pig headed they may be.

XENA

She's had a lot of practice with me. She's used to pig headed.

Xena stands and brings in the net again, then dumps a few more fish into the basket before recasting it.

ADELIA

You know all the Amazon traditions Xena.

XENA

Most of them.

ADELIA

Then you know there is a way.

XENA

I don't want to talk about it.
It's not an option.



CUT TO:

INT. HUT - EVENING

Xena is relaxing in a hot tub. Head back, eyes closed and a very relaxed look on her face. She looks totally peaceful and very happy. There is a loud bang from outside the hut and slowly one blue eye opens. She listens for a moment and decides there's nothing to be alarmed about. She closes her eye again, then sinks under the water.

The door flies open and Gabrielle rushes in, slamming it behind her and leaning against it in relief.

GABRIELLE

Finally! A few minutes to myself.

Pushing off the door, she starts stripping out of her clothes, completely unaware of the pair of mischievous blue eyes peering at her from just above the surface of the water.



When Gabrielle turns back toward the large tub, Xena slips back under the water leaving no trace of her presence. Gabrielle climbs in and settles against the rim.

GABRIELLE

Oooo. That's so good.

She closes her eyes and rolls her head around, rather enjoying the satisfying little crunch it is making as she does.

Xena's eyes pop on the other side of the tub and silently move through the water toward Gabrielle who is seemingly oblivious to them. You don't need to see Xena's entire face to know she has a huge smile on her face. It's very clear in her eyes.

She slowly surfaces and carefully approaches Gabrielle, very gently placing a kiss to her lips. Gabrielle smiles and opens her eyes.

GABRIELLE

That's good too.

XENA

Glad you like it. So, how was your day, dear?

GABRIELLE

These women are making me insane, Xena. This is worse than howling naked at the moon.

Xena settles in next to her.

XENA

Depends on why you're howling.

Gabrielle just slips under the water, bubbles rising to take her place. Xena grins and reaches under the water to retrieve her. Gabrielle spits out a huge mouthful of water.

GABRIELLE

You couldn't just let me drown?



XENA

(teasingly)

Nope, sorry. Too much effort and time has gone into your training. I can't afford to start all over again.

GABRIELLE

Thanks so much. Aren't you glad you finally got me house broken?

Xena laugh and hugs her.

XENA

So, tell me, what are they doing now?

GABRIELLE

They seem to think that I'm the great redeemer or something, that I'm single handedly going to be able to reconstruct the nation. They don't realize that it's going to take all of us working together. And they refuse to understand they need to leave this land.

XENA

Life has gotten very complicated for them.
They're trying to defend the land and
their not properly prepared to do it.

GABRIELLE

You're going to fix that, right?

XENA

Is that a royal request?

GABRIELLE

You know it.

XENA

Then how can I refuse? I suppose I
could take a few of them in hand
and teach them a thing or two.

A brow rises over Gabrielle's eye as she looks to Xena.

XENA

About defense.

She reaches over and pinches some delicate part of Gabrielle's anatomy, causing a squeal, which then degenerates into a splashing fight. They're laughing and having a very good time when the door to the hut bursts open and two women come charging in, swords drawn.

The taller of the two, RAINIA, realizes immediately that their presence is not needed and quickly turns the other one away and shoves her out the door, before bowing deeply.

RAINIA

Forgive us my Queen, we
heard noises and thought....
(beat)
But I can see....

XENA

Rainia?

RAINIA

Yes?

XENA

Get out.



Rainia looks to Gabrielle who makes 'shooing' motions with her hands.

RAINIA

Yes, my Queen.

She backs out and closes the door. Xena now slides under the water and Gabrielle retrieves her.

GABRIELLE

Oh no, you wouldn't let me out that way. You have to stick around too.

CUT TO:

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

Gabrielle and Xena walk into the center of the village where dozens of women are gathered eating and talking. As they make their way through the crowd, some women great them with smiles while others don't seem quite as pleased.

Adelia gestures for them to join her and another group of women who are seated at a large round table.

Taking their seats, Xena pours a cup of wine for Gabrielle and then one for herself. She looks across the clearing at another group of women, who are talking among themselves. She sighs, knowing they're going to be trouble down the line and returns her attention to the table.

LOURA

So tell us, do you have any suggestions for where the tribe should move?

XENA

I have heard of a place that is far away from here. It is unexplored and will serve your needs perfectly.



GABRIELLE

It's lovely there, peaceful.
There is lots of land....

Two of the women who had been sitting across the clearing rise and approach the table. They nod to Gabrielle and then look to Xena.

RAYA

Xena, do you still serve as Queen Gabrielle's champion?

Xena and Gabrielle exchange looks. Gabrielle shrugs.

XENA

Gabrielle is perfectly capable of defending herself, but if there were a need for me to do so, I would be her champion.

NOFIA

Raya and I think you should relinquish the title to a true Amazon.

Gabrielle bites the inside of her lip and waits for the explosion.

XENA

(calmly)
Oh, you do?



RAYA

Yes, it's disgraceful that our Queen should have a non-Amazon as a champion. The Queen should choose a champion.

GABRIELLE

The Queen did. Xena is my champion. She has been since I became a member of the tribe and she will be until I am no longer a part of you.



Xena takes the last drink of her wine and stands up, turning slowly to the two young women. A little more than annoyed that this issue has come up.

XENA

Of course if you'd like to fight me for it....

CUT TO:

INT. HUT - NIGHT

Xena is sitting on the bed while Gabrielle tends to a small cut on her forehead. Gabrielle is trying not to grin.

GABRIELLE

That was mean.

XENA

No it wasn't. They needed
to be taught a lesson.

GABRIELLE

How fast to run? Xena....

XENA

I knew they wouldn't fight me, Gabrielle.
They're young, but they're not dumb.

GABRIELLE

Good thing they didn't see you hit your head
on that tree limb when we were walking home,
they might have changes their minds.

XENA

(leering)

Not my fault. I just love you in those
leathers, really shows off your....

GABRIELLE

Ah, ah, ah... be good.



Gabrielle sets aside the cloth she was cleaning Xena's forehead with and sighs as she sits next to her on the bed and rests her head on Xena's shoulder.

GABRIELLE

(Cont'd)

I'm so tired.

Xena puts her arm around Gabrielle and pulls her close.

XENA

I know. How about I tuck you in
and bring you a warm cup of
spiced wine to help you sleep?

GABRIELLE

That would be wonderful.

XENA

Okay, you get into bed,
and I'll take care of it.

Xena places a kiss on Gabrielle's forehead before standing up and moving to the small cooking area. Gabrielle undresses and crawls into bed, pulling the covers up around her shoulders as she watches Xena.

GABRIELLE

Not everyone believes that you know.

XENA

What?



GABRIELLE

That you're not Amazon.

Xena sighs and smiles as she pours Gabrielle's wine.

XENA

Well, I guess it depends on whose stories you believe. There are some who think I am and then there are some like our new friends out there who don't think I am.

GABRIELLE

You know more about Amazon rites and laws than all of us combined.

XENA

I know a lot about Roman law too, but it doesn't make me Caesar.

Xena joins Gabrielle, hands her the cup, then undresses and gets into bed with her.

GABRIELLE

You are Amazon.



XENA

I might have been once, but I'm not anymore. I did too many things that just won't let me be a part of the tribe anymore.

FADE OUT.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

EXT. CLEARING - DAY

Xena is with a small group of Amazons. They are drilling with weapons and Xena is watching them. She stops near one and shows her how to hold her sword with a better grip.

Gabrielle is walking with Adelia, watching from a distance as they talk.

ADELIA

She wants to help.

GABRIELLE

She always wants to help. Now if some of our sisters will just get a clue and let her do it, a lot of our problems will be solved. We could move the tribe and that would be the end of it.



ADELIA

Oh, it's not just that, My Queen. I was born this land. I was joined on this land. My partner and I raised two daughters here. I buried her here two years ago. I had planned on joining her once again. So you see there is more to it than just leaving the land. This place is our lives and our history.

GABRIELLE

(quietly)
History.

ADELIA

My Queen?

GABRIELLE

Oh, just something someone said to me yesterday, about the history of Queen Nicia the one who led the Amazons to this land.

ADELIA

Ah yes, one of our greatest stories. Queen Nicia was a very brave woman who gave up everything so the Amazons could be free.

GABRIELLE

What do you mean?

Adelia sits on a log.

ADELIA

Hmm, I see you've never been told the whole story either. Would you like to hear it?

Gabriele sits in the grass at the old woman's feet.

GABRIELLE

Yes, please.



Adelia laughs and takes a deep breath before starting her story.

ADELIA

It was generations ago, of course... long before even my grandmother's grandmother. Nicia was a woman from a well-to-do family. The story says her father was a governor of a large providence. She ah, apparently fell in love with a soldier. He was a high-ranking officer in the local army and by all accounts they were very much in love. Just on the edge of the providence there was a small village of women. They kept to themselves and didn't cause any problems. But Nicia's father decided that they were 'unnatural' and that they had to be killed. He ordered Nicia's young man to do it, and being a soldier and accustomed to following orders, he gathered his men and set off to destroy the village. When he arrived, he found Nicia there. She was bound and determined to defend that village and those women. Because of his love for her, he couldn't follow through with his orders. He couldn't cut her down. She told him she would lead the women away from the providence and he told her that if she did that she should never return.

GABRIELLE

Why?

ADELIA

She had kept him from his duty. And she had forced him to defy an order from her father.

GABRIELLE

Why didn't he go with her?

ADELIA

As the story has been related, only a few weeks later there was an attack on the town and he along with everyone else, was killed. Nicia stayed with those women and they came here. They made her

ADLELIA

(Cont'd)

queen and she led them. But she knew they could not remain defenseless and so she taught them the art of being warriors. She lived a long life with them, but never a happy one I'm afraid. They say she knew the day he died. Being separated from the other half of your soul will do that.

GABRIELLE

(looking at Xena)

I know.



ADELIA

Anyhow, the legend part of the story says that Nicia and her lover will be reunited and they together will lead the Amazons together.

GABRIELLE

You think Xena and I are....

ADELIA

I didn't say that, I just told you what the legend says. I'm only the storyteller here. I don't decide what they mean.

FADE TO:

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

Xena is walking through the village alone. It's late and nearly everyone is in for the night. She's looking and listening to everything around her, trying to find a reasonable solution to the problems at hand.



A sentry stops and starts to question her, then realizes who it is and just waves to her. Xena gestures and head down toward the river, as she walks she hears several voices and stops, taking cover behind a tree to listen.

CAASI

Then we have to be prepared to do whatever needs to be done to make sure they don't try to move us from our land. Xena and Gabrielle can't make us leave if we don't want to.

BIDU

Gabrielle is our Queen.

RAYA

She is a Queen from a generation ago. The Amazons have changed. We've been forced to fight for what is ours and she just doesn't understand that. She's not a queen. She's a drifter who drops in from time to time, forces her ideas and beliefs on us and then leaves us again to travel with that murderer.

BIDU

And what do you think you're going to do about it? You wouldn't even challenge Xena for the right to be Gabrielle's champion.

RAYA

Why waste our time with Xena when there is another way to get what we want?

BIDU

If you're thinking of killing Gabrielle, then you may as well just go to Xena and ask her to kill you now, because that's exactly what will happen.

RAYA

I'm not going to kill her; it's not worth my time. I've talked Deliz into making a challenge for the throne. She's our best fighter and she'll tear Gabrielle apart. Once Deliz is queen then we can do what we want.

(beat)

Including making Xena pay for her crimes against the nation.

CAASI

Are you sure Deliz can beat Gabrielle?

RAYA

I'm positive.

XENA

(to herself)

Will they never learn?



From her place behind the tree, Xena just hangs her head and sighs before walking back to the village.

CUT TO:

INT. HUT - NIGHT

Xena slips into the hut and quietly closes the door. She looks over to the sleeping area where Gabrielle is already in bed. Taking a seat on a bench she starts to unlace her boots.

Gabrielle rolls over and watches for a minute, before sitting up.

GABRIELLE

Trouble sleeping?

XENA

Well you know, too many nights under a real roof and in a soft bed and I get buggy.

GABRIELLE

What's wrong?



XENA

They're forming an alliance to challenge you. They have someone they want to challenge you.

GABRIELLE

Who?

XENA

Someone named Deliz.

GABRIELLE

I don't know her. I haven't met her.

XENA

She may be a member of one of the tribes that has been pushed this way because of the encroachment.

Gabrielle falls back in bed and stares at the ceiling.

GABRIELLE

Oh, well, that's just wonderful news.
Thanks.

Xena drops her boots and gets up, moving to the bed. She sits on the edge and takes Gabrielle's hand.

XENA

You can handle it.



GABRIELLE

I know I can handle it. I'm just not wild about having to fight a sister over this matter.

XENA

If it comes to that Gabrielle, you can't pull any punches. You have to fight to win. The future of the Amazons depends on it.

GABRIELLE

You know what really stinks?

XENA

What?

GABRIELLE

Even if they challenge me and I win, they still won't want to leave.



XENA

We'll cross that bridge when we come to it.

Gabrielle sits up and looks off into the distance, pointing.

GABRIELLE

Oh look! What's that? A bridge.

Xena laughs and hugs Gabrielle close.

GABRIELLE

(Cont'd)

And it's probably one of those crappy rope ones with the boards missing.

CUT TO:

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

It looks like all the Amazons that remain with the tribe are in the center of the village. They're all milling around, obviously waiting for something or someone. There are many conversations going on some are calm and others carry angry tones and overall the entire atmosphere is highly charged and close to explosive.

Xena wanders casually into the crowd, listening and watching and looking for anyone who might be Deliz. She's paying special attention to the group that Raya has around her. She knows they are the core of the problem she and Gabrielle face in getting the Amazons to move.



Gabrielle comes into the square. She is dressed in full Amazon regalia. She looks to Xena who smiles and gives a little wave. Gabrielle smiles and takes a step up on a platform. She waits until everyone quiets down and all eyes are on her.

GABRIELLE

Now is the time for us to address the issue of this land. We must face the fact that as people explore and cities expand, they will come in this direction. You are not safe here any longer.

Xena and I can take you some place safe.
A new land where you can live your lives....

RAYA

Some of us don't want to leave our land.



Gabrielle slowly turns to face her.

GABRIELLE

You would rather fight and die here? You will die.
The people moving toward this land will outnumber you. They will either kill you or take you prisoner and sell you as slaves.

RAYA

Like many others who came before us.

Raya turns to Xena

RAYA

(Cont'd)

It wouldn't be any worse than the decimation
that you brought to our people.

She turns back to Gabrielle.

RAYA

(Cont'd)

We won't follow you and we
certainly won't follow Xena.

GABRIELLE

Then I think....

RAYA

We don't care what you think. We issue a
challenge to you, Gabrielle. Defend your
rights to be Queen of the Amazons.

GABRIELLE

You really don't want to do that.



RAYA

Won't you fight? Will you have your
lap dog fight for you, because
you know that you'll lose?

Gabrielle is clearly angry at the insult to Xena and stands up very straight, staring Raya right in the
eye.

GABRIELLE

Pick your champion! As the challenged,
I have the right to say when and what
weapons. It will be this evening
and the weapon will be staffs.

RAYA

(smiling and nodding)

This evening it is.

CUT TO:

INT. HUT - DAY

Gabrielle is sitting at a table with her head down in her arms when Xena comes in. Without a word,
Xena moves behind her and rubs her shoulders.

XENA

You should be resting.



GABRIELLE

I should be, but I can't.

She sits up and turns to face Xena.

GABRIELLE

Tell me why, just for once, can't something be simple? What's wrong with us saying... "You're in big trouble here and we need to get you to safety." And then have them say, "Well, gee Gabrielle that sounds like a dandy plan." Why can't it happen that way just once?

Xena is trying hard not to laugh.

XENA

Because we'd get bored. Now come on. You need to rest.

Xena pulls Gabrielle to her feet and guides her to the bed. She seats her, and then kneels down to unlace her boots. Gabrielle smiles and runs her fingers through Xena's hair.

GABRIELLE

Thank you for letting me whine.

XENA

No problem. I'm a good lap dog.

GABRIELLE

Oh please. You have no idea how hard it was for me not to go down there and smack her for that.



XENA

It's okay. I tripped her on her way out of the village.

Gabrielle lays back on the bed.

GABRIELLE

You did not.

XENA

Okay I didn't, but I thought about it.



Xena picks Gabrielle's legs up and turns her into the bed, then tosses a blanket over her.

GABRIELLE

You only thought about tripping her?
You're getting soft in your old age.
Normally you would have thought
about hanging her naked and
dripping with honey over an anthill.

XENA

(a brow rises)

Dripping honey? You need a nap.
Get some sleep. I'll come get
you in a couple of hours.

Xena leans over and kisses her on the forehead.

XENA

(Cont'd)

I love you.

FADE OUT.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

EXT. VILLAGE - EVENING

A combat ring has been created. Amazons surround it, waiting for the combatants. Adelia stands with two other older Amazons. She sighs and shakes her head.

ADELIA

This makes no sense, any of it. Xena knows there is another way to deal with this.

STELLISE

Maybe she doesn't want to handle it that way. It's possible she believes this challenge will be the end of it.

MARIAH

And the Queen is certainly a capable fighter.

ADELIA

(quietly)
Maybe.

Adelia watches, as from across the ring Xena ducks under the ropes and steps inside the ring just as the drums announce the arrival of Gabrielle.



Gabrielle is dressed in combat leathers. She moves into the ring and her second tosses her the staff she will be using. She smiles at Xena and twirls it before delivering several practice blows, which Xena blocks with absolutely no effort. Then Xena delivers a series of punches and kicks that Gabrielle fends off with the staff.

It's an effective little warm up for Gabrielle, and she seems content with her performance. Xena moves forward and before she can say anything to Gabrielle her eyes go wide when she gets a look at Deliz.

GABRIELLE

What?

Without a word and without taking her eyes from the Amazon, she turns Gabrielle by the shoulders. Gabrielle's eyes widen as well when she sees a woman who must be close to seven feet tall.

XENA

She gives new meaning to the word Amazon.



GABRIELLE

I think I met her father once. I offered him your legs as drumsticks.



XENA

What?

GABRIELLE

I'll tell you later.

She looks at Deliz again.

GABRIELLE

(Cont'd)

If I live to tell ya.

XENA

You'll be fine.

GABRIELLE

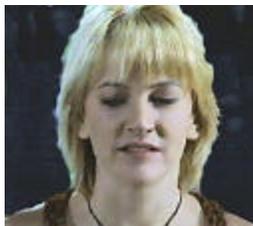
I hope so.

The drums start up again and Xena steps out of the ring as does Raya and the others who had accompanied Deliz.

Gabrielle and Deliz face off. Gabrielle smiles. Deliz snarls.

GABRIELLE

Oh, wonderful.



The drums stop. The signal for combat to begin is given. Gabrielle watches Deliz carefully as they circle each other. She realizes the woman is big and strong, but that she moves rather slowly.

Deliz makes the first strike, which Gabrielle blocks just before it connects with her head with what would have been skull-shattering force. Gabrielle holds Deliz's staff at bay with the end of her staff while using the other end to deliver a blow to the tall Amazon's ribs.

Deliz looks down and seems about as fazed as if a mosquito has just bitten her. She withdraws her staff and twirls it. Gabrielle glances to Xena, who just shrugs.



Gabrielle adjusts her grip on her staff, making it two handed, holding the staff lengthwise in front of her body. She delivers a series of blows to Deliz's ribs, using each end of the staff to do it quickly. It has some effect, and Deliz staggers backward just a bit.

Deliz uses her staff and her longer reach to tangle Gabrielle's legs, effectively sweeping them out from under her and dropping her to her back.

Xena flinches when she sees Gabrielle go down, and fights the urge to enter the ring. Gabrielle lays stunned for a moment, coughs and then rolls away just before Deliz delivers a blow with the end of the staff. It hits the ground one a split second after Gabrielle's head is gone from the spot.

As Gabrielle rolls to get up she realizes her knee has been hurt and it's hard to put weight on it. She curses under her breath as she fights off the pain and stands on both feet. Xena can tell Gabrielle is hurt and is becoming more jittery by the second.

Raya and the other Amazons begin smiling and passing money back and forth between them, clearly believing that Delia's victory is short at hand.

Gabrielle uses her staff to push herself off the ground, in a vaulting maneuver to kick Deliz in the chest with her good foot. The tall Amazon stumbles backward and as Gabrielle hits the ground, keeping her weight off her injured knee she uses her staff to sweep Deliz's feet out from under her. She falls backward, hitting the ground hard; Gabrielle turns her staff over end in her hands and hits her opponent in the ribs.

Deliz's staff falls from her hands and Gabrielle kicks it away, and then places her staff in Deliz's throat.

GABRIELLE

It's over. Don't make me kill you, because I will if I have to.



Deliz looks to Gabrielle, obviously stunned and in pain and slowly nods.

DELIZ

I submit to you... My Queen.

Gabrielle breathes a sigh of relief and backs off, using her staff to balance herself. Xena rushes into the ring and helps Gabrielle by placing her arm around her neck.

XENA

You okay?

GABRIELLE

I think my knee is really messed up.

She smiles at Xena.

GABRIELLE

(Cont'd)

Nothing you can't fix, I'm sure.

Xena helps Gabrielle out of the ring as Deliz pushes to her feet, holding her ribs. There is no one to help her. Raya and the others have left her to her own devices with her defeat. Adelia and some of the older Amazons assist her as Xena and Gabrielle leave the ring for their hut.



CUT TO:

INT. HUT - EVENING

Gabrielle is seated. Her leg up in Xena's lap as her partner slowly and carefully unlaces her boot and pulls it off. Gabrielle looks down to her knee, which is swollen, and turning the most amazing shade of black and blue.

GABRIELLE

At least it has the decency to look mangled.

Xena tenderly touches the swollen joint. Gabrielle grimaces and grips the arms of her chair, sucking in a sharp breath.

GABRIELLE

(Cont'd)

It has the decency to hurt like Tartarus too.

XENA

It's out of place. I need to pop it back in. Think you can handle it?



GABRIELLE

Not like I have a lot of choice.

Xena reaches up and uses pressure points in Gabrielle's thigh to help control the pain.

XENA

You may still feel a little something, but it won't be as bad now.

GABRIELLE

Okay, it already feels better. How about we just leave it that way and leave me numbed?



XENA

Gabrielle....

Gabrielle grips the chair.

GABRIELLE

Just get it over with.

Xena rubs her hands together quickly, warming them. Then she lays them on Gabrielle's knee. They look at each other and Xena grasped the knee and pulls and twists just a bit. Gabrielle sucks in another quick breath and then lets her head drop.

GABRIELLE

I hate that.

XENA

I know. I need to wrap it for you.

Xena releases the pressure points and then gets up to find something to wrap Gabrielle's knee with. Finding what she needs, she returns and gently begins wrapping the joint.

XENA

You did very well out there.

GABRIELLE

I hope I didn't hurt her too badly.

XENA

I think she's probably got a couple broken ribs, but she'll be okay. Good strategy, working on her ribs like that.



GABRIELLE

I knew I had to pick a spot and go with it. If I just hit her randomly, she would have killed me.

Xena finishes wrapping the knee and gently pats Gabrielle's leg.

XENA

I never would have let that happen.

GABRIELLE

I know.

CUT TO:

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

Xena and Gabrielle walk into the center of the village where, once again all the women are gathered. Gabrielle is walking on her own and not limping too badly. She goes back to the platform and climbs up on it.

GABRIELLE

I have completed your challenge and beaten your opponent. Is there anyone else who wants to challenge my right to be queen?



The entire group remains silent. Having seen Gabrielle beat the biggest Amazon in the tribe is more than enough for them.

GABRIELLE

(Cont'd)

Good, I'm glad we got that cleared up. Now, we need to make plans to move this tribe to safety. I know I can lead you, but you must understand that Xena has the knowledge and the skills required to move a large group. She knows how to command and I need her help to get this tribe someplace safe.

ADELIA

My Queen, please forgive me, but I think the biggest issue with our sisters is that Xena is not Amazon.

GABRIELLE

Of course she is.



RAYA

No, she isn't.

Gabrielle sighs and looks to Xena.

GABRIELLE

Then we should induct her into the tribe. We can make her an Amazon. Xena will go through the rites and....

RAYA

Why do you insist on this? You know her crimes against the tribe keep us from accepting her.

GABRIELLE

You talk about history and her crimes, but what about the history of all of the times that Xena has assisted the nation? If you remember your history, you know she made peace between the Centaurs and the Amazons. Doesn't that count for anything?

RAYA

Not to all of us.

GABRIELLE

So, you will all follow me, but some of you will not follow me if Xena is with us, helping us move? And your argument is that Xena is not Amazon? I have to tell you all I think that is the stupidest thing....

ADELIA

My Queen, there is another way.

Xena gives Adelia a dirty look and jumps up on the platform with Gabrielle.

XENA

No! No there's not!

Gabrielle looks to Xena, clearly very confused, then to Adelia who has a frustrated look on her face.

GABRIELLE

Adelia, what's the other way?

XENA

(warningly)
Adelia....



ADELIA

I'm sorry, Xena. She has the right to know.
You and Xena could be joined.

The entire crowd gasps, Xena groans and Gabrielle looks like a deer trapped by a bright light as we....

FADE OUT.

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. TRIBAL HUT - NIGHT

Xena is seated against the wall on a chair, legs crossed and clearly pissed off. Gabrielle is seated at a long table with several members of both factions of the tribe.

GABRIELLE

So what you're telling me is basically, if Xena and I get married, she will share the rank of Queen and everyone will have no choice but to follow her?



ADELIA

Yes.

GABRIELLE

How stupid is that?

Gabrielle looks to Xena who rolls her eyes and looks to the ceiling. Xena is still clearly upset this has been mentioned.

ADELIA

It will solve the problems.

GABRIELLE

And forcing Xena into something she doesn't want? What about that? How is that right?

ADELIA

It will allow you both to lead us.

GABRIELLE

Ah yeah, the greater good.

Gabrielle stands and leans on the table, staring down anyone who has the courage to look at her.

GABRIELLE

(Cont'd)

You know what? I think this is the most ridiculous thing I have ever heard in my life. Xena should not be forced into this because half of you are too damn stubborn or too plain stupid to do what is best for the tribe.

(pointing to Xena)

That woman is first and foremost my best friend and I won't make her do something like this to mollify you.

Gabrielle turns, angry and leaves the hut. Xena watches her go, touched and surprised by her words.



CUT TO:

INT. TEMPLE - NIGHT

Xena enters the old temple. It's clear it hasn't been used in many years, probably since the twilight. She looks up through holes in the ceiling and watches stars cross the sky. Then she moves to the altar and feels around the edge until she releases a lever and slides the top away. She reaches inside feeling for something and obviously frustrated that it's not there.

Adelia moves from the shadows, holding up a cloth bundle.

ADELIA

Looking for these?

XENA

Give them to me.



ADELIA

I can't do that Xena. You know they are one of the last true Amazon relics. They've been with the tribe since the beginning, waiting for their rightful owners.

XENA

That is a very old legend, Adelia.
There is nothing to prove it.

ADELIA

Really?

The old woman moves to the altar and places the bundle on it, unrolling it. Inside there are two ceremonial knives. She holds up a bone-handled dagger with intricate carvings.

ADELIA

This was Nicia's, given to her by Aurelius, just before she left.

She picks up the other one and they seem to be drawn to each other.

ADELIA

(Cont'd)

And this was his, taken from his body by Nicia when she found it in the ruins. She tried to save them. She tried to get the Amazons there in time to defend the city. She knew he was in danger.

XENA

Old legend that has no place in fact. There is no evidence to support the legend of the bonding.



ADELIA

Then why did you come for them?

XENA

So that you wouldn't give them to Gabrielle. She has enough problems without your adding to it with old stories.

Adelia smiles at Xena as she carefully wraps the knives back up.

ADELIA

She is an Amazon Queen. She can handle a little history.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Gabrielle is out walking alone in the forest. She is listening to the sounds around her and seems to be contemplating on them. She stops for a moment and looks up into the trees.

GABRIELLE

All right, you three. Don't get cocky just because you passed your Rites. Get down here.



Esme, Dori and Jinx drop from the trees. They're all smiling and wearing the tribal leathers that signify adult members of the tribe.

ESME

We're never going to get one over on you, are we?

GABRIELLE

Never.

JINX

We just wanted to tell you. Well, we'll follow you and Xena anywhere.

She looks to her sisters, who are nodding their agreement, and then she shrugs.

JINX

(Cont'd)

I mean I know we're not much, but....

GABRIELLE

(smiling)

You are so very much. You are what will keep this tribe strong and healthy. You are the beginning, without you there is nothing to try and save. You are true Amazons.



The girls beam under their Queen's compliment. And they fall in beside her trying to match her stride.

DORI

Can we walk with you?

ESME

I don't think Xena would be happy that you're out here by yourself.

GABRIELLE

I'm a big girl. I can take care of myself, but I'd be happy to let you walk with me.

ESME

So will you join with Xena?

GABRIELLE

No.

JINX

Why not?

GABRIELLE

Because that's not Xena's style.
She's not the joining type. We have
a good relationship the way it is.



ESME

What about you? What do you want?

GABRIELLE

(laughing nervously)

It's not about what I want. It's
about what the Amazons need.

DORI

They need you and Xena to lead
them. The only way you can
do that is to join with her.

Gabrielle sighs and shakes her head.

GABRIELLE

Xena and I have always done what we
needed to do for the greater good, but
forcing her to do this is crossing the
line. I have to find another way.

She looks to a clearing in the forest and smiles at the girls.

GABRIELLE

(Cont'd)

Head back to the village.
I'll be back soon.



JINX

You sure?

GABRIELLE

Absolutely.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Gabrielle is seated in the clearing with a small fire burning. Her eyes are closed and she is clearing meditating. Slowly she opens her eyes. Ephiny is seated across from her.

EPHINY

Hello.

GABRIELLE

Hi.

EPHINY

Quite a mess huh?



GABRIELLE

Yeah. Ephiny, Xena made you a promise....

EPHINY

Yes, she did.

GABRIELLE

But I didn't. I can't ask her to do this just because they won't listen.

EPHINY

You're thinking of leading those who will follow and leaving the other behind?

GABRIELLE

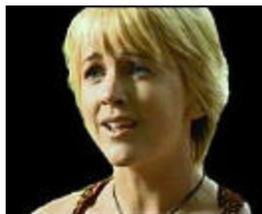
I don't think there is an option. Those who want to leave will be taken to a safe place. Those who don't....

EPHINY

Will die.

GABRIELLE

I'm sorry.



END ACT FOUR

FADE OUT.

TAG

FADE IN:

INT. HUT - NIGHT

Gabrielle is up at a table. She's leaning her head in the palm of her hand and drawing shapes on the table with her finger. Xena comes in, sees her and slowly closes the door. She moves across the room and kneels down by her chair, gently running her fingers through Gabrielle's hair.

XENA

Not a banner day huh?



GABRIELLE

Not really.

XENA

I'm sorry.

Gabrielle turns to Xena and smiles, leaning in and kissing her on the tip of the nose.

GABRIELLE

So am I. I'm sorry that they bought up that stupid ritual.

XENA

It's not a stupid ritual.

GABRIELLE

Okay, it's not stupid for them.

XENA

Is it stupid for us?

GABRIELLE

Yes.



XENA

Why?

GABRIELLE

(chuckling)

Like you'd join with me just because
we need to move Amazons.

XENA

No, but I'd join with you
because I love you.

Xena takes both of Gabrielle's hands in her own.

XENA

(Cont'd)

Join with me.



FADE OUT.



TO BE CONTINUED....



DISCLAIMER

No amazons were actually hurt during the making of this motion picture.
Gabrielle just used the bruised knee thing to get a little sympathy from Xena.