

Xena: Warrior Princess - Subtext Virtual Season 8



Production #V805 - My Brother's Keeper

Virtual Airdate - December 11, 2002

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TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. SUNNY MEADOW CAMPSITE - EARLY EVENING

It is near sunset. Xena and Gabrielle's campsite is set up under a tree. Argo is getting a drink from a stream passing by it.

Xena and Gabrielle stand in the meadow, tossing the chakram back and forth to each other in an odd, slightly deadly, and potentially finger cutting game of catch.

XENA

We won't be seeing
any towns for a while.



Gabrielle catches the chakram, and tosses it back.

GABRIELLE

That's okay. I don't mind
the company I'm in.

Xena catches the chakram and twirls it on her finger before she returns it.

XENA

We could take the high road across
the mountains. I think I remember a
couple of good lookouts up there.

Gabrielle snags the chakram out of the air and throws it from behind her back.

GABRIELLE

You mean we could stop and smell the
flowers and get some great views?



XENA

(smiling)

Something like that, yeah.

The sunset spreads across the meadow. Xena catches the chakram and spins it, balancing it on her fingertip.

GABRIELLE

Sounds like a plan.

Gabrielle walks over to Xena. Xena clips the chakram to her belt, and they head towards the campfire. Gabrielle pauses to pick up her bag, and bring it with them.

XENA

Didn't you used to have
two bags of those?

Gabrielle sits down and opens the bag, removing a scroll and setting it aside.

GABRIELLE

Yeah, I did. I... um.... left
one of them in the tomb
under Ares' Temple.

Xena is surprised. She sits down next to Gabrielle and hands her a mug.

XENA

Sorry to hear that. I know
you worked hard on them.

Gabrielle takes out a quill and sharpens it, then dips it into a little clay pot of ink.

GABRIELLE

It's not so bad. Just a few
of our older stories.

Xena takes a sip of her drink.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

And all the private ones.



Xena spits her mouthful into the fire, which sputters and flares up. She turns and stares at Gabrielle.

XENA

The pr.... You mean the ones
about you and me and....

Gabrielle nods. Her eyes are twinkling.

GABRIELLE

I figured he could use
something to read.

Xena puts her cup down and covers her face with her hand. After a minute, her shoulders start shaking.

XENA

(laughing)
Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE

Paybacks are definitely a bitch.

Xena shakes her head, still laughing.

XENA

Well, at least I don't have to
worry about them being read
on the steps of the Athenaeum.

Gabrielle chuckles, and starts to write on her parchment. Xena rests her chin on her fist and watches the sunset. Her humor fades, and she seems a bit pensive. Gabrielle notices.

GABRIELLE

Having second thoughts?



XENA

About Ares, you mean?

GABRIELLE

Yeah.

Xena considers the question for a brief while.

XENA

No.... It's just there's so few people
now who were a part of my life before.
Bad as he was, he was one of them.



Gabrielle nods. She understands. She puts her quill and parchment down and takes Xena's hand, as they watch the stars come out overhead.

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. MOUNTAIN VALLEY - DAY

Xena and Gabrielle enter a stunning valley, full of beautiful trees, gorgeous flowers, and pretty waterfalls. It is picture perfect. As they walk through a field of knee high grass, a flock of butterflies takes flight around them, surrounding them with wild color.

Gabrielle stops to watch them.

GABRIELLE

Wow.

Xena pulls up next to her and rests her forearm on Gabrielle's shoulder.



XENA

I must be getting old. I'm starting to like watching stuff like this.



Gabrielle gives Xena a look, and rolls her eyes.

GABRIELLE

C'mon, grandma.

They continue on through the valley. It seems deserted. There are no other people visible, no roads, and no signs of habitation.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

It sure is quiet out here.
You were right.

Xena looks around her.

XENA

Never was much civilization around these parts. Me and.... my army came through here after we left Amphipolis.

Gabrielle glances at Xena.

GABRIELLE

That's right. It's not that far away, is it? Just over this mountain range.

Xena nods. She looks in the direction Gabrielle mentioned, then looks away.

XENA

What's left of it.



Gabrielle plucks a stem of grass and chews on it as they walk. They head for a level area at the bottom of the valley, near the banks of a small stream.

When they get there, Gabrielle puts her things down, and walks into the surrounding trees to get firewood. Xena takes their bags down from Argo II's back and starts to set up camp.

Neither speaks. They work together in comfortable silence, performing tasks they have both done now for a long time. Gabrielle kneels and arranges the firewood, as Xena goes to the stream and fills their containers of water.

Xena pauses, and tastes the water. She finds it acceptable, so she fills up the skins, and also a small black pot that she brings back to where Gabrielle is working.

Gabrielle takes the pot. She pats Xena's leg, but doesn't comment. Xena ruffles her hair, then goes to a nearby half buried boulder and sits down on it.

XENA

(cont'd)

Water's nice. Want to go for a swim?



Gabrielle finishes lighting the fire. She rests her elbows on her knee and looks at the creek.

GABRIELLE

Sure. My back's a little
sore. That'll help.

A look of concern crosses Xena's face. She starts to get up, then changes her mind and resumes her seat. She begins to take off her boots.

XENA

You could have
mentioned that earlier.

Gabrielle looks over her shoulder at Xena. Her face bears a warmly knowing expression, but Xena doesn't see it.

GABRIELLE

If it had been bad
enough, I would have.

Gabrielle gets up and dusts her hands off. She casually picks up the pot of water, and with a quick motion, douses Xena with it.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Race you to the water.
Here's a head start.

Gabrielle starts running towards the creek, removing her clothes as she does.

Xena sits in a brief shock, water dripping from her hair.

XENA

You little....

Xena throws her boots and leg armor down and bolts after her. They both reach the water at about the same time, and in the same relative state of undress, and jump in, causing a healthy splash.

Their laughter is the only human sound to be heard.



CUT TO:

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Xena is stretched out on their sleeping furs on her side, head propped up on one fist. She watches Gabrielle write in her diary.

It is late. The stars are out overhead, and crickets are sounding all around them.

XENA

I can see I'm not going to
get any sleep with this racket.

Gabrielle smiles.

GABRIELLE

Lucky me. Remind me to
take some of those with us.

Xena gives Gabrielle a look. Gabrielle grins.

XENA

How's your back now?

GABRIELLE

Fine, really.

Xena's eyes narrow in speculation.

XENA

Sure?



GABRIELLE
(*slightly exasperated*)
Xena.

XENA
Okay. I was going to offer a
backrub, but if you're fine....

GABRIELLE
Oo... well, you know, I'm kinda
stiff now that you mention it....

Xena smirks. She gets up and goes to Gabrielle's side, pushing her flat in a gentle motion. Gabrielle stretches out willingly on her stomach, resting her chin on her hands as Xena starts to work.

GABRIELLE
(*cont'd*)
It's nice to be out here
all by ourselves.

Xena looks pleased to hear this.

XENA
Been a while.

GABRIELLE
It's almost like a....

A scream is heard, ringing over the trees from moderately far away. Gabrielle stops talking and looks over her shoulder at Xena. Xena looks back at her.

They both sigh simultaneously. Xena gets up, and offers Gabrielle a hand up. She pulls Gabrielle to her feet and they start to throw on their weapons.

GABRIELLE
(*cont'd*)
Knew it was too good to last.



XENA
Want to stay here and
wait? I'll take care of this.

Gabrielle gives Xena one of those looks. Xena frowns, but just shakes her head. Xena mounts Argo, then turns and offers Gabrielle a hand up behind her.

GABRIELLE

I can run.

XENA

Argo can run faster. C'mon.

After this token protest, Gabrielle allows herself to be pulled onboard, and they gallop off towards the sounds of chaos.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODLAND CLEARING - NIGHT

The clearing is full of men, torches, yelling, and the sound of fighting. It is dark, except for the light from the torches, and it is very difficult to see what is really going on.

Xena and Gabrielle ride into the side of the clearing and stop, sliding off Argo, and then pausing.

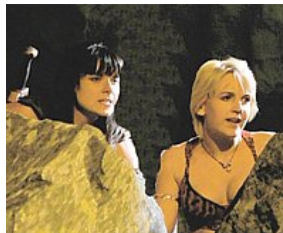
GABRIELLE

Okay. Who's the bad guys? Flip a dinar?

Xena makes a quick assessment.

XENA

Go for the ones attacking, not defending.



Xena throws herself into the fight. She grabs the nearest grubby thug whacking on someone and slams her fist into his head. The man doesn't budge. Xena is shocked. She pulls back her hand to hit him again, then the man just collapses into a pile of rattling armor.

Xena looks at her fist, then at the man, then shakes her head and goes onto the next grubby thug.

Gabrielle selects her opponents more carefully. She ducks between two men struggling together and turns, neatly tripping the one that seems more aggressive. His opponent is an older man, dressed in non-descript clothes under makeshift armor, and he moves out of the way as Gabrielle boots the rising thug in the jaw with an easy kick and knocks him out.

MAN

Thank you!

Gabrielle smiles, but her eyes widen as she sees two men with maces bearing down on them.

GABRIELLE

Hold that thought.

The man turns and sees the two thugs attacking. He starts to run towards them, but Gabrielle steps in front of him and he is forced to stop or run into her.

MAN

Watch it! Get out of the way!

GABRIELLE

(pointing)

Hey, look over there!

The man whirls. Gabrielle is now free to confront the men.

Gabrielle draws her sais and meets the first of the attackers, catching his mace on the one of them and shoving it back up into his face. She turns to face the other, but has to duck as he is propelled over her head by a kick from Xena, who apparently just happened to be nearby.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Hey!

XENA

You snooze, you lose.

Xena somersaults off, kicking and punching as she cuts through a group of raiders and sending them scattering.

GABRIELLE

(yelling)

I wasn't snoozing.



Gabrielle turns to look for another target, but it is obvious now that there are far more raiders than defenders. More raiders rush in from the far side of the clearing. Gabrielle picks up a spear and catches on of them just as he is about to smack her over the head. The end of the spear gets him right in the groin and he lets out a sound loud enough to break glass.

One of the defenders sees the new attackers.

MAN

There's too many! We have to get
out of here! Run! Run all of you!
Let 'em have the wagons!

The raiders are grabbing the contents of a wagon and running off now as the defenders scatter. It is too dark for them to be sorted out, and rather than attack innocents Xena and Gabrielle hesitate, coming to stand back to back in the center of the clearing as the raiders escape with their booty.

GABRIELLE

Xena, we can't just let
them get away with this.

Xena watches the last of the raiders disappear into the darkness.

XENA

We don't know how many of
them are out there. I'm not
gonna risk chasing them.

Gabrielle gives Xena a look, then she sheathes her sais and goes to help one of the victims stand up. Slowly, the defenders gather in the clearing, some limping, some being helped. Three are beyond help, lying dead on the ground. One of the men, the first one Xena helped, comes up to her.

MAN

Thanks, strangers.
For what it's worth.

XENA

They just after your goods?



MAN

This time, yeah. We thought we'd sneak by 'em by moving at night.

XENA

Bad idea.

The man looks around, sees the three dead. His shoulders slump.

MAN

Jackals.

Xena observes the man's makeshift armor. Several other men gather around them, similarly dressed, along with other men obviously merchants.

MERCHANT

Jaral! You promised to protect us!

XENA

He was trying.

MERCHANT

Trying? That's all they do is try. Meanwhile, we're losing our shirts!

Several other merchants mutter in agreement. Gabrielle and Xena exchange looks.

GABRIELLE

Where were you going? Is it far?



MERCHANT

Just over that ridge, to the town. We almost made it!

XENA

We'll help you get there.

JARAL

Maybe you can give us some ideas while you're at it. You seem to know what your doing.

Xena half smiles at the faint compliment. Gabrielle merely chuckles and shakes her head.

MERCHANT

Any ideas will be better than what we've been doing. It's just not working!

XENA

Gabrielle, stay here and help those wounded. I'll get our stuff.

Xena jumps on Argo and rides off before Gabrielle has a chance to protest. Gabrielle starts to say something, then stops. She walks over to the nearest wounded man and kneels next to him, reaching for a piece of cloth to bandage his wounds.

CUT TO:

EXT. SMALL VILLAGE - NIGHT

Xena, Gabrielle, the remaining defenders, and the merchants approach the entrance to a small village, set deep inside the mountain forest.

The gates to the village are made of wood, and though sturdily built they are obviously not meant to hold back any serious attack. On either side of the gate is a burning torch marking the entrance, and a guard nearby dressed as the defenders are.

There is sign of siege about the village. The defenders look drawn and discouraged. Near the gates, and on the walls of the small homes and shops just inside is evidence of attacks. Parts of walls are burned or missing, and one hut is collapsed into itself, materials on the ground outside showing that it is in the process of being rebuilt.

GABRIELLE

(under her breath)

Thought there weren't any towns around.



Xena hears her. She moves closer. Xena is leading Argo, who is carrying two of the dead bodies.

XENA

Wasn't here the last time I was.

GABRIELLE

Xena, an entire civilization could
have rose and fell since then.

XENA

Hah. Hah.

Gabrielle peers at the village.

GABRIELLE

Looks like they've been having a
tough time. Maybe we *can* help.

XENA

Maybe.

The guards open the gates and they enter the town. It is late, but several doors open on hearing them and people come out, dismayed when they see the dead bodies. Jaral leads them to the village square.

JARAL

You can leave the bodies here.
I have to go get their families.

Xena gives Jaral a sympathetic look.

XENA

Tough job.



Jaral looks at Xena, and sees understanding in her eyes. He manages a weak smile.

JARAL

I'll go wake the marshal. He'll be
very disappointed. He hoped
this new idea might work.

XENA

Marshal?

The townsfolk are now gathering in agitation. They are frightened, and frustrated.

JARAL

He runs our militia. He's
tried everything. I just...
oh, wait, here he comes.

Gabrielle has been standing off to one side a little, and has a good view of the arriving townsfolk. One is taller than the rest, and starts pushing forward to the center. Gabrielle spots him.

XENA

Can't be much of a marshal if....

GABRIELLE

Xena.

Gabrielle grabs Xena's forearm in a grip. Xena recognizes the tone of Gabrielle's voice as one that can only mean trouble. Xena moves over to Gabrielle's side, and Gabrielle points to the man heading towards them. Jaral also looks.

JARAL

Aye, that's the marshal.

Xena and Gabrielle look at each other, then at the man.

GABRIELLE

Xena, that's....

XENA

My brother, Toris. Yeah.



Now thirty odd years older than his sister, Toris is a man past middle age, and is dressed in a form of the armor the defenders are wearing. He shades his eyes from the torchlight and looks across the square, right at them.

He recoils in recognition, with obvious shock and anger.

GABRIELLE

Uh oh.



XENA

Guess it's not gonna to
be a warm family reunion.



FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. TORIS' COTTAGE - NIGHT

It is very tense inside Toris' cottage. Gabrielle and Xena stand on one side of the room, Toris on the other. The room itself is relatively spare and simple. There is a bed on one side, and handmade furniture, a small table, and a chest under the window.

TORIS

Damn Jaral for bringing you here.



Xena's eyes narrow. Gabrielle holds up a hand.

GABRIELLE

Wait a minute. He didn't bring us. We decided to help.

TORIS

Help? YOUR help is the one thing we don't need here.

Xena snorts.

XENA

Oh yeah, you're doing great.

Toris turns and points at her.

TORIS

Get out of here, Xena.

Gabrielle's peacemaker gene kicks in, reluctantly. Toris has never been her favorite person, and time has not warmed her regard for him.

GABRIELLE

Okay, hold it. We didn't come here on purpose. We were just passing through and heard fighting.

TORIS

You should have kept passing.

GABRIELLE

And let those people
die? Not our style.

Toris stares at Gabrielle

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Look, I know it's a
shock seeing us, but....

TORIS

Shock?

(shaking head)

How about nightmare? If there
was one good thing about your
disappearing, it was that you'd
never be back to cause more
pain to my family again.

Gabrielle is taken aback.

GABRIELLE

What? What did I ever
do to your family?

Xena's face changes, as she realizes what Toris means.

TORIS

Not you. Oh, not you, Gabrielle.
You're just the unlucky little
pawn stuck to my sister.

He turns, and stares at Xena.

TORIS

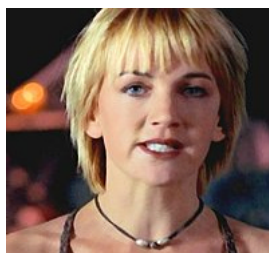
(cont'd)

I watched our mother burn.

Gabrielle steps between them.

GABRIELLE

That wasn't Xena's fault.



TORIS

Don't lie, Gabrielle. It was
her fault, and she knows it!
(*pointing at Xena*)
Don't you?

Xena's face is grim.

XENA

I....

TORIS

Go on, Xena. Tell me it wasn't your
fault she was taken out, beaten, and
burned to death! Because of you!

GABRIELLE

Toris! We would have
stopped it if we could have!

TORIS

It doesn't matter! Don't you see?
Wherever she is, pain and grief are.
She killed my entire family.
I don't want to be next.

GABRIELLE

But....

XENA

Come on, Gabrielle.

Xena starts to leave, taking hold of Gabrielle's arm.

GABRIELLE

Xena, wait a minute.
This isn't fair.

XENA

(*curtly*)
Let's go.



Gabrielle has to choose whether to pull herself free from Xena or allow Xena to tow her out of the room. She chooses to leave.

But not without a final word.

GABRIELLE

What about the men who
died tonight? Aren't they on
your conscience, Toris?

Xena and Gabrielle leave. Toris stands looking at the open door for a long moment, then goes to it and slams it closed.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Xena and Gabrielle are back in their own campsite. Xena sits by the fire, staring into it. Gabrielle is still outraged.

GABRIELLE

How can he say things
like that, Xena?

XENA

(quietly)
Because they're true.



Gabrielle stops pacing.

GABRIELLE

C'mon, you know they're....

XENA

Gabrielle, they are true.
(pausing)
Lyceus, my father.... My mother...
my son. They all died because of me.

Gabrielle comes and sits next to Xena, putting a hand on her arm.

GABRIELLE

Xena.

XENA

He's right. Everyone who
gets close to me gets hurt.

Gabrielle takes a breath.

Xena looks at Gabrielle.

XENA

(cont'd)

Look me in the eye and
tell me that's not true.

Gabrielle does look her in the eye.

GABRIELLE

Life hurts everyone, Xena.



Xena gets up, and tosses a rock into the fire. It sends sparks flying upward.

XENA

Yeah. Well, I guess that just proves
the old saying that life sucks.

Xena walks off into the darkness. Gabrielle is left to stare pensively at the fire.

CUT TO:

EXT. VILLAGE SQUARE - MORNING

In daylight, the village looks even more battered. Jaral walks across the square, and stops, looking around. He shakes his head. Toris approaches him from the opposite direction.

TORIS

We have work to do.

Jaral looks at him.

JARAL

She could have helped us.

Toris is angry.

TORIS

You don't know anything about it.
You don't know her. Thank the
gods we no longer have that
I kept it that way for you.

JARAL

I don't understand.

Toris grabs his sleeve and starts walking towards one of the town's buildings.

TORIS

You don't have to. Gather the
men. I want to talk to all who
were attacked last night.
Something must have been missed.

JARAL

Nothing was missed, Toris! There
were just too many of them! They'll
be back, and we can't stop them.

TORIS

We'll find a way. Go find the men.

Toris gives Jaral a shove towards a side street, and continues on to the building.

JARAL

(under his breath)

I thought we found a way last night.

Shaking his head, Jaral goes off.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMPSITE - MORNING

Gabrielle is asleep, still covered in furs that appear to have been tucked carefully in around her. The fire has been tended, and the campsite tidied.

It is quiet, and apparently peaceful. Suddenly, however, Gabrielle wakes with a start and half sits up, looking around her in alarm. Xena is nowhere to be seen.

GABRIELLE

Xena!

Xena appears from among the nearby trees. She is obviously just coming from a bath, her hair is wet, and there are water droplets on her skin.

Gabrielle spots her and appears relieved.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

There you are.

Xena sets her armor down and walks over to where Gabrielle is sitting. She takes a seat on a log next to her.

XENA

Morning. I was trying
not to wake you up.



Gabrielle sits up and pulls the furs around her. She is still a little dazed from sleep.

GABRIELLE

Wish you had. I might have missed
that last dream. Been up long?

Xena doesn't answer.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Did you go to sleep at all?

Xena shrugs.

XENA

I heard staying up all night is good
for ya. Thought I'd give it a try.

Gabrielle reaches out and puts a hand on Xena's leg, giving her a comforting pat.

GABRIELLE

Why don't we stay here another
night, instead of heading out?

Xena looks around, then looks back at Gabrielle.

XENA

No. There's no point in sticking around. We should get going.

Her subtle ploy not working, Gabrielle decides to play her trump card.

GABRIELLE

(reluctantly)

I could use a day off. I think I moved the wrong way during that fight last night.



Xena's attention is distracted by this. She moves from the log to sit down on the furs next to Gabrielle and begins to examine her in concern.

XENA

Lay down.

Gabrielle complies. She turns over and lies down, putting her head in Xena's lap as Xena looks at her healing back wound.

XENA

(cont'd)

Looks all right, but....

Gabrielle's eyes twinkle, slightly.

XENA

(cont'd)

If it's bothering you, better not take a chance. We'll stay put.

(looking around)

I can fix some things....

Restock on herbs.



GABRIELLE
(under her breath)
Take a nap....

XENA
What?

GABRIELLE
(grinning)
I said, that sounds like a great idea.

CUT TO:

INT. VILLAGE BARRACKS - DAY

Toris and Jaral meet with a score of others. This is the village militia, and they are a motley group that includes older men, barely adolescent boys, and even two older women.

TORIS
It should have worked.

JARAL
We thought it would. It almost did.
It was like they found us at the last
minute, Toris. We were so close!

Toris paces back and forth clearly upset.

TORIS
That's the third merchant wagon they
got. If this keeps up, we won't be able
to get any traders to come here.

JARAL
We need that trade.



TORIS
(angrily)
Don't you think I know that?

The militia is uneasy.

WOMAN

What if they come here again?

TORIS

We have to build up our defenses.
We need to make the walls
higher, the gate stronger....

JARAL

You think that will keep them out?

WOMAN

What we have now won't.

The people in the room mutter agreement.

TORIS

All right. Let's get to work. Maybe
if we can make it tough on them,
they'll find easier targets.

Jaral and the others nod.

WOMAN

Toris... What about those women
from last night? Jaral said....

TORIS

(firmly)

Forget about them. We'll do this
ourselves. We don't need help.

Toris leaves. The rest of the militia hesitate, then follow him. Jaral and the woman are the last out.

WOMAN

What thing was so horrible that he
hates them more than the raiders?

JARAL

I think he's related to them.

The woman shakes her head as they walk out.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMPSITE - AFTERNOON

Xena is beneath a tree, working on fixing a piece of her armor. Gabrielle sits nearby, not doing anything in particular. She is chewing on a stalk of grass, just watching nature pass them by.

After a few minutes of silence, Gabrielle clears her throat and speaks.

GABRIELLE

Know what I was thinking?



Xena looks at Gabrielle with a knowing expression. It is one of half amusement, half annoyance, and yet is all loving. Gabrielle does not see it.

XENA

No, what?

GABRIELLE

I think if you and Toris could just sit down
and talk to each other, it might help.

XENA

I think if we end up in the same room
again, talking will be the last thing we do.



Gabrielle turns and leans on one elbow.

GABRIELLE

You'd beat up an old man?

Xena frowns.

XENA

He's only two years
older than I am.

GABRIELLE

Give or take three decades, sure.

XENA

Hmph.

GABRIELLE

I still think....

XENA

Gabrielle....

Xena pauses, and puts armor down.

XENA

(cont'd)

Listen, I appreciate what you're trying to do, but some things can't be fixed. Toris and I never did get along. Nothing's going to change that.

GABRIELLE

Xena....

XENA

Especially not now. Not after... what happened to mother.



Gabrielle considers this. She watches Xena's face, which is stormy. She decides not to press the point, at the moment. Instead, she crawls closer to Xena and lies down, putting her head in Xena's lap and closing her eyes.

GABRIELLE

Okay.

At first slightly annoyed, after a few moments Xena begins stroking Gabrielle's hair with her fingers and this seems to work a calming magic.

XENA

Thanks for trying.



GABRIELLE

That's what friends do.
(pausing)
But I'm not done trying.

Gabrielle kisses Xena's knee, then puts her head back down.

Xena smiles. She puts her arm over Gabrielle's shoulders and leans against the tree. Shortly after, her eyes drift shut.



CUT TO:

EXT. VILLAGE SQUARE - EARLY EVENING

The militia is finishing their work. They have greatly enhanced the outer wall with more logs, and built up the gates higher, and wider.

Toris is inspecting the new defenses, and appears pleased. There are also several villagers nearby, pointing and nodded. They also seem pleased.

TORIS

Good job. Tomorrow, we work
on the rest of the wall.

JARAL

We did a lot. I feel better
behind those gates.

CROWD

Yes. At least we have that!

Toris straightens, obviously proud of his idea. He dusts off his hands, scraped and raw from helping with the wood.

TORIS

We can find the answers. Now we're
on the right track. Let's go wash up,
and have some dinner together.

The militia enters the gates, and start to close them. When they are halfway closed, a yell suddenly erupts from the forest surrounding the village and before they can get the gates locked, a group of raiders burst through them on horse back and attack.

CROWD

AIIEEEEEEE!!!!

Caught totally by surprise, the militia can only scramble to get out of the way as the men start to destroy everything within reach.

TORIS

(desperately)

Get your weapons! Hurry!

Toris picks up a small barrel and throws it at a raider. It hits the man, and deflects him from stabbing an older woman. Other militia members start to try and fight, but the raiders are overwhelming in numbers.

The village begins to burn.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

EXT. CAMPSITE - EARLY MORNING

It is a foggy, somewhat chilly morning.

Gabrielle kneels next to a still sleeping Xena. Gabrielle is already dressed, and she tucks a fold of the sleeping furs around Xena in a tender gesture. Her expression is worried.

Slowly, Gabrielle stands up and goes over to Argo.

GABRIELLE

Keep an eye on her, okay?
She just fell asleep before dawn.



Argo shoves Gabrielle in the stomach with her nose.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Hey! That's cold!

Argo knickers, in a tone that is definitely critical.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

I'll be right back. I just want
to talk to Toris, that's all.

If a horse can be said to roll her eyes, Argo does. Gabrielle gives Argo a pat on the neck, then she starts off through the fog. It closes around her, obscuring her from view.

CUT TO:

EXT. VILLAGE GATES - EARLY MORNING

Gabrielle steps out of the fog onto the road that leads into the village. She stops at the smell of acrid smoke that lingers, though she cannot yet really see the village.

GABRIELLE

Uh oh. Why don't I believe
that's a barbeque?

Gabrielle walks forward. As the fog recedes, she sees what is left of the gates, broken and charred with new additions lying shattered in the road. She steps over them carefully and enters, her eyes met with a scene of devastation.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Oh, no.



As Gabrielle moves on, more of the village is revealed. Most of the buildings are burned... some to the ground, other partially. The well has been pulled down. On the ground, bodies lie of both humans and animals.

Gabrielle stops. She stands in the square and turns completely around, sickened.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Hello? Is anyone here?

A door swings open and Gabrielle turns, but it is only the wind, blowing the wood back and forth.

All is silent for a bit more, then Gabrielle hears scuffing footsteps approaching, and she shades her eyes into the fog.

Jaral appears, limping, his clothing bloodstained. He approaches Gabrielle with a haggard, shocked expression. Gabrielle rushes forward to meet him, supporting him with an arm around his shoulders.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

What happened?!

Jaral sits down on the remainder of the well.

JARAL

They came. We burned.

Jaral looks around.

JARAL

(cont'd)

We died.

Gabrielle is visibly upset.

GABRIELLE

I wish we'd....



JARAL

I wish you'd, too.

(sighing)

But I don't think anyone could have helped us. They came too fast, and they just caught us by surprise.

GABRIELLE

Did they attack for a purpose?

Jaral scrubs his face with one hand, and shrugs his shoulders.

JARAL

They took our supplies. I guess that's what they wanted.

Gabrielle gets up and walks around, studying the destruction. Sadly, it is not a new sight to her eyes, and she sees things not obvious to Jaral.

GABRIELLE

They need a constant source of supply, if they're living in this area. Not many towns.

Jaral merely watches her, with uncomprehending eyes.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Why destroy the only one they can raid?

Jaral has obviously not thought of this. He gets up and limps over to her.

JARAL

We were reinforcing the gates. Toris was afraid this would happen.

Gabrielle turns and looks at the gates, just visible in the fog.

GABRIELLE

Maybe they didn't want
anything slowing them down.

(pausing)

Where is Toris? Did he get hurt?

Jaral looks at Gabrielle and shakes his head.

JARAL

We didn't find him, living or dead.
The last I saw him, he was fighting
one of them near the edge of the
fence, and then... I don't know.

GABRIELLE

Maybe they took him.

XENA

(V.O.)

Maybe he ran.

Both Jaral and Gabrielle look up at the opening that once held the gates. The fog slowly swirls back and reveals Xena on Argo, moving out of the mist and into solid reality.



Jaral is indignant.

JARAL

How can you say that? He
was the first one to fight!

Xena doesn't look impressed by this. She stops Argo next to them and gets down.

XENA

Because I know him. Let's just
say he's got a history of it.

GABRIELLE

Xena, that was a long
time ago. People change.

Xena half shrugs, as though conceding the point. She looks around at the destruction, and sighs heavily. Gabrielle waits for her to speak, but she doesn't.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

What if they did take him?



XENA

Last thing he'd want is
me coming after him.

Jaral looks from one to the other as they speak, not entirely understanding what is going on.

GABRIELLE

All the more reason for us to go.

XENA

You could stay here and
help these people recover.

GABRIELLE

Pigs could fly, if they had
wings and the right attitude.

Xena nods, as though the entire conversation were just a formality, with a foregone conclusion.

JARAL

We held the bastards long enough for
many to escape. At least we have that.

XENA

Keep thinking that way. Start rebuilding.



JARAL

Some will say...
they'll just come back.

Xena turns and starts walking towards the gates, leading Argo. Gabrielle puts her hand on Jaral's shoulder.

GABRIELLE

Not if we can do
anything about it.

Gabrielle turns and follows Xena out. Jaral stands and watches them as the fog swallows them up.

CUT TO:

EXT. DEEP FOREST TRAIL - DAY

Xena and Gabrielle move through the trees. Xena concentrates on finding and analyzing the trail of the raiders. Gabrielle watches Xena's back, and keeps an eye out for trouble. They have left Argo behind.

Xena pauses to examine some broken branches.

XENA

Looks like some of them
came through here, at least.

Xena kneels and touches almost hidden hoof prints in the leaf litter.

XENA

(cont'd)

Didn't make much
effort to hide.

GABRIELLE

They didn't expect
anyone to follow them?

Xena gets up and dusts her hands off.

XENA

Probably not. Let's go.

Gabrielle follows Xena up the path. It is starting to slope considerably upward. Gabrielle winces slightly, looks around, then starts to use tree branches to help herself move upward.

XENA

(cont'd)

Did I mention how much I
hate waking up late, alone?



GABRIELLE

Sorry. I was hoping
I'd be back fast.

Xena climbs upward, picking a path through the trees.

XENA

Know what woke me up?

Gabrielle follows with a determined expression.

GABRIELLE

Dew?

XENA

You.



Gabrielle is surprised.

GABRIELLE

Me?

XENA

When you saw that
village, I felt it.

GABRIELLE

You did?

Xena nods. She stops and turns, offering Gabrielle a hand. Gabrielle takes it and gets pulled up onto a small flat space next to Xena. They face each other.

XENA

I did. Just like I'm feeling
you hurting now.

Gabrielle's eyes drop, then she looks directly at Xena.

GABRIELLE

You told me the only way for me
to get back my strength was
to use my body. I'm using it.
(pausing)
I'm not going back.



Xena clasps Gabrielle's hand, and starts off again.

XENA

Didn't think you would.

With Xena's help, Gabrielle finds it much easier and they proceed up the slope following the raider's trail.

CUT TO:

EXT. VILLAGE SQUARE - DAY

The surviving villagers are removing debris. The bodies are gone, a smoldering pyre a testament to their disposal. Many villagers are injured; they are bandaged haphazardly. Jaral limps around, directing the work.

JARAL

If we can just clear out the well....

WOMAN

Should we bother?



Several other villagers mutter in agreement.

OLDER MAN

Might as well just put the harvest
out on a wagon for 'em. We'll starve.

Jaral looks around, and realizes he's in the middle of a growing crowd, most of whom seem to agree with the sentiment.

JARAL

No. I think we'll be okay.

MAYA

Jaral, you're nuts. What can two
women do against that whole army?

OLDER MAN

Toris didn't have much use for 'em.

JARAL

Well....

Two men come into the village through the gates, half carrying a third. The third man is a raider, and he's injured but alive.

OLDER MAN

What's that? One of them?

MAYA

Why bring him? Leave him
in the forest to die!

One of the two militia men drop the injured man's arms and trot over to Jaral.

MILITIA MAN

Jaral, we found him nearby. He told
us where the raider's camp is!

JARAL

What? Where? That's great!
I'll go after Xena and tell her!

MILITIA MAN

You better go after her. It's in
Hades' Hollow. They walk in
there, they'll never come out.

Jaral grabs the man's arm.

JARAL

Come with me. Hurry.

Jaral and the militia man leave at as fast as pace as Jaral can manage. The rest of the villagers gather around the injured raider, with ominous expressions.

CUT TO:

EXT. DEEP FOREST TRAIL - LATE AFTERNOON

High above the village, Xena and Gabrielle peer over a rocky outcropping. They look down on a chasm, with a small path leading down into it, the only apparent way in or out.

GABRIELLE

Whoa.

Xena examines the terrain. Below, under cover, she can just barely see guards who have an easy shot at the path. Past that, the raider's camp is just visible, a curl of smoke coming up through the trees, and the tops of hide tents showing.

XENA

Tough.

As they watch, two raiders emerge into a clear space, dragging a body between them. Even at this distance, both Xena and Gabrielle recognize him.

GABRIELLE

Xena! It's Toris.
They've got him.



XENA

Still alive.
(pausing)
Which means we've
gotta get in there.

Gabrielle stares down at the camp.

GABRIELLE

How?

Xena leans over and looks at the sheer drop beneath them.

XENA

Damn good question.



FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

EXT. ROCKY OUTCROPPING - EARLY EVENING

Xena and Gabrielle remain observing the raider's camp. It is starting to get dark, and below them raiders move along the path lighting torches.

XENA

Damn.

GABRIELLE

I guess it was too much to hope
they'd just blow out the lights
and close the door, huh?

XENA

We've still got a much better chance
of getting down there at night.



They watch as the torches catch, lighting the path brightly.

GABRIELLE

You sure?

Xena sighs. She is not sure.

XENA

We've got limited options.
Cliff's overhung. I can't climb it.
We don't have ropes to go down.

GABRIELLE

Thank the gods for small favors.

XENA

They've seen both of us, so trying
a distraction would be deadly.

Gabrielle gazes down at the camp. They can just see a flash of dirty white that is Toris' shirt. He is tied up to a tree on one side of the small clearing.

GABRIELLE

Poor Toris.

Xena pushes back from the outcropping.

XENA

C'mon. Let's get into position. Maybe once we get to the head of that path, I'll see a better way down.



Gabrielle joins her, and they start to make their way down the hillside.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAIDER CAMP – EVENING

Toris is tied to the tree. Raiders pass nearby, jeering at him. Toris seems pensive and not unexpectedly, sad.

RAIDER

Don't think anyone's gonna rescue you, old man.

TORIS

I don't.... I made sure of that.

RAIDER

We don't like smart guys playing games with us. You can just stay there and starve while we eat your harvest.

The raider laughs and walks off. Toris looks out into the darkness.

TORIS

Well, can't lay the blame for this one at your feet, Xena. Bet you'll be glad for that.

An owl hoots in the distance. The breeze picks up, and Toris shivers in the growing chill.

CUT TO:

EXT. PATH TO RAIDER'S CAMP – NIGHT

Xena crouches at the head of the path, just outside the torchlight. Gabrielle kneels next to her, putting a hand on her shoulder.

GABRIELLE

Xena, it's too dangerous.

Xena looks at her in surprise.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

We're both long past questioning each other's courage, but if we go down that path, they'll fill us both so full of arrows we'll look like porcupines. We've only got two hands each.

XENA

If we leave those torches lit, sure.

Xena removes her chakram from her hip and studies the torches. There are twelve, evenly spaced down the path.

XENA

(cont'd)

Ready?

GABRIELLE

For?



XENA

I'll snuff the torches out, and we make a run for it. Get to that little stand of trees before they can relight the torches.

GABRIELLE

What if they just start shooting when the lights go out?

XENA

Duck.



Xena cocks her arm, and lets the chakram fly. It skims through the air and slices through the torches in rapid succession, first taking out one side, then coming back and taking out the other. Xena catches the chakram as it returns, and they both start running.

A yell goes up from the camp, and as Gabrielle suspected, arrows start flying.

GABRIELLE

(under her breath)

Least this one won't
be in the back.

Xena knocks aside two of the arrows, but they start to come like a swarm around her and Gabrielle.

XENA

Been here, done this.
Not again.

Xena grabs Gabrielle's arm and throws herself to the ground, pulling Gabrielle with her. They both start tumbling down the path, which is at a steep incline. The arrows fly over their heads in the darkness, but it is a very rough ride for both of them.

The raiders start to run up the path. Xena and Gabrielle roll past them unseen, and tumble off into the brush just above the entrance to the camp.

The raiders replace the torches, and start combing the path. The entire camp is in an uproar.

Xena and Gabrielle roll to a stop against a tree, and crawl into the bushes out of sight. They are battered, bruised, and very sore.

GABRIELLE

Ugh.

XENA

Shh.

GABRIELLE

They're yelling too loud
to hear me. Ow.

Xena is flat on her belly, peering through the bushes. The raiders are running up and down the path, searching for them. The gates are lit up, and they can hear shouts of anger and consternation.

XENA
You all right?

GABRIELLE
(hesitating)
Yeah.

Xena looks over her shoulder at Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE
(cont'd)
Wind knocked out of
me... that's all.

XENA
Sure?

GABRIELLE
(more confidently)
Yeah.

Gabrielle gets down on her belly and joins Xena. They peer through the leaves.

GABRIELLE
(cont'd)
Know what?



XENA
(concerned)
What?

GABRIELLE
Sometimes wearing almost no
clothes is just a bad idea.

Gabrielle half rolls over and plucks something from her bare belly, then hands it to Xena. It is a sharply pointed pinecone. Xena looks at it.

XENA

Ow.

(pausing and smiling)

Want me to kiss it
and make it better?

Gabrielle appreciates the humor.

GABRIELLE

You start that, and we
could be here all night.

XENA

(chuckling)

Let's give em a chance
to settle down.

Xena and Gabrielle watch the raiders. Confused and angry, they comb every inch of the path until they are satisfied there are no intruders.

GABRIELLE

(whispering)

Think they'll come this way?

Xena shakes her head.

XENA

No. It's too far off the path.
They think no one could
have gone that far.

One of the raiders lets out a yell, and points. Two others rush up the path, and a moment later a scuffle ensues.

GABRIELLE

Now what?

XENA

Who knows? It's... oh, damn it.



The two raiders come back down the path, dragging Jaral and another man with them. Both are very battered, and the second man has an arrow sticking out of his leg.

Gabrielle lets her head fall against the ground in frustration.

GABRIELLE

Didn't we tell them to stay home?

Xena examines the captives, and finds a silver lining.

XENA

They've stopped looking for us.
C'mon. Let's get closer.

Xena crawls off into the underbrush. After a moment, Gabrielle follows her.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAIDER CAMP - NIGHT - LATER

The two villagers have been tied next to Toris. The injured man appears unconscious.

TORIS

What are you doing here?
Trying to be a hero?

JARAL

No, I....

Jaral realizes the raiders are listening.

JARAL

(cont'd)

I mean I had to give it a try.
I couldn't just leave you here.

Toris shakes his head disgustedly.

TORIS

Idiot. Now we'll all die.

Jaral looks around as best he can, searching the shadows around the camp. He sees nothing.

JARAL

I'm sorry.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAIDER CAMP - NIGHT - SAME TIME

Xena and Gabrielle have crept up to the edge of the raider's camp.

XENA

Here we are.

Gabrielle looks past Xena's shoulder.

GABRIELLE

How are we going to get out of here, Xena? It's the same gauntlet on the way out.



XENA

We'll need a distraction.

Gabrielle appears to consider this.

GABRIELLE

Well, I could try....

XENA

Telling them a story?

GABRIELLE

(clearing throat)

I was thinking more along the lines of that dance....

XENA

(chuckling)

They don't deserve it. I've got a better idea, but it'll take both of us.



Gabrielle turns and looks at Xena, both of her eyebrows lifting in astonishment.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAIDER CAMP - NIGHT - SHORT TIME LATER

Two guards stand watch over the path. Other raiders walk around behind them, relaxing and laughing.

Suddenly, in the center of the camp, a dark figure drops from a tree into the area just near the campfire, letting out a very loud, wild yell.

XENA
Yiyieieieiei!

The raiders jump.

XENA
(*cont'd*)
Hello, boys. It's playtime.

The raiders rush to attack Xena. Xena draws her sword and becomes the center of a mass of confused fighting. As the raiders pour into the central area, a shadow slips behind them, and races for the stolen merchant wagons near the rear of the camp.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAIDER CAMP - TREES - NIGHT - SAME TIME

Toris and Jaral hear the commotion, and Xena's yell.

JARAL
What was that?

Toris has a look of very mixed emotions on his face. He struggles against the ropes tying him, but can't budge them.

TORIS
Trouble.

JARAL
More trouble?
That's all we need.

TORIS
(*grimly*)
Trouble for them.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAIDER CAMP - CAMPFIRE - NIGHT - SAME TIME

XENA
C'mon, you little cowards!

Xena grabs the heads of two men, and slams them together. The two men collapse. Xena ducks under a sword and kicks a raider against a wall. She picks up another raider and throws him into a group of others, then turns to face a wave of men coming at her from the rear.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAIDER CAMP - WAGONS - NIGHT - SAME TIME

Gabrielle is working fast. She throws a harness onto the nearest horse and backs him up to an empty wagon, all the while watching out for anyone seeing her.

The horse protests.

GABRIELLE

Shh. You'll thank me after
we get out of here.



Gabrielle gets the harness fastened, then she grabs the horses bridle and starts leading him forward. He rears up, almost taking Gabrielle into the air with him, then he reluctantly moves ahead.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAIDER CAMP - TREES - NIGHT - SAME TIME

Toris cranes his head to try and see what is going on by the fire. All they can hear is noise, and yelling, and the sounds of fighting.

TORIS

She's gotten even
crazier over the years.

Jaral hears him.

JARAL

Is it Xena?

Toris is about to answer, but just then a wagon crashes through the edge of the camp, mowing down a thick patch of hedges as it thunders through.

JARAL
(*cont'd*)
Ahh!!!!

Gabrielle manages to get the horse to stop. She jumps off its back and runs over to Toris, pulling out her dagger and cutting him free.

GABRIELLE
Get in the wagon.



TORIS
No one asked....

GABRIELLE
(*yelling*)
SHUT UP and
GET IN THE WAGON!!

Gabrielle gives Toris a healthy shove towards the wooden cart and runs over to Jaral, cutting him free. Jaral falls to his knees, then gets up and goes to the other man.

JARAL
He's hurt.

Gabrielle helps him pick up the injured man and they rush to the wagon. Gabrielle turns her head and watches the now visible fight anxiously.

GABRIELLE
Hurry!

CUT TO:

EXT. RAIDER CAMP - CAMPFIRE - NIGHT - SAME TIME

Xena is now fighting the entire camp. They have her backed into a corner and she is holding them off with sheer skill and stubbornness.



She meets four men at once, her sword clashing against theirs and throwing them aside. Xena leaps up and kicks out to the front, kicking all four men in the head, then flipping in a back flip only to land on a fifth man and squash him flat.

A dozen of the raiders jump on Xena. She disappears under them.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAIDER CAMP - WAGON - NIGHT - SAME TIME

Gabrielle tries to back the horse up, but the horse is frightened by the noise and smell of blood and refuses, rearing up and almost hitting Gabrielle in the head with his hooves.

Gabrielle gets out from underneath the horse, and sees Xena go down as she looks past the wagon. Her eyes widen.

GABRIELLE
Xena!!

Xena fights her way to the top of the pile, kicking and punching, lashing out powerfully with the hilt of her sword. She spots Gabrielle and their glances lock for a long instant. Then Xena disappears beneath a new wave of raiders.

Gabrielle grabs the horse's head harness and drags its head down. She takes a deep breath and lets out a yell that nearly makes the animal's mane stand up straight.

The horse scrambles backwards to get away from her, and Gabrielle holds on and follows. She nearly gets dragged off her feet but continues yelling at the top of her voice.

The wagon rolls rapidly backwards towards the fire, then bumps to a halt as its wheels hit a log and almost tosses its occupants into the air.

Gabrielle jumps onto the horse's back and puts her fingers between her teeth and lets out a shrill whistle. She watches the melee.

Xena cannot be seen. Then the pile of men heaves up, and half a dozen of them go flying in all directions. Xena appears, fighting like a wildcat.

GABRIELLE
(*cont'd*)
Xena!

Xena grins, then she shakes herself free of another half dozen raiders and runs, directly towards the fire.

She leaps into the air just short of the fire, somersaults twice, then lands shockingly, in the heart of the bonfire itself.

TORIS
She missed!

Gabrielle watches anxiously.

GABRIELLE
C'mon... c'mon....



The fire explodes outward in all directions, sending burning embers, branches, and coals flying. Out of this burst, Xena comes flying, sparks surrounding her.



She flips twice, then lands in the back of the wagon.

XENA
Let's go!

Gabrielle slaps the horse, and urges him into a run.

Xena looks behind them, to see the entire camp catching fire, as the raiders stop worrying about her and start worrying about burning to death.

The wagon dashes away, as the growing fire casts light on Xena's grim smile.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR

TAG

FADE IN:

EXT. VILLAGE SQUARE - DAY

Xena and Gabrielle walk together through the village, which has begun to be rebuilt. They stop in front of the well, watching as a man and woman draw up the first bucket of water since it was restored.

GABRIELLE
Time to leave?

XENA
Just about.

Across the square, Toris emerges from one of the damaged huts and crosses the square, to enter another. Xena and Gabrielle both watch him.

GABRIELLE
You know, Xena....

Xena turns and gently puts her hand over Gabrielle's mouth. This is a discussion they have had continually since Xena destroyed the raider camp.

XENA
I'm over it. He won't talk
to me. End of discussion.



Gabrielle sighs. Xena removes her hand.

GABRIELLE
He's your only family.

Xena looks at her, and raises an eyebrow.

GABRIELLE
(cont'd)
You know what I mean.

Across the square, Toris emerges again, and this time comes towards them. Xena and Gabrielle wait as he approaches. Toris stops next to them.

TORIS

You are leaving?

XENA

Yes. Lucky you.

Gabrielle pinches Xena. Xena glares at her.

GABRIELLE

We think things are going pretty well here. I don't think the raiders will be back soon.

Toris looks at Gabrielle.

TORIS

I hope you're right.

He pauses, and turns to Xena.

TORIS

(cont'd)

Thanks for coming after me.

Gabrielle grins. Xena manages a gracious nod.

XENA

You're welcome.

TORIS

I know you felt obligated....

Xena interrupts him.

XENA

Don't flatter yourself. I'd have done it for anyone.

(pausing)

And before you tell me to get lost and not come back, you'd better get used to having a sister again because I'll go and come as I please.



Toris seems almost bemused at this.

TORIS

You haven't changed, you know that? Even with all your heroics.

Xena snorts, and turns, going to Argo and preparing to leave.

GABRIELLE

That's not true.

Toris regards Gabrielle.

TORIS

I've known her longer than you have, Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE

You're just her brother. You have no idea who she is now. I'm her partner, and I do.

TORIS

Just? Ah. As in, you can't pick your family, is that it? Well, maybe you're right.

GABRIELLE

I know I am. We'll be back.

Toris looks past Gabrielle, at Xena. Then he looks back at Gabrielle.

TORIS

You haven't changed, either.

Toris turns, and walks away, shaking his head. Gabrielle is taken aback for a moment, then she smiles, and joins Xena at Argo's side. Xena takes Argo's reins and they start off down the path.

GABRIELLE

I think he's warming up to you.



Xena looks at Gabrielle in disbelief, then starts laughing.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Really.

Xena puts her arm around Gabrielle's shoulders as they walk, and Gabrielle returns the embrace as the forest closes in around them.



FADE OUT.

DISCLAIMER

No sibling rivalries were harmed in the making of this motion picture, but Xena once again proves why you choose your friends, but suffer your family.