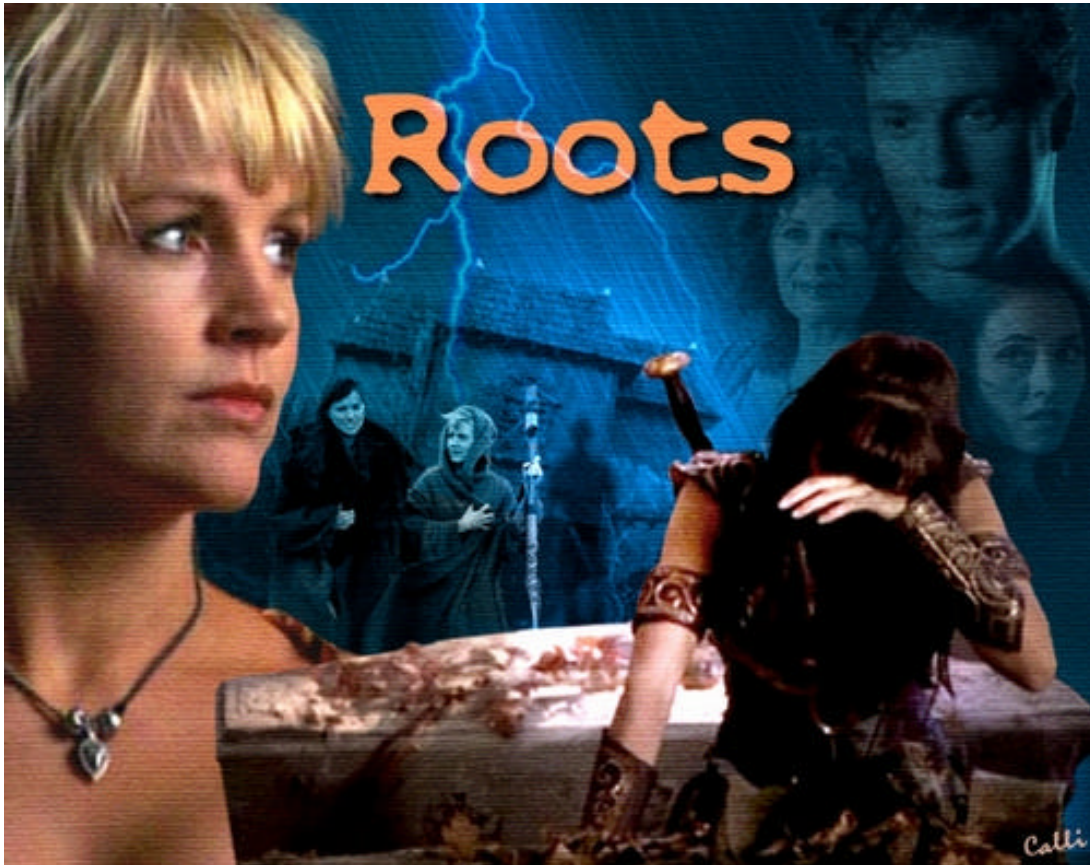


Xena: Warrior Princess - Subtext Virtual Season 9



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TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. FOREST ROAD - AFTERNOON

Xena and Gabrielle are seated on a small outcropping of rocks just off the side of the road. They are taking a break from walking, and having a drink of water.

The weather is mildly threatening. Xena is still wearing her cloak, Gabrielle her coat. The wind stirs their hair and blows a few dead leaves across the dirt path they have been traveling on.

GABRIELLE

Feels good to be on familiar ground.



XENA

(faintly smiling)

It does, even though I know there'll just be ruins at the end of the road.

GABRIELLE

(warmly)

I remember running down this road, chasing you after you rescued us from those slavers.

Xena nods, her expression quiet and pensive.

XENA

I remember riding down this road cursing myself because I couldn't stop thinking about this chatty little blonde kid I just yanked out of a scrape.



Gabrielle boots a small rock across the road.

GABRIELLE

Really? I thought you couldn't
get rid of me fast enough.

Xena gets up and prepares to continue on.

XENA

Well, this was after I'd gotten
rid of you, wasn't it?

Gabrielle joins Xena.

GABRIELLE

You wished.

Xena and Gabrielle start walking. Argo II ambles after them without being directed. It is quiet around them; the only sounds are of Argo II's hooves and Xena and Gabrielle's boots.

Gabrielle watches Xena out of the corner of her eye. Xena appears somewhat down. After a few steps, Gabrielle reaches out and takes Xena's hand and holds it as they walk.



CUT TO:

EXT. AMPHIPOLIS ROAD - LATE AFTERNOON

Xena and Gabrielle slowly approach up the road. The town is mostly in the same shambles as it was the last time they saw it, during the Haunting of Amphipolis.

There are a few people around, but it is mostly deserted. Some dead leaves blow past Xena and Gabrielle as they approach and pass boarded-up huts on either side of the path leading to the inn.

There is an older woman standing by one of the few inhabited cots. She stares at Xena, then deliberately turns her back and goes into the hut, closing the door.

Xena and Gabrielle keep walking, until they turn a corner and pass between some very overgrown trees.

CUT TO:

EXT. AMPHIPOLIS INN - LATE AFTERNOON

The inn is in shambles. Most of the front has collapsed, but there is a partial gap where the door once stood. There is moss and ivy growing everywhere.

XENA

(sighing)

Maybe this wasn't a good idea.



Gabrielle walks over and picks up an old, cracked piece of wood. On it is lettered "Cyrene's Inn" but the words are almost indistinguishable.

Gabrielle looks up at the wreck of the inn.

GABRIELLE

It's always worth coming back here.

No matter what it looks like now,
there are some memories I
cherish about this place.

Xena walks over and takes the sign. She looks at it sadly.

A yell comes on the wind, and they both look up. Following the sound comes hoof beats, and then the town erupts in what little human activity is possible given its condition.

A man comes running past.

MAN

Hide! Run! Quickly!

Xena and Gabrielle turn to see a group of bandits riding down on the town, brandishing weapons. Xena gently tossed the sign down and whistles.

Argo II races in from wherever she's been eating grass and or hay or whatever it is Xena's horses do when they're not in view. Xena catches hold of Argo II's saddle horn and pulls herself aboard as the mare runs past.

XENA
Yeahhh!!

Xena heads Argo towards the raiders as she draws her sword. Gabrielle pulls her sais and starts to run after her.

GABRIELLE
Some things just
never change.



CUT TO:

EXT AMPHIPOLIS ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

The bandits attack the town. They do not appear to want to destroy it, but they race between the huts and bend over to take whatever they can get their hands on.

The few villagers in sight run in terror. One falls and is run down by one of the raiders, who tries to trample him as the raider laughs.

Gabrielle jumps in front of the raider and grabs hold of the man, dragging him clear just as the horse reaches them. The horse slams against Gabrielle's shoulder, throwing her to one side. She ducks under the raider's ax swing and whirls, booting the horse in the rear in frustration.

GABRIELLE
Bastard!

The horse bucks, throwing the raider half off.

Two more raiders ride at Gabrielle, yelling as they lean over to grab her.

Xena rides Argo from between the trees and meets the first of them, not hesitating an instant as she swipes her arm in an arc and cuts the raider's head clean off his shoulders.

XENA
YeeeeahhhhHH!!!!!!!

Two raiders swerve towards her. Xena rides straight forward between their horses, and ducks at the very last second as they both swing axes at her and hit each other instead.

The two men fall off their horses.

RAIDER CHIEF

Forget it! Let's go! Let's go!
We'll come back later!!

One of the raiders grabs a chicken and tucks it under his arm as he retreats. Gabrielle spots him and pitches her sai at him, thumping him in the back of the head and making him release the bird.

The raiders leave, disappearing into the dusk. Xena rides over to the small clump of people gathering near the last few habitable huts and jumps off Argo's back.

XENA

What was that all about?



Gabrielle retrieves her sai and comes to Xena's side. She is limping slightly.

TOWNSMAN

Just finishing what
you started, Xena.

He looks around, disgusted.

TOWNSMAN

(cont'd)

That's it! I'm out of here. We're
leaving tomorrow. This place is dead.

The man turns and walks off. The rest of the crowd looks at Xena and Gabrielle, then they too turn and walk off.

Xena and Gabrielle are left alone in the street in the twilight, with only a headless man and curious chickens avoiding the blood.

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT. XENA'S FAMILY CRYPT - SUNSET

The door to the crypt opens with a creak, and Xena enters. Behind her, a flood of sunset light spills down the steps and into the crypt. Xena lights a torch anyway and sets it into a wall sconce.

Xena steps into the center of the space and looks around. Alone in Amphipolis, this place has changed the least.

Xena walks around the crypt, laying her hands on some of the relics. She touches Lyceus's tomb, and her father's, and the marker she placed for Cyrene.

XENA

Glad you're not here to
see this place now.



Xena looks around.

XENA

(cont'd)

No matter how far I went,
somewhere in the back of my
head, this place was here.

(shaking head)

Not anymore.

The light from outside is blocked momentarily, then the iron gate opens again and Gabrielle enters. She pauses in the entrance and looks around, then she joins Xena near the center sarcophagus where Lyceus lies. In her hands, Gabrielle carries a small bundle.

GABRIELLE

I brought this.

XENA

Thanks.

Xena puts her hands on Lyceus' sarcophagus and examines it, tracing the carved pattern in its lid with her fingers. A light dust is raised under her touch.

XENA

(cont'd)

This place has been
here a long time.

Gabrielle looks around. In addition to Xena's immediate family, there are signs of older, less recent burials.

GABRIELLE

Your family's been
here a long time.



Xena nods. She straightens up and turns to the far wall. Here there are empty alcoves. Across from them are the same types of alcoves, filled with small boxes that could be bone boxes, or ash containers.

Gabrielle joins her, and hands her the small bundle. Xena takes it and approaches one of the empty alcoves. It is next to an alcove with a carved wooden box inside, covered in dust but visibly newer than most of the other objects around.

Xena unwraps the cloth bundle and reveals a few items. One is a carved wooden crowned sun, another is a pair of sandals, a third is a necklace, and a fourth is a bloodstained robe. Xena studies them, then she folds the robe first and sets it into the alcove.

XENA

For better or worse, she was a
part of this family. I wanted a
part of her to be here, too.

Gabrielle slowly wraps the necklace around her fingers and then she puts it on top of the robe. Xena puts the sandals down, and last, Gabrielle adds the crowned sun.

GABRIELLE

I think she'd like that.

XENA

(thoughtfully)

Do you?

GABRIELLE

(nodding)

We all want to be a part of
something. She was a part of us.

Xena nods. She reaches over to brush some dust off the box in the next alcove. She turns and walks over to a low stone bench and sits down. Gabrielle comes over and sits next to her.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

You all right?



XENA

(sighing)

Yeah. It just never gets any easier.

Gabrielle puts her arm around Xena's shoulders.

XENA

(cont'd)

But having someone to share it with makes a difference.

Xena returns the embrace.

GABRIELLE

(softly)

Yeah, it does.

Xena and Gabrielle both look at the opposite wall. The last light of sunset spills through the gates and splashes over their boots. Xena finally sighs and lets her hands rest on her knees.

FADE TO:

EXT. AMPHIPOLIS INN - EVENING

Xena and Gabrielle emerge from the crypt and walk across the overgrown space towards the inn. A shadowy figure moves towards them as they reach the front of the ruined building.

MAN

Wait.

Xena and Gabrielle pause. The man approaches them.

MAN

(cont'd)

I just wanted to say thank you.
(to Gabrielle)
You saved my life.

Gabrielle is still limping. She looks tired, but she smiles at the man anyway.

GABRIELLE

I'm glad we were here.

She looks past man.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Even if everyone else isn't.



MAN

(embarrassed)

It's just been so hard. Nothing's
right around here anymore.

GABRIELLE

Who were those men?

MAN

(shrugging)

Who knows? They come and take
whatever they can get their hands
on. Hardly worth bothering here.
There's nothing left.

Xena turns in a slow circle then faces the man.

XENA

You could have cleaned the place
up. Made it worth living in.

MAN

For what? No one wants to come here.
We can't even get merchants to buy
what little crops we have. Stefan
was right - it's time to leave.

The man starts to back away.

GABRIELLE

Didn't anyone think of taking over
the inn? Maybe the merchants
had no place to stay and....

MAN

The inn?
(horrified look)
Only the dead go there.

The man turns and runs off. Xena goes over to a stump of a dead tree and sits on it.

Gabrielle watches her for a minute.

GABRIELLE

If....

Xena looks up.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

If we're going to go find a place
to sleep, we should get going.

Xena sits quietly. Her eyes search the old ruin of the inn.

XENA

Gabrielle, this is the last connection
I have left to my family.



Gabrielle walks over and crouches next to Xena.

GABRIELLE

I know, but....

XENA

I can't let this place die.

Gabrielle seems a bit confused. She puts her hand on Xena's knee.

GABRIELLE

I don't think you can make
people stay here.
(hesitating)
What do you want to do?

Xena sits quietly for a minute. She looks up at the inn.

XENA

I want to rebuild it.

Gabrielle turns around and looks at the ruins. She turns back around and looks at Xena.

GABRIELLE

You want us to rebuild it?
You and me? Xena, I'm no
carpenter. Neither are you.



Xena seems wryly amused at something.

XENA

We can do it.
(pausing)
You're right. I can't make people
stay here. But I can't leave
this place like it is either.

Gabrielle sits down on the ground and wraps her arms around her knees. She studies the inn thoughtfully before she looks up at Xena.

GABRIELLE

That could take a while.

XENA

Do we have someplace
else we have to be?



Gabrielle seems satisfied with the answer. She nods.

GABRIELLE

Let's go see if there's a corner we
can lay our bedrolls out in then,
because I think it's going to rain.

Obligingly, thunder rolls over head. Xena gets up and offers Gabrielle a hand. Gabrielle gets slowly to her feet, favoring her leg. Xena watches her in some concern. She puts her arm around Gabrielle and they head towards what is left of the inn.

CUT TO:

INT. CYRENE'S INN - NIGHT

The sound of rain is heard. It drips down through the ruined ceiling and over Gabrielle's head as she searches for a dry spot.

She ducks under a broken roof support as lightning flashes, outlining her in silver light.

GABRIELLE

Gee, thanks.

XENA

(V.O.)

(yelling)

You find anything?

GABRIELLE

(yelling back)

A lot of mud! You?

XENA

(V.O.)

Rotten floorboards.

Gabrielle winces. She keeps searching, pulling aside several broken pieces of wood to reveal a closed, miraculously whole door. It is down a half flight of stairs, almost under ground level.

GABRIELLE

Well, well....

Gabrielle carefully pulls the door open and looks inside. It is pitch dark. Gabrielle brings her torch inside.

XENA

(V.O.)

Gabrielle, let's get out of
here before we get....

GABRIELLE

Xena! Over here!

Xena struggles through the debris and reaches the door.

XENA

Gabrielle?

Xena disappears through the door.

CUT TO:

INT. CYRENE'S INN - BACK ROOM

Gabrielle is standing against the wall, holding the torch up. Xena stands next to her. The room is very small, and obviously has not been used in a long time. Boxes and various debris lays scattered all over.

The roof is apparently intact, however, and it is dry.

GABRIELLE

Well, we've slept in worse.



Xena takes the torch and circles the room. She touches the walls.

XENA

Inn burned down
a couple times.

She lays hand flat on wall.

XENA

(cont'd)

This is from the
oldest part of it.

Gabrielle watches Xena closely.

GABRIELLE

From when you
lived here?

Xena nods silently.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

I'll go get our stuff.

Xena stops her.

XENA

I'll go. Rest that leg.



Gabrielle for once doesn't argue. She sits down on a box immediately, obviously in some pain.

GABRIELLE

Don't get lost on the way back.

This place is a maze.

Xena goes to the door, leaving the torch behind so Gabrielle has light. She vanishes into the dark, just as lightning flashes outside.

In the silver light, Gabrielle clearly sees a figure outside the room watching her.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. CYRENE'S INN - BACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Gabrielle jumps up and goes to the door, looking out.

GABRIELLE

Who's there? Hello?



There is no answer. Gabrielle grabs the torch and moves up the steps into the hallway. Around her, the inn creaks in the storm.

CUT TO:

INT. CYRENE'S INN - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

GABRIELLE

Hello? I know someone
was there. I saw you.

Another flash of lightning, but this time the corner is empty. Gabrielle walks over to it and crouches down, touching the floor. It is wet, and muddy. She touches a footprint.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Least I'm not going crazy.



Gabrielle continues down the corridor, searching for the figure. She comes up against a dead end, a collapsed wall. She looks one way then the other. Then she tips her head back and looks up.

She sees nothing, and there is no obvious way anyone could have gotten out past her.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Okay, maybe I am going crazy.

Gabrielle stands up, then returns the way she came, walking backwards as she watches the hallway, searching the corners for something other than shadows.

She finds nothing. She backs down the steps and pauses in the doorway of the small room, listening intently.

All she hears is thunder, and the creaking of wood.

CUT TO:

EXT. CYRENE'S INN - REAR DOOR - NIGHT

Xena is unbuckling their bags and assorted bundles from Argo II's saddle. She puts them down under a broken piece of roof wood and starts to take off the mare's tack. It is raining.

XENA

Hang on, girl. Almost done.

Argo II whickers.

XENA

(cont'd)

There's some shelter over there, and lots of grass.

Xena removes Argo's saddle and bridle. She puts them under the roof piece to keep them dry, then straightens up and strokes Argo's nose.

XENA

(cont'd)

G'wan girl. Go through those trees. There's a field on the other side.

Xena stares through the rain towards the spot.

XENA

(cont'd)

(softly)

Believe it or not, it's where I learned to ride.

(patting Argo)

Can you imagine that?

Argo snorts, as if in disbelief. She trots off towards the trees. Xena smiles and turns to pick up their gear.

CUT TO:

INT. CYRENE'S INN - BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Gabrielle enters and looks back over her shoulder one more time. She sees nothing, and puts the torch back in the wall sconce. She goes back to the box and starts to sit, then changes her mind and begins to tug the boxes around to make some space.

GABRIELLE

Let's see what I can
find to make us a bed.

The boxes are filled with odds and ends. This is obviously a store room for things that were not used often. Some old parchment, old tools, broken chairs, etc.

Gabrielle pulls a piece of wood aside, and a pile of old rags falls over her. She throws them away from herself with an almost violent motion.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Stupid piece of....

She stops, and takes breath.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Damn I'm starting to
sound like Xena.

Gabrielle overturns a few old crates. Three crates are stacked near the wall. She goes over and tries to pull down the top one, but it overbalances and crashes down on top of her.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Yahhh!!

The door flies open and Xena bounds into the room, alert and ready to fight. She spots a movement in the corner and pounces on it, pulling the crate up and revealing Gabrielle underneath.

XENA

What are you doing?



Gabrielle is covered in the contents of the crate, stacks and stacks of musty old furs. She sneezes. A bit of fur drifts up and lands on her head.

GABRIELLE

Making a nest. What
does it look like?

Xena smiles in response.

XENA

Room in the nest for two?

Gabrielle moves over. Xena sits down on the pile of furs with her. They both sneeze from the dust.

GABRIELLE

(sniffing)

Xena, I saw someone
else in here. Someone was
watching from past that door.

Xena looks at the door in some alarm.

XENA

I didn't see anyone
coming in here.

GABRIELLE

I know. I didn't see
anyone leaving, either.

XENA

You sure you...?

GABRIELLE

Yes.

(pausing)

And he left muddy footprints.

Xena opens her mouth to say something.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Bigger than yours.

Gabrielle looks at the door.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Want me to show you?



XENA

Nah. We can look in the morning.
Probably just someone getting
out of the rain. Sounds like
you scared him off.

Gabrielle looks relieved. Thunder rolls outside, and the rain can now be heard coming down much harder. Gabrielle leans against the earthen wall and looks up.

GABRIELLE

Nice to have a roof over
our heads for a change.
(thoughtfully)
Especially this roof.

Xena sprawls next to Gabrielle on the furs.

XENA

We're gonna have to rebuild
most of this roof.
(sighing)
Maybe it's crazy.

GABRIELLE

Maybe. I'm glad we're doing it
anyway. It's going to be good to
stay in one place for a while.

Xena pulls their bags over and sets them on the furs. She watches Gabrielle out of the corner of her eye with some concern.

XENA

You tired of traveling?



GABRIELLE

I don't know. I think
I'm just... tired.

Gabrielle leans back on her hands and gazes out across the room.

XENA

Your knee bothering
you again?

Gabrielle shrugs.

GABRIELLE

It hurts. What else is new?
I think I'm just getting used
to pain. Like you are.

Xena reacts, frowning slightly.

XENA

Lay down. Might as well
keep off it if you can.

Gabrielle lies down and curls up on the furs, using her bag as a pillow. Xena runs her fingers through Gabrielle's hair. Gabrielle closes her eyes.

Xena sits by her in silence, deep in thought.

FADE TO:

INT CYRENE'S INN - MAIN ROOM – MORNING

The storm has ended. Xena emerges into the ruins of what was the inn's main room. In the daylight, the condition is worse than what it appeared the night before. The walls are full of holes, and the door is missing. Debris litters the floor.

Xena walks around the perimeter. She hears something behind her and turns, looking back into the corridor that leads further inside the inn.

XENA

Gabrielle?

There is no answer. Xena goes to the corridor and looks down it, but sees nothing. She crouches and examines the floor, then looks at the walls inside the hallway. There are no visible marks.

XENA

(cont'd)

Don't tell me I'm getting an
imagination after all these years.



Xena pauses near the entrance to the kitchen and just looks at the mess, then shakes her head. She is dressed only in her leathers. She ties her hair back, and starts to work gathering broken items and debris and chucking it out the window.

CUT TO:

INT. CYRENE'S INN - BACK ROOM - LATE MORNING

Gabrielle is sound asleep on the pile of furs. There are two small windows high up on the wall that have been opened to let sun and air in, but the door to the inside of the inn is closed.

Far off, past the door, the sound of steady labor can be faintly heard.

It is peaceful for a few moments, then a loud bang is heard, followed by a curse.

Gabrielle does not stir at the bang, but the curse brings her sitting straight up, wide awake.

GABRIELLE

Xena!

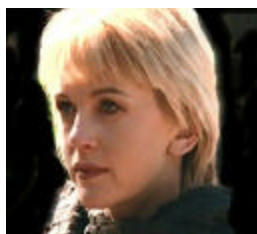
Gabrielle looks around her, confused. Then she remembers where she is and sits back against the wall. She scrubs her face with both hands, and then lets them fall to her lap.

Her eyes go to the windows, then to her clothes, which have been removed and neatly folded next to her boots. She plucks the edge of her nightgown and just shakes her head.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

I know I didn't fall asleep like this.
Don't tell me you're getting
considerate in your old age, Xena.



Gabrielle pulls her clothing over, and starts to hastily dress.

CUT TO:

INT. CYRENE'S INN - MAIN ROOM - MID MORNING

Xena is sitting on an overturned box, cradling her right hand while she attempts to get a splinter out of her palm.

The main room has been roughly cleared. Part of the roof is missing, now evident in the daylight, and the sun pours down into the open space and over Xena's body.

Gabrielle appears in the hallway entry and stands quietly, just watching Xena.

XENA

Come on, you son of a....

Gabrielle enters and walks over to Xena.

GABRIELLE

What's up?

XENA

(grumpily)
You, finally.

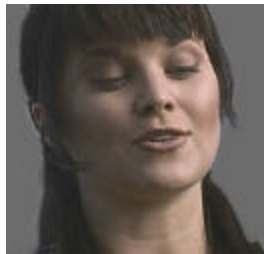
GABRIELLE

You could have woken me
whenever you felt like it.

Xena continues to try and remove the splinter.

XENA

I thought you could
use a sleep in.



XENA

(cont'd, grimacing)
Damn it....

GABRIELLE

So now you're bitching
because I did?

XENA

I'm not bitching.

GABRIELLE

Okay, whining.

Xena picks her head up and gives Gabrielle the look.

XENA

I am NOT whining.

Gabrielle leans over and gives Xena a kiss on the lips.

GABRIELLE

Thank you.

She takes Xena's hand.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Here. Hold still.

XENA

(grumbling)

I can do that myself.

GABRIELLE

Shut up, Xena.

Gabrielle works on removing the splinter. Xena waits.



GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

You got a lot done.

(smiling)

Ah, there it goes.

Xena examines her hand, flexing it, then she stands up, putting her fists on her hips and looking around.

XENA

Drop in the bucket.

Gabrielle wanders over, and looks through the doorway into the kitchen. If anything, what can be seen through the door is in worse shape than the main room.

GABRIELLE

Well, I'll get started in here.

Xena turns towards her.

XENA

Gabrielle.

In the doorway to the kitchen, Gabrielle stops and looks back inquiringly.

XENA

(cont'd)

You don't have to do this.

She looks around.

XENA

(cont'd)

After I got started, I realized how much work it's going to be. It's nuts.

Gabrielle walks back over to where Xena is standing.

GABRIELLE

Do you still want to do it?



Xena exhaled, and turns, surveying the room. She lifts both arms in question.

XENA

Is there a point?

GABRIELLE

There is for me.

Xena turns around again, surprised. Gabrielle walks past her, then circles around the room, reaching out to touch a wall. She grips a piece of the wood.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

I found my future in this room.

(turning)

I made a choice, discovered a friend and stopped being a child right...about here.

(looking down)

So I'd like to see this place whole again, even if it's just for a little while.

XENA

Ah. I didn't know you felt that way.

GABRIELLE

Yeah, well... neither did I.



Gabrielle crosses back to the doorway into the kitchen and passes through it, disappearing from sight. Xena is left somewhat surprised, in the center of the room. After a moment, she shakes her head slightly and goes back to her work.

CUT TO:

INT. CYRENE'S INN - KITCHEN - DAY

Gabrielle goes to the outside door, half broken and hanging on its hinges. She stares at it, then abruptly lashes out and gives it a solid roundhouse kick. The door parts fall off and clatter to the ground outside.

Gabrielle stares at it, then wipes the back of her hand across her eyes impatiently.

GABRIELLE

Great start.

Turning, Gabrielle grabs the first bit of debris and throws it out the door. She finds another piece and heads for the opening with it, almost letting it go when a figure appears in the doorway. Gabrielle manages to stop her motion, almost causing her to fall over.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Oh! Sorry!

Gabrielle recovers her balance and turns to the doorway, only to find it empty.

She runs to the opening and looks out, but sees no one.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

What the...? Hey! Hey!

Who's out there?



Gabrielle kneels next to the door and examines the ground. She touches a depression in the earth, then looks around again. The area is completely empty as far as the eye can see.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Maybe I'm just seeing things.

(muttering)

Too many nights
sleeping on wet rocks.

Gabrielle goes back inside and starts to tug a huge tangle of wood and iron towards the door. As she moves towards the outer entrance, behind her shoulder a figure appears in the inner one, watching her.

It is faint, and almost see-through. The features are indistinguishable, but there is an impression of youth.

XENA

(V.O.)

Gabrielle!

At Xena's voice, the figure disappears, just as Gabrielle turns to face it.

GABRIELLE

(loudly)

Yeah?

XENA
(V.O.)
Any levers in there?

Gabrielle looks around her at the destruction and lifts her hands, then lets them drop.

GABRIELLE
(loudly)
See what I can find.

Gabrielle goes back to work.

CUT TO:

EXT CYRENE'S INN - FRONT - AFTERNOON

Xena is piling all the debris into a huge pyre. Gabrielle emerges from the front of the inn with an armful more, and drops it on the pile.

GABRIELLE
We should clear some of this
forest out too - you can barely
see the place from the road.

Xena nods.

XENA
Yeah.

Xena sets fire to the pile of debris. She steps back to watch it burn, and Gabrielle comes to her side and stands with her. Gabrielle folds her arms over her chest. Both she and Xena are covered in dirt, soot, wood chips, and assorted garbage. Xena has a rip in her leathers, and Gabrielle's red velvet outfit is now roughly the same color those leathers. Gabrielle is also sporting several scrapes across her shins.

GABRIELLE
Phew. Well, it's a start.

XENA
(smiling)
Yeah. It's a start.



They hear voices behind them. Xena and Gabrielle turn to find what is left of the village pushing past the overgrown foliage to confront them.

One of the men gets in front.

TOWNSMAN

I don't know what you think
you're doing, Xena, but
we don't want you here.

Xena remains silent.

TOWNSPEOPLE

Yeah.

TOWNSMAN

So you better pack
yourself up and take off.

Xena stalks forward.

XENA

Yeah? Who's gonna make me?

TOWNSMAN

We are. The longer you stay here,
the worse destruction those brigands
are going to lay on us for letting you
stay. You've done enough! Now LEAVE!

Gabrielle starts forward. Xena puts her hand out and stops her.

XENA

(growling)

I'm not going anywhere.

She turns and points.

XENA

(cont'd)

This is my place. My home. If you
think you can chase me out
of here, c'mon and try.

TOWNSMAN

You gave up any claim to this
place when you brought the
wrath of the gods on us!!!

Xena steps forward and grabs the man, lifts him up by the shirt. His feet dangle over the ground.

XENA

(yelling)

YOU... Gave up any claim to
my mercy when you
burned my mother!

Xena throws the man from her. He falls on the ground.

XENA

(cont'd)

I'll leave when I'm
good and ready.

The crowd looks at each other uneasily. They are all carrying sticks and poles, and some have rocks in their hands. Xena and Gabrielle are not visibly armed.

The standoff is broken when the sound of yelling is heard, and again, the approaching thunder of hooves.

TOWNSMAN

Let's let them handle her! Hurry!
Show them where she is! Run!

The townspeople scramble out of the way, shoving through the overgrown bushes, frantic to get out of the way before the raiders arrive.

GABRIELLE

Our new neighbors leave
something to be desired, Xena.

She turns and starts running.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

I'll get the weapons.

Xena picks up a burning piece of wood.

XENA

I'll warm up the guests.



FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

EXT. CYRENE'S INN - FRONT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Gabrielle bolts from the inn, her sais in her boots, Xena's sword clenched in one fist, and her chakram in the other. It is a relatively imposing sight and small animals run in terror as she races past.

The piles of debris are hiding the fight she can hear going on loudly behind them.

GABRIELLE

Xena!

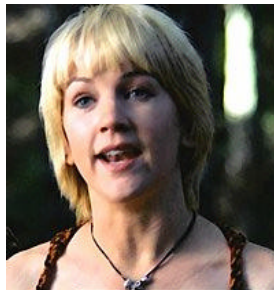
XENA

(V.O.)

What???

GABRIELLE

I'm coming!



XENA

(V.O.)

Take your time!

Gabrielle frowns, but does not slow down. She goes between the piles of debris and disappears.

CUT TO:

EXT. CYRENE'S INN - FRONT - BEYOND THE PILES - CONTINUOUS

Eight raiders are surrounding Xena in a circle, running their horses around her and trying to attack.

Xena stands in the center with a pile of sticks, and is fending off each man as he tries to get close to her.

XENA

C'mon you cowards!

Afraid of a girl???

Xena takes the biggest bit of plank in her pile and waves it like a baseball bat that will not be invented for two millennia. One of the raiders comes right at her, yelling at the top of his lungs. Xena waits until the very last possible moment and then swings, whacking the raider on the head and knocking him sideways on his horse.

He hangs on to the saddle horn, jerking around crazily as the horse runs past and heads for the hills.

XENA
(cont'd, laughing)
Losers!!!



Behind the hedges, the villagers watch the action, growing more concerned as they see Xena whipping the bad guys.

Gabrielle halts and looks for a way to get Xena her weapons, then realizes she's doing just fine with the ones she has.

GABRIELLE
(under breath)
Still likes variety.



She is momentarily stymied. She does not want to put Xena's gear down for the raiders to steal, yet she does not want to fight with it either.

A raider spots her, and resolves the dilemma by turning his horse and charging at her. Gabrielle ducks under his sword and swings up with Xena's weapon, chopping the man's hand off with his sword in its grasp.

RAIDER
Yahhhhh!!!!

The raider leaps off his horse at Gabrielle. Instinctively, Gabrielle brings her left hand around with the chakram in it, and cuts his throat. He collapses to the ground in a shower of blood.

Gabrielle takes a step back and looks at the body.

GABRIELLE
Isn't that easier
than it used to be.

Gabrielle shakes her head and looks towards Xena, only to find that through the chaos of men and horses, Xena is staring at her.

Their eyes meet only for a moment, then two raiders rush between them and the fight continues.

Xena puts down her sticks and leaps at the head raider, grabbing him by the neck as she flies past and pulling him right off his horse to the ground. She raises her hand and in an instant, she is catching her sword and twirling it, then putting the point of the blade at the man's throat.

XENA
HOLD IT OR I GUT HIM
LIKE THE PIG HE IS!!!

The raiders slowly stop and face her. Gabrielle stands to the side, holding the chakram.

XENA
(cont'd)
I don't know what you scum have
been used to, but you're not
welcome here anymore.



Xena presses the blade against the raider chief's neck.

RAIDER CHIEF
You think you can stop us?

Xena leans closer, the blade now cutting the man's skin.

XENA
I know I can.
(cutting deeper)
And you know it too.

The raider grimaces in pain.

Xena leans even closer.

XENA

(cont'd)

This is my home.

RAIDER CHIEF

Not according to
the rest of them!

XENA

I don't give a damn
about the rest of them.

(hissing)

Stay out of here!

Xena suddenly stands, lifting the raider as she does. She picks him up and throws him at the rest of the men, letting out a wild yell at the same time.

XENA

(cont'd)

Yeaaahhhhh!!!!

She points at them with the sword.

XENA

(cont'd)

You come back, you'll die –
all of you. I swear it.



The raider drags himself back onto his horse, wiping the blood from his neck. He glares at Xena hatefully, but motions to his men to leave.

RAIDER CHIEF

Don't think this is the end, Xena.

Xena rolls her eyes in a 'been there, done that, have so many t-shirts she could make a quilt' kind of way. The raiders gallop off. The dead man's horse follows, its stirrups bouncing emptily.

The villagers all sneak away quickly.

Xena and Gabrielle are left standing together near the piles of debris. After a moment, Gabrielle takes the edge of her skirt, and wipes the blood of the chakram before extending it towards Xena.

GABRIELLE

Not that you needed it.

Xena takes it, puts it in the hand she already has her sword in, then without speaking puts her arm around Gabrielle and pulls her close, laying her cheek down on the top of Gabrielle's head. Her expression is sorrowful.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

You okay? What's this for?

Xena's look gets a bit sadder.

XENA

Just felt like doing it. Want to take this stuff in, and I'll clean up out here?

Gabrielle looks at the dead raider, then at Xena. She takes the sword and chakram.

GABRIELLE

(nodding)

Sure. Meet you inside.



Gabrielle turns and goes back towards the inn. Xena watches her, then she sits down on the pile of debris rests her elbows on her knees.

The sunset paints Xena, the destruction, and the dead raider in a splash of red-gold light.

FADE TO:

INT. CYRENE'S INN - KITCHEN - SUNSET

Gabrielle stands near the window, which has had broken shutters cleared from it and is now nothing more than an empty frame leading outside.

The inside of the kitchen has been emptied of most of the destroyed furniture and debris. It is still in very sad shape - there are holes in the wall, and in the roof - over Gabrielle's head sky can be seen.

Gabrielle's travel bag is on the floor near her feet, and she is using a broken plank set across two nubs sticking out from the wall as a sort of table, preparing some odds and ends she has taken from the bag. Her hair is damp, and she has exchanged her traveling outfit for a shift.

A figure appears in the door to the kitchen and watches her silently.

After a brief moment, Gabrielle senses the eyes on her, and she turns, but the figure vanishes before she can focus on it. She puts down the small knife and bit of end and walks to the door way, peering outside it.

GABRIELLE

You know, you're gonna have
to stick around sometime.

(beat)

We won't hurt you.

(waiting)

Are you hungry?



There is no answer. Gabrielle shakes her head and goes back to her task. She picks up the knife and cuts the odd and or end up, putting the pieces in a small iron pot.

She takes the pot and goes to the destroyed fireplace, where she has scraped out one corner and built a small fire. She puts the pot over it, and then sits down on a piece of stump. She looks around, at the holes in the roof, and the stump she's sitting on. She shakes her head again.

Xena pauses in the doorway and watches her much like the figure had done a moment prior. Gabrielle also senses this, but does not look surprised when she lifts her head and sees Xena standing there.

XENA

What's going on in here?

Xena enters and kneels down next to Gabrielle. Gabrielle rolls a stump over for her and pats it.

GABRIELLE

Just putting some soup up.

Xena sits on the stump.

XENA

You didn't have to do that.
(looking around)
Much as they hate me, I'm
sure I could have bought
something from that
baker down the road.



Gabrielle rolls a third stump, much lower over and plops it between them. She gestures to it.

GABRIELLE

C'mon, Xena. How often
do I get to serve up dinner
on your kitchen table?

XENA

(smiling slightly)
True.

She looks around.

XENA

(cont'd)

We used to eat in here
all the time when
we were kids.

Gabrielle takes a candle stub out and sets it on the 'table' stump.

XENA

(cont'd)

Tomorrow I'll go out and
catch something. We must
be pretty low on supplies.

GABRIELLE

Considering I had to cut
some leather off your armor
and put it in the soup? Yeah.

Xena reacts, looking at Gabrielle in concern.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Just kidding. Here.

Gabrielle pours some soup for Xena, and gives her half of the small bread she has left. She lights the candle and they sit together quietly for a moment.

XENA

I don't think those bastards are going to stay away for long.

GABRIELLE

Me either. So what do we do, stick around and just keep knocking them off?



Xena stares at Gabrielle. Gabrielle just keeps eating.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Long as we're here, at least the people around this place might get a break.

Xena slowly breaks a piece of bread off and fiddles with it.

XENA

Yeah. They might. For a while. Hey, nice job getting this place cleaned up.

Gabrielle peers around. She smiles.

GABRIELLE

Well, I lived with my family... then I lived with you. I never really had any place of my own.

(thinking)

It's an interesting feeling, being here.

XENA
(thoughtfully)
Yeah, it is.



Xena slowly chews her bread. Gabrielle drinks her soup. Behind them, a figure appears in the outer doorway, peeking around the sill at them.

CUT TO:

EXT. CYRENE'S INN - FRONT - MORNING - FIVE DAYS LATER

Xena walks across the front of the inn, leading Argo II. The horse is pulling a load of freshly cut logs and does not look entirely thrilled about it.

Xena is wearing only her leathers and boots, no armor, and it is apparent she's been doing some pretty hard labor in them. There are cuts and scuffs on the leather, and tar stains both on the leather and on Xena's legs.

However, Xena is whistling under her breath and appears in a relatively good mood.

XENA
C'mon, girl. Last load
for today, I promise.

ARGO II
(sardonic whicker)

Xena laughs. She releases the logs near the inn and gives Argo II a slap on the backside.

XENA
Go on. I keep my promises.

Argo II trots off, not needing to be told twice. Xena picks up one log and sets it on a makeshift sawhorse, picking up her ax and twirling it in her hand.

She pauses, and turns to look at the inn.

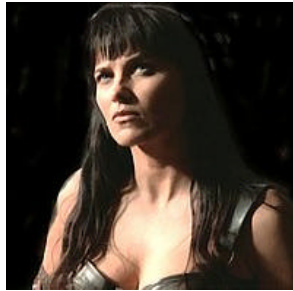
It is starting to look like an inn again. Freshly cut wood supports are now in place, and the front walls no longer have holes in them. The windows are still just spaces, but a new layer of thatch covers most of the roof. One space is open, lacking supports.

Xena hears something coming up behind her and turns, to find six or seven villagers approaching. She lets her ax hang at her side, and puts her other hand on her hip.

XENA
(*cont'd*)
Not again.

The villagers approach. One steps closer than the others. It is the same man who has been the most vocal all along.

XENA
(*cont'd*)
What is it now, Jares?



JARES
A merchant just passed through.
(*grimacing*)
He wouldn't stay, naturally.

Xena shrugs.

JARES
(*cont'd*)
He said a man on the road
told him the warlord Xerxes is
the one behind the raiders. He's
really mad at what happened here.

Xena shrugs again.

JARES
(*cont'd*)
He's going to come and destroy
the village if you don't
give yourself over to him.

Xena twirls the ax again.

XENA
He can try whatever he likes.
I'm not going anywhere.

The villagers look at each other.

JARES

That's what we thought
you'd say. So we are.
We're all leaving. Today.

Jares turns and walks off followed by the rest of the villagers. Behind Xena, Gabrielle appears in the entrance to the inn, listening to what is going on.

XENA

Why are you bothering to tell me?

The villagers stop, and Jares looks back over his shoulder at her.

JARES

Your mother was a friend,
once. I keep wanting to think
she was right about you.

Jares shakes his head and continues through the trees. Gabrielle walks over to Xena. Gabrielle is dressed in a non-descript shirt belted at her waist, and boots. The shirt is so liberally stained with just about everything, its color is impossible to pin down.

XENA

(sardonically)

Wonder what that means.

GABRIELLE

Given the range of your mother's
opinions in the time I've known you, that
could mean just about anything.

Xena scratches her jaw and shrugs, conceding the point. She seems a little discouraged, however.

XENA

I thought they were
getting used to us.

Gabrielle wipes her hands on a towel hanging from her belt.

GABRIELLE

Well, maybe it's for the best, Xena.
They leave, we take care of the warlord...
and maybe they'll all come back.

XENA

Maybe. But now we need to
take care of the warlord.

(sighing)

Damn, they multiply like rabbits.

GABRIELLE

Hm. Think we should start castrating them instead of killing them?



Xena reacts, looking at Gabrielle in shock. But Gabrielle smiles at her, and winks.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Just kidding. Want some help out here?

Xena relaxes. She picks up the log again and Gabrielle picks up the other end. They put the log on the braces and Xena begins chopping it with her axe as Gabrielle braces the log.

They pause as the sound of hoofs and wagon wheels reaches them. On the road leading past the inn, the villagers are moving out, taking all their possessions with them. No one looks over at them as they go past.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

(calling out)

Good luck.

The villagers move on, without a backward glance. After a brief silence, Xena continues chopping.

CUT TO:

INT. CYRENE'S INN - KITCHEN - NIGHT

The hearth has been nearly rebuilt with new river stones, and the worktables against the walls have had their legs fixed. Everything inside is neat and tidy, and a new table sits in the center of the room. In the center of the table is an earthen jar with a handful of wildflowers in it.

Gabrielle enters and lights several candles, resulting in a warm, golden glow in the room. She is now in a clean white shirt, and she hums under her breath as she moves around taking out wooden platters and eating utensils.

Xena appears in the doorway, also cleaned up and looking spiffy. She leans on the newly fixed edge of the door and watches Gabrielle for a moment before she enters. Then Xena smiles, and walks over to the hearth.

XENA

I could get used to this.



Xena kneels and warms her hands by the fire.

Behind her back, Gabrielle stops what she's doing and turns, visibly intrigued. She studies Xena, then she smiles also and goes back to what she's doing.

GABRIELLE

You never told me
you could build things.

Xena goes to the table and sits down. She uncorks the bottle sitting there and pours some wine into her cup, and into Gabrielle's.

XENA

I've always been better
at tearing them down.

Gabrielle brings two plates to the table and puts them down. She sits next to Xena.

GABRIELLE

Well, not in this case. The
place is starting to look great.

Xena studies the kitchen. The walls have been freshly washed, and the windows lined with terra cotta field tiles, with old, faded designs on them.

XENA

You're not half bad at this yourself.
Where did you get those tiles?

Gabrielle is pleased that Xena has noticed her work.

GABRIELLE

One of the boxes we moved out
of that room we're in. Same
place I found this jar.

Xena looks at the jar.

XENA

But not the flowers.

GABRIELLE

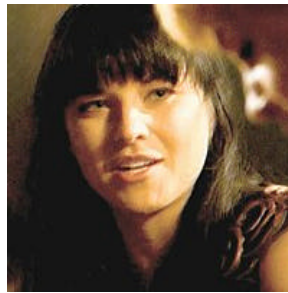
(chuckling)

No, I picked those in the field out back. The one with the fence post with your name carved into it.

XENA

(surprised)

That's still there? Must be petrified by now.



They both laugh. Gabrielle raises her mug, and touches it to Xena's.

GABRIELLE

Hey, how about we finish up the bed after we're done here? My back is on its knees begging.

XENA

All right, you're on.

She tastes the food on plate.

XENA

(cont'd)

This is different...
new... Wow!

GABRIELLE

(wryly)

Thanks. It bakes for hours. Not something I can do on the road.

Behind them, in the doorway the amorphous figure appears. Gabrielle sees it from the corner of her eye. She doesn't look directly at it, but she puts her cup down and reaches over to touch Xena's arm.

Xena casually picks up the wine bottle and turns it, apparently studying the label. The doorway is reflected in the glass, showing the figure.

It disappears.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Did you see it this time?

XENA

Yeah.

Gabrielle turns to look at the now empty doorway.

GABRIELLE

It hasn't tried to hurt us, but
it gives me the creeps, Xena.

Xena appears very thoughtful.

XENA

I know.

(pausing)

But there's something familiar...
ah, maybe I'm just imagining things.

GABRIELLE

Well, at least you saw it this time
so you don't think I am any more.

Xena puts the bottle down and picks up her cup, turning it in her fingers as she ponders in silence.

CUT TO:

INT. CYRENE'S INN - BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Xena and Gabrielle have turned the old store-room into a small, but cozy bedroom for themselves. Their gear is stacked neatly in one corner, but some of their things are out and hanging in the room.

A bed-frame dominates the center of the space, the wooden exterior lashed together and a lattice of leather strips almost done making the surface to sleep on.

Xena is kneeling on one side of the frame, nailing a leather strip in place while Gabrielle threads a second through, weaving it over and under.

XENA

Just about done.

GABRIELLE

I'm counting the candle drips.



Gabrielle brings the last strip through, and Xena nails it in place. She presses against the leather, and it rebounds a little in a bouncy way.

Gabrielle opens the door and reaches out, pulling something big and bulky through the opening after her. It is a large sack, filled with something.

Xena gets up to help her, and they both settle the sack onto the leather. Xena pats the sack.

XENA

There ya go. Knew that old
coop was good for something.

Gabrielle half jumps, half falls on top of it, spreading her arms out with a blissful smile. Xena sits down more sedately, then stretches out on her side.

Gabrielle turns her head, then reaches over to tickle Xena. Xena jumps, then tickles Gabrielle back. They glare at each other, then scramble together in the center of the bed in a mock tussle, ending up laughing and tangled up in each other.

GABRIELLE

Whew! Oh, ah.... Stop...
my stomach hurts.

Xena rolls over onto her back and relaxes. Her expression becomes wistful.

XENA

That's something we don't
do much either out there.

GABRIELLE

What, tickle each other???

XENA

Just have fun.

She pauses and looks at Gabrielle.

XENA

(cont'd)

At least not lately.

GABRIELLE

(quietly)

No. It hasn't been much fun lately,
has it? Sometimes I feel like we're
on this dark road that doesn't lead
anywhere but into more fighting
and more pain and....

XENA

And what's the point in it all?

GABRIELLE

Yeah. I wonder sometimes.

Xena stares at the ceiling, her expression somber.

XENA

So do I. Especially now.



Gabrielle reaches out and takes Xena's hand. She starts to speak, but is cut off by screams in the night, easily penetrating the walls.

Both sigh simultaneously. They start to jump out of bed, when the voice changes from noise to words.

VOICE

(V.O.)

Help! Help! They've
taken them all! Help!!!

(screams)

The gods damn you
Xena! It's all your fault!

They both run for the door.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. CYRENE'S INN - FRONT ROOM - NIGHT - SHORT TIME LATER

Xena and Gabrielle sit at one of the newly built tables. A woman sits across from them, angry and distraught.

GABRIELLE

Look, if you don't tell
us what happened....

WOMAN

You happened! You came
here, and you destroyed
this place, again!

Xena is visibly losing patience.

XENA

Look.



Gabrielle puts a hand on Xena's arm.

WOMAN

Why didn't you leave? Haven't
you done enough to this place?

Xena stands up angrily.

XENA

You know what? You
can just get out of here.
Door's that way.

GABRIELLE

Would both of you
please SHUT UP!

Surprisingly, they do. Gabrielle reaches over and grabs the woman by the shirt, pulling her closer.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Now look. You tell us what happened, and then either we'll help you, or we'll go to bed because I'm tired of being yelled at.

Xena puts her hands on her hips and give Gabrielle a look of consternation.

WOMAN

(chastened)

All right. We got three leagues down the road, and those raiders caught us. I got away, but I heard them saying they were going to hold the rest of them hostage.

XENA

For what?

WOMAN

For YOU.

(exasperated)

They think YOU would give yourself up for US.

Gabrielle and Xena fall silent. Gabrielle looks away, Xena looks at the table. Xena starts to reply, then stops and shakes her head.

WOMAN

(cont'd)

So now they'll all die, when they were just trying to get away from you.

XENA

They're not gonna die.

GABRIELLE

We'll figure something out.

The woman looks from Xena to Gabrielle.

WOMAN

Why couldn't you just have...?

XENA

Because we didn't.

GABRIELLE

There's a few sacks in the corner there
and a bench. You're welcome to them,
and what's left in the kitchen.



WOMAN

(uncertainly)

Aren't you going to go find them?

XENA

No. They'll come to me.

Xena gets up and walks out. After a brief pause, Gabrielle does the same.

CUT TO:

INT. CYRENE'S INN - BACK ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Xena is standing at the window, looking out. Gabrielle enters and walks over to stand next to her.

GABRIELLE

Too dark to track them.

XENA

Yeah.

Gabrielle goes over to the bed and sits down on it. After a moment, she lies down on her back and stares at the ceiling. Xena turns and leans against the wall.

XENA

(cont'd)

Looks like these guys won't
scare off. Got any ideas on
how we can get out of this?



Gabrielle looks at Xena curiously.

GABRIELLE

Outside of taking
them on, you mean?

XENA

(nodding)

Who knows how many of
them there are? We could
be fighting for months.

GABRIELLE

(conceding)

Mmph. Yeah.

Xena walks over and sits down on the bed and leans against the headboard. She waits, watching Gabrielle out of the corner of her eye.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Are you asking me just to
pacify my need to be involved
in our decision making?

XENA

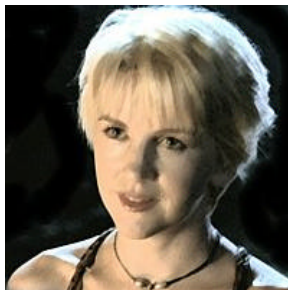
(seriously)

No.

Gabrielle goes back to thinking. After a few minutes, she looks at Xena again.

GABRIELLE

Maybe they can
be scared off.



Xena appears doubtful, and a little disappointed.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Just not by us.

She rolls over, and hitches up on her elbows.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Everyone knows this place
is haunted, Xena. Why
can't we use that to protect
Amphipolis instead of ruin it?

Xena raises an eyebrow, and looks intrigued.

XENA

We'll need a damn frightening
yarn to do that. Think
you can come up with one?

GABRIELLE

(softly)

You know, I think maybe I can.

Xena gives Gabrielle a pat on the shoulder. Gabrielle squirms up and settles in Xena's arms with a pleased expression.

XENA

Hey, I could be a....

GABRIELLE

If you say ghost, you die a slow
ticklish death covered in honey,
and the feathers in this mattress, Xena.

Xena prudently doesn't answer. She kisses Gabrielle instead.

FADE TO:

EXT. CYRENE'S INN - FRONT - MORNING

Gabrielle sits on a stump outside the inn, whittling. It is very quiet. There is a sound of a horse approaching, and several moments later, the horse arrives with a brigand on his back. He rides between the trees, spots Gabrielle, and pulls the horse to a halt.

RAIDER

Hey! HEY!

Gabrielle finishes a bit of her work, then finally looks up.

GABRIELLE

Hi.

RAIDER

I have a message for Xena.

GABRIELLE

She's busy.



The raider looks around. A set of newly hung shutters in front of the inn suddenly creak open of their own volition, then swing shut again with a bang.

RAIDER

Well, tell her to get out here.

GABRIELLE

I can't.

RAIDER

Listen, girlie, you better change that answer! Where is she?

Gabrielle does not seem overly intimidated.

GABRIELLE

Feeding the demons.

Far off, a low, eerie howl is heard.

RAIDER

What? There ain't no such thing as demons!

Abruptly, a flock of chickens bursts from under the inn and dashes past Gabrielle, shedding feathers all over the place as they bolt in fear.

They run under the raiders horse, who rears, almost throwing the man off.

Xena scrambles out from under the inn and dashes after the chickens, a bloody dagger in one hand.

XENA

Get back here you little....

Xena runs under the horses belly also, and she and the chickens disappear around the corner of the inn.

RAIDER

Hey!

A loud roar is heard, shaking the foundations of the building. From under the inn, a cloud of white feathers spattered in blood appear, and slowly drift to the earth, followed by a brassy burp.

A low, evil laugh echoes from behind the inn. The raider starts to back off, his face stark white.

Gabrielle resumes whittling.

GABRIELLE

Did you say something
about a message?



The raider turns his horse and slaps it on the butt, frantically trying to get away from the inn. He rides between the trees, breaking branches and taking a clump of leaves with him.

Xena strolls from around the edge of the inn, twirling a chicken feather between her fingers. She and Gabrielle exchange grins.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

You have such a sexy growl.
Too bad he didn't think so.

Gabrielle gets up and heads towards the inn, giving Xena a pat on the arm as she goes past and through the door.

Xena sits down on the stump and picks up Gabrielle's piece of wood. She starts whittling, whistling softly under her breath.

XENA

(chuckling)

Rowr.

All of a sudden, the breeze blowing around the inn stops, leaving it eerily silent. Xena looks up, and her brow creases.

XENA

(cont'd)

Gabrielle? How'd you do that?

A soft creak sounds behind Xena. Xena turns, expecting to see Gabrielle, but finding their mysterious specter instead. This time the figure doesn't disappear. It stays in the doorway to the inn, watching Xena.

Xena stands and faces it.

XENA
(*cont'd*)
Lyceus?



Xena steps forward. The figure disappears.

CUT TO:

INT. CYRENE'S INN - KITCHEN - MORNING

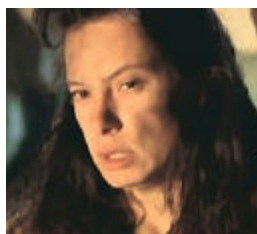
Gabrielle is mixing something up in an urn. She hears footsteps behind her. She stiffens, waits, then whirls as they come closer.

WOMAN
(*jumping*)
AHH!

GABRIELLE
(*chagrined*)
Sorry. Thought you were
someth... someone else.

The woman approaches Gabrielle warily.

WOMAN
I don't know what you're trying to
do. There's no demon here.
(*beat*)
Except Xena.



Gabrielle turns her back on the woman and resumes mixing.

GABRIELLE

The raiders don't know that.

WOMAN

They will. My friends they're holding
won't back up your stupid story.

Gabrielle keeps her back turned, a faint smile appears on her face.

GABRIELLE

Not unless someone tips them
off, no. But wouldn't it be great if
they did believe it? Then people
would leave Amphipolis alone.

The woman appears angry, then pauses in thought.

WOMAN

No. That would scare
the merchants off too.

GABRIELLE

Not really. We'd say the demon
protects anyone who lives here.
Get you better prices, maybe.

WOMAN

(calculating)

Maybe.

(pausing)

But there's no way to tip them
off, so it doesn't matter.

Gabrielle turns, the urn of black, gooey something in her hands.

GABRIELLE

Sure there is.

(smiling)

You ever hear of the Trojans?



CUT TO:

INT. CYRENE'S INN - BACK CORRIDOR - DAY - LATER

Xena is prowling the dark recesses of the inn, where they have not yet begun to clean up. She moves past the small room they have taken over, apparently searching for something.

XENA

Ly? C'mon, where are you?



Xena pulls back some wreckage. One part of a wall has collapsed, and it is very dark. She removes another piece of half-rotted wood, and tosses it behind her.

A support beam is in her way. Xena puts her arms around it and tugs backwards. The walls around her creak ominously.

XENA

(cont'd)

Uh oh.

Xena pauses, but the wood is already in motion. She releases the support and dives back out of the way, but the entire wall in front of her collapses with a crash, and clatter of falling debris.

CUT TO:

EXT. AMPHIPOLIS ROAD - DAY - SAME TIME

Gabrielle hides behind a good sized boulder, watching the deserted road. There are a few scattered belongings of the villagers dropped here and there.

In the center of the path are gooey piles of black, tarry appearing droppings, artfully arranged with the odd chicken feather sticking out of them, small animal bones poking up here and there, and the occasional belt buckle and button showing.

From around the bend in the road comes a fairly large party of people.

Raiders are on horseback, struggling to pull along the villagers who are tied to them by stout ropes. The villagers are protesting wildly, fighting being brought back near the village.

Gabrielle grins.

GABRIELLE

Hope you're ready, Xena.



CUT TO:

INT. CYRENE'S INN - BACK CORRIDOR - DAY

It is silent. Then a pile of debris stirs, and a hand pokes out. It grabs a piece of wreckage and slings it aside, then reaches for another.

Slowly, Xena emerges, covered completely in dust, dirt, rotten wood, and mud. She stands up and looks behind her. The corridor has been closed off by the collapse, but tiny gaps are apparent. Xena shoves against the blockage, and it sways.

Xena turns back around and looks in front of her. There is another wall, and a spot where something had been boarded up over time.

Xena searches in the wreckage for her ax, then she sets to work chopping the boards away. Behind her, a faint, silvery presence appears.

CUT TO:

EXT. AMPHIPOLIS ROAD - SAME TIME

The raiders stop at the first pile of goo. The raider chief jumps off his horse, and goes to look at it. He covers his nose and mouth and backs off at the smell.

The villagers spot the droppings and scream in concert, turning as a group and trying to run the other way. At the front of the villagers is the woman, now a part of the captives.

RAIDER CHIEF

Come on you idiots!
It's just animal dung!

The raider gets on his horse, and forces it forward. A bit uneasily, the raiders follow, dragging the villagers behind them.

Gabrielle slips out from behind her rock and runs to a tree overhanging the road. She climbs up into it.

CUT TO:

INT. CYRENE'S INN - BACK CORRIDOR – DAY

Xena has uncovered a door in what was an older section of the inn, set at the bottom of some crudely cut steps not unlike the ones that descend into the room she and Gabrielle are using.

Xena straightens, her expression wary. Behind her shoulder, we see the pale figure drifting. Xena can barely be seen in the thin shafts of light coming in through the destruction.

XENA

Ly?

Xena eases down the steps, and puts her hand on the old door. As she does, a hand appears next to hers, white and translucent.

XENA

(cont'd)

Was this what you
were looking for?



Xena pushes, but the door does not give way. She throws her shoulder against it, then spots a lead seal that is holding the door shut.

Her fingers trace the seal, and she frowns. Raising her ax, she breaks the seal, and as she does so, a bright light flares from it, then quickly fades.

Xena pushes the door with her fingertips, and now it opens inward.

CUT TO:

EXT. AMPHIPOLIS ROAD - DAY

Gabrielle juggles a handful of nettles. Carefully, she steps on a branch to bend it down, clearing a little space for her to throw.

The raiders ride into view, going slowly since they are practically dragging the villagers along after them.

Gabrielle aims, and side arms a nettle, smacking the raider chief on the side of the face with it. She lets the branch up as he jumps, and looks around.

RAIDER CHIEF

Hey!

Gabrielle moves another branch, and throws a second nettle, bouncing it off a tree on the other side of the raider, and hitting him in the shoulder. The raider chief whirls, and looks in the other direction.

RAIDER CHIEF

(cont'd)

HEY!!!

Gabrielle grins impishly. She is obviously enjoying herself. She chucks another nettle and it hits the ground, bouncing up and hitting the chief's horse in the belly. The horse bucks violently.

RAIDER CHIEF

(cont'd)

Son of a Bacchae!!!!

WOMAN

That's what 'e does! Bites
you, and you never see 'em!!!

Gabrielle hits the chief in the head with another nettle. The chief spurs his horse on towards the Inn, stubborn to the core. She peppers the other raiders with thorns, and they duck, starting to appear a little rattled.

CUT TO:

INT. CYRENE'S INN - HIDDEN ROOM - DAY

Xena enters the hidden room, taking a step forward as she senses something entering behind her.

She looks around. Unlike the other room she and Gabrielle have taken over, this room was not used for storage. It was left in the condition it had been in since the door was sealed over.

This room, though barely seen in the very scant light, was the bedroom of a young man. A bed, a small table, some boots, other small items, all lay were they had been left, and they are completely covered in layers of dust.

The white figure forms in front of Xena, facing her. It is now recognizably Lyceus. He lifts a hand towards Xena.

LYCEUS

Been a long time.



Xena walks towards him, stopping just short of touching.

XENA

Way too long.

She searches Lyceus' face.

XENA

(cont'd)

But why are you here? Now?

Lyceus' ghost turns and looks around, then sits down on the bed. The dust doesn't stir.

LYCEUS

I've always been here.

Xena is visibly stunned.

LYCEUS

(cont'd)

Where else would I go?

This is home, isn't it?

Xena slowly sits down on a dust covered stool near the bed.

XENA

The Fields are home for
you. Not this place.

LYCEUS

(smiling sadly)

This place....

He looks around.

LYCEUS

(cont'd)

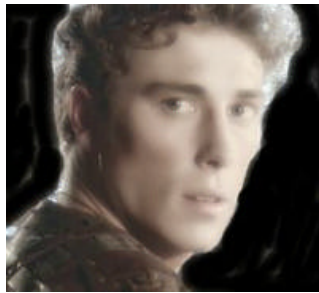
All my hopes... my dreams...
my goals... our goals, were here.
All the things we used to talk
about, that I never got to do.

Xena studies the floor.

XENA

Wish I could say the same.

Lyceus gives Xena a look of profound compassion, which she does not see. He reaches out and touches Xena's shoulder.



CUT TO:

EXT. CYRENE'S INN - FRONT - DAY

The raiders finally make it into the town. The villagers are now fighting like wildcats, trying to get away. They keep pulling the raiders this way and that way, keeping them almost constantly unbalanced.

Gabrielle watches from behind the corner of the inn, she frowns and looks at the inn door, then shakes her head.

RAIDER CHIEF

All right! Now, where's Xena??

XENA! Get out here!

The brush between two boarded up suddenly rustles wildly. The villagers scream, as the leaves burst apart and Argo II charges right at them, covered in what appears to be blood.

The raiders scatter, dragging the villagers with them.

GABRIELLE

Whoops. Okay, Xena,
now it's your turn.

Gabrielle looks at the door to the inn, which stays shut.

RAIDER CHIEF

Xena!!! I'm gonna start
killing these idiots if you
don't get your face out here!

The door remains shut.

CUT TO:

INT. CYRENE'S INN - HIDDEN ROOM - SAME TIME

Lyceus stands and walks around the room.

LYCEUS

At least you've had a chance
to make a difference.

Xena looks at him.

LYCEUS

(cont'd)

I couldn't even help mother.
All I could do is watch....
Watch them torture her.



His voice breaks.

LYCEUS

(cont'd)

The one place she could get
away from them was here.

Xena stands and walks over to him.

XENA

Here?

LYCEUS

She used to come here and just sit.
They left her alone here... until they
figured it out and put that lock on it.

Xena looks at the remnant of the seal on the door, then she looks back at Lyceus.

LYCEUS

(cont'd)

Yes.

(sitting)

At least here, I can
remember who I was.

Xena puts her hand on his shoulder. Lyceus starts a little as he feels the touch, and her hand does not go through him. Xena lifts her head to listen. She hears sounds outside.

XENA

There's something
I have to go do.

LYCEUS

I know. Standing up for
the old homestead
all over again, huh?

Xena starts to turn, then pauses and looks at Lyceus.

XENA

Yeah. Wanna help?
For old time's sake?



Xena holds her hand out to Lyceus. He hesitates, then reaches out to take it.

LYCEUS

For old time's sake.

CUT TO:

EXT. CYRENE'S INN - FRONT - MOMENTS LATER

The raider chief gets his horse under control and grabs one of the villagers, pulling her up over his saddle and putting a dagger to her throat.

Gabrielle gets to her feet and starts to bolt forward.

RAIDER CHIEF
XENA!

Xena drops out of a tree behind the raiders. Gabrielle sees her, and drops behind a barrel.

XENA
(yelling)
WHAT!!!!??????

The raiders all whirl around, confused, until they spot her.

RAIDER CHIEF
All right! Now you listen here....

Xena saunters into the sunlight. She is half covered in what appears to be old blood. Two dead rabbits tied together are slung over her neck. She has a bone of indeterminate origin stuck in her belt.

XENA
Hey! Thanks for bringing 'em
back. I was getting a little...
hehehe, short... and Gabrielle
was getting nervous.

Behind the barrel, Gabrielle growls softly.

GABRIELLE
(under breath)
Oo... You're gonna
pay for that one.

The villagers all get as far away from Xena as they can. The girl on the back of the raider's horse starts to struggle. He hits her on the back of the head with his dagger hilt.

RAIDER CHIEF
Cut the crap! I don't believe
in any of this spook stuff.
Now you just turn yourself
over, or this wench gets it.



The raider raises his dagger. Suddenly, it's knocked from his hands. He grabs for it, but it falls to the ground.

Gabrielle crawls under the front of the inn, and pulls a string. A long, low rumbling is heard.

XENA

Not a believer huh?

The raider chief pulls out another dagger. It's knocked from his hands. Xena catches it. Gabrielle pulls the string again, then jerks on a second cord. A screech sounds, making Xena grimace slightly.

A shadow falls over the inn courtyard. The men all look up, to see a hazy cloud obscuring the sun, rippling in and out.

RAIDER

Uh.... Boss.... This ain't looking so good. Maybe you was wrong....

The villagers too, appear now uneasy and truly frightened.

WOMAN

It is the demon!!!

RAIDER CHIEF

(desperately)

All right! I'll just break her neck!
I don't need a stinking dagger!

The raider chief picks the girl up and grabs her jaw, twisting her body.

The cloud descends on him, as Xena hurls herself towards the horses, waving her arms.

The horses get the scent of dead animals and blood and panic.

RAIDER CHIEF

(cont'd)

AHHH!!!!!!

The horses all rear and try to break away, terrified of the scent Xena is emitting and the dark cloud over the raider's horse.

Despite it all, the raider keeps squeezing the girl's neck.

Xena leaps through the melee, throwing herself up and over the raider's horse. She grabs hold of the girl and rips her from his grasp as the dark cloud coalesces around his head, making a sound like angry bees.

RAIDER CHIEF

(cont'd)

AIIEEEEE!!!!!!!!!!

The raider chief falls from his horse, and wraps his head in his hands, screaming in terror.

RAIDER

Get outta here! Leave 'em!
Let the damn thing take 'em!

The raiders all turn and run, dropping the ropes holding the villagers. After a second of shock, the villagers bolt as well, heading away from the inn as fast as they can run.

Xena checks the girl's pulse, then lays her on the ground before she runs back to where the raider chief is. He is writhing on the ground, lost in fear, screaming his head off.

Xena grabs him by the lapels and slugs him in the face. His scream cuts off, and he slumps, unconscious. Xena drops him.

The cloud lifts and moves away, changing from black, to gray, to a soft white. The wind dies down, the sun returns, and a timid bird starts chirping gamely after a few seconds.

Gabrielle emerges and goes to Xena's side. The girl stirs, then lifts her head, spotting them. She scrambles groggily to her feet and runs off towards the break in the hedges.

GABRIELLE

(sighing)

Wasn't exactly how
we planned it....

XENA

(faintly smiling)

It never is.

The white cloud hovers nearer. Gabrielle turns to look at it, then looks at Xena.

GABRIELLE

Going to introduce me?



XENA

Yeah. Let's go inside.

They walk towards the inn. The cloud follows after them.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR

TAG

FADE IN:

INT CYRENE'S INN - MAIN ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Gabrielle sits at the new table, watching the small fire in the rebuilt fireplace. She appears lost in thought.

Lyceus' ghost forms nearby and stands watching her briefly, before he drifts over. Gabrielle looks up, and gives him a warm smile.

Lyceus smiles back.



GABRIELLE

Thanks.

Lyceus seems a bit surprised. He becomes a bit more solid, and apparently has to struggle a little to communicate with Gabrielle.

LYCEUS

Why?

GABRIELLE

For getting in touch with Xena.
It means so much to her.

Lyceus sits down in the chair next to Gabrielle.

LYCEUS

She's the only one I could talk to.
No one else... not even mother.
I don't know why.

GABRIELLE

(wryly)

Oh, I think I do. But I'm glad I
got to meet you, after hearing
about you all these years.

Lyceus smiles.

LYCEUS

I think I should say
thanks to you.

GABRIELLE

Why?

LYCEUS

For saving her.

This time it is Gabrielle's turn to smile. She is about to answer when the front door opens and Xena enters.

XENA

I packed that last bastard off
tied to the back of an ass
covered in your dragon poop
and the rest of those feathers.
I figure he won't be back.

GABRIELLE

(chuckling)

Remind me to forget
that recipe, hm?

Xena comes over and sits down. She watches Lyceus, who appears to be fading in and out.

XENA

Thanks for the help.

LYCEUS

(distracted)

Hm? Oh. It was good to....

Lyceus' voice trails off.

XENA

What's wrong?

There is a knock at the door. After a second, it opens, and the woman the raider chief was trying to kill walks in. Lyceus fades from view.

WOMAN

Hello.

Xena and Gabrielle exchange glances.



GABRIELLE

Feeling any better?

The woman walks over to them, and hesitantly sits down in the chair Lyceus had just been in and clasps her hands together.

WOMAN

You saved my life. Now that
the whole thing's over,
it's easier to see that.

Xena leans back in her chair.

XENA

We had to make it look good.
That meant scaring everyone.

WOMAN

(ruefully)

You did. We were scared.
It was so real.

GABRIELLE

How do you feel about it now?

The woman seems a bit unsure. She hesitates and looks at the floor for quite some time before she answers.

WOMAN

The raiders won't be back. We
heard they're still running.
(looking up)
So we all figured... maybe we'd
stick around here for a
while. See what happens.

The woman gets up.

GABRIELLE

I'm glad you're staying.
It'll work out.

WOMAN

(shrugging)
We'll see. Anyway,
thanks again.

The woman leaves. Xena looks mildly surprised.

XENA

Huh.
(looking around)
Ly?

Very slowly, Lyceus fades in, appreciably more transparent than he was previously.

LYCEUS

Something strange
is happening.

Xena and Gabrielle both get up and look quickly around, clearly expecting an attack of some kind.

XENA

What is it?

Lyceus fades out a little, then comes back.

LYCEUS

Someone's calling me.
Calling me away from here.

XENA

Who? To where?

LYCEUS

(softly)
I don't know. This is where
I've always been. I couldn't
go anywhere else, but now....
(listening)
It sounds like mother.

Xena steps towards him. Gabrielle puts her hand to her mouth, a look of realization on her face.

XENA

You made a
difference here, Ly.

LYCEUS
(astonished)
I did?



He looks at Xena.

LYCEUS
(cont'd)
We did.

Xena's expression is a mixture of joy and sadness.

XENA
(huskily)
Give mom a hug for me.

Lyceus starts to fade out, then he strengthens again, and moves towards Xena, wrapping his arms around her. They hug each other tightly, then he slowly fades, going transparent, until all that is left is a faint golden light dusting Xena's skin.



Xena lets her arms drop, and she smiles wistfully. Gabrielle finally lets out a breath she's been apparently holding.

GABRIELLE
Wow.

XENA

Yeah.

Gabrielle moves closer and puts her arm around Xena's waist. Xena puts her arm around Gabrielle's shoulders, and they stand there together, enjoying the moment.



CUT TO:

INT. CYRENE'S INN - MAIN ROOM - TWO WEEKS LATER - MORNING

The change is almost incredible. The inn appears completely rebuilt. The main room has tables, chairs, sideboards to put things on, etc.

The mantel of the fireplace is decorated with various pieces of pottery.

The walls are all repaired, the roof is complete, a view into the kitchen from the open door reveals a bright, restored room, with a glimpse of a very beaten out of shape frying pan hanging on the wall.

Gabrielle enters, in evident good spirits. She gives a table a pat, then goes to the window and looks out.

GABRIELLE

What a gorgeous day.

Xena comes in behind her, and hears. She sets a pitcher down on one table and walks over to join Gabrielle.

XENA

Sure is.

(pausing)

Well, we're almost
done here.

Gabrielle turns and surveys their work.

GABRIELLE

And a damn fine job
we've done, too.
(grinning)
This place looks great.

XENA

Uh huh. Too bad we can't get anyone
to take over running it. Guess we
went a little too real for 'em.

Gabrielle nods in rueful agreement.

GABRIELLE

It's a shame we're just going
to lock it up, but maybe we
can find someone out there
to come back here and live in it.

Xena watches Gabrielle from the corner of her eye.

XENA

You want to?



Caught by surprise, Gabrielle turns and looks at Xena for a long moment.

GABRIELLE

Find someone? Or...?

XENA

Live here.

Gabrielle studies Xena, and it appears Xena is serious. However, after a brief pause, Gabrielle smiles somewhat wistfully.

GABRIELLE

We can't stay here. You and I
both know that. It's not where
our road's leading us.

Xena nods in concession.

XENA

I know.

GABRIELLE

(quietly)

But maybe someday.



XENA

(smiling slightly)

Someday.

She looks around.

XENA

(cont'd)

We'll probably have to rebuild
it from scratch by then.

GABRIELLE

(chuckling)

Probably.

They hear some yelling outside, and both turn to look out the window again. The hedges have all been cut back and the inn is clearly visible from the street. Up the road, they can see a wagon approaching pulled by a single, sad looking donkey. A woman walks in front of the donkey, and her face turns towards the inn.

Gabrielle gasps.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Sarah!

FADE TO:

INT. CYRENE'S INN - MAIN ROOM - SHORT TIME LATER

Lila, Sarah, her husband, and the baby sit around one of the inn tables. They are battered and travel worn, and look much the worse for wear. Their clothing is singed at the edges.

LILA

The fire took everything. The entire village is gone. We weren't really headed here but....

Xena and Gabrielle exchange looks.

XENA

But here you are.

SARAH

We didn't even know this place was still here... or that we'd find you two here.

Sarah gazes around the inn.

SARAH

(cont'd)

We don't have much money. I don't think we can afford this place. You think they'd take half price for a room?

Gabrielle hides a smile. Xena seems somewhat bemused.

XENA

I think you could work something out. Got any plans from here?

SARAH

Not really. Find someplace else to settle. Maybe we can get some work in a town.

Gabrielle looks at Xena. Xena looks back at Gabrielle.

XENA

Ever thought about being innkeepers?

FADE TO:

EXT.CYRENE'S INN - FRONT - SEVERAL DAYS LATER

Xena and Gabrielle prepare to leave. They wave to Lila and Sarah standing at the door to the inn, and start off down the road.

GABRIELLE

You know, Xena, it's amazing how this all worked out.

Xena stamps her boots, which appear somewhat new.

XENA

That your family needed a home
at just the same time we were
looking for someone to give
one to? Yeah, well....

Xena takes a breath of fresh air, as they leave the town.

XENA

(cont'd)

Sometimes life just
comes together for ya.



She looks at Gabrielle.

XENA

(cont'd)

Feel better?

Gabrielle is busy trying to learn to juggle. She looks up in some surprise.

GABRIELLE

Me? I feel great.

(laughing)

Now, show me
that toss again?

Xena smiles and they walk off down the road.

FADE OUT.

DISCLAIMER

No inns were harmed in the making of this motion picture,
but Gabrielle ended up removing splinters for months.