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**Note:** This story takes its cue from the episode THE XENA SCROLLS, of the tv series "Xena:Warrior Princess", and from the episode FINAL OPTIONS, of the web series "Xena Warrior Princess Subtext Virtual Seasons", but it presents only my personal depiction of Xena and Gabrielle, and it is written in the manner of a script of an SVS episode just as a tribute to the great work of that wonderful team.

# REFLECTIONS

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## TEASER

FADE IN:

### EXT. SMALL LAKE IN A FOREST – SUNSET - UNKNOWN P.O.V.

A small lake hidden among the dense vegetation of a forest. The landscape looks a little confused and twisted on the edges, as if we were looking at it through a bottom of glass. As we approach, we begin to distinguish the head and shoulders of a woman with dark hair emerging from the surface. Although the image is still a bit confused, we recognize Xena, leaning against the rocky edge of the pond, her eyes are closed and her head is tilted backwards.

A beam of the setting sun filtering through the trees spreads over her hair, black, shiny, compact with water, giving it blue reflections. Her lips are slightly parted and weak moans seem to come out of them.

Suddenly, her eyes snap open, alert, attentive. Xena looks around, as if she's expecting to see someone nearby that might be watching. Then shakes her head and closing her eyes again, reclines her head almost with a jerk, while a louder groan erupts from her throat and a jolt shakes her shoulders and her neck. Then she slumps on the rocks behind her with a satisfied smile.

Small air bubbles explode on the surface, and a moment later a blond head emerges in front of her. Gabrielle pulls her soaked hair back with both hands and smiles.

## GABRIELLE

How did I do?

**XENA**

*(smiling)*

Excellent.

This time I counted  
until nearly five hundred.

**GABRIELLE**

*(maliciously)*

I hope that the counting  
didn't distract you too much.

**XENA**

*(laughing)*

Don't worry. I fully enjoyed  
your... breath-holding test.

The two women exchange positions. Xena takes the place of Gabrielle who leans back against the rocks.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

It's my turn now. Get ready  
to count up to one thousand.

**GABRIELLE**

*(closing her eyes)*

Ok, but don't be upset if I lose  
count. I don't have your  
capacity of concentration.

*(pause)*

And I want to enjoy myself too –  
to the fullest – this test of yours.

Laughing, Xena immerses herself completely, disappearing under the water, as Gabrielle takes the pose that had been of her partner, spreading her arms along the edge of the rocks.

At the same time, the scene starts to become more and more confused and erratic, as the image moves away quickly, like a fast zoom out from above. Now Gabrielle is barely discernible in the distance on the surface of the pond, then the same lake is transformed into a patch of blue, while the vegetation closes around the landscape like a curtain.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. CAMP IN THE FOREST - EVENING**

Now the image is sharp and precise and no more confused as before.

Gabrielle is lying in her furs, at the light of a small fire crackling. She sits up and leans toward her bag lying next to her. She opens it, takes a look at its contents, then smirking with a sigh,

she closes it, and returns satisfied under the covers.

A slight rustling in the bushes surrounding the camp is followed by the figure of Xena. Gabrielle welcomes her with a smile. The smile that instead Xena returns to her seems a little tense, even if she tries not to show it.

**GABRIELLE**

So? Have you found anyone?

**XENA**

No one.

Xena rids herself of the sheath with the sword on her back, then also takes off the slight armor; she slips under the covers next to her companion.

**GABRIELLE**

I told you, Xena. I didn't hear anything, and even if my hearing is not as good as yours, I think I have learned enough from you to notice if someone was following us.

Xena pulls Gabrielle in her arms, and the bard lies at once in her preferred position.

**XENA**

Yeah. Let's hope you're right.

**GABRIELLE**

Absolutely. Besides, you say that you've been feeling watched for days now. Why would anyone keep an eye on us for so long without doing anything? We crossed woods and desert plains, cities and villages. If they want to attack us, they have had plenty of chances.

**XENA**

Maybe they don't mean to attack us. Maybe they just want to ask for our help, or deliver a message to us.

**GABRIELLE**

*(chuckling)*

A shy messenger.

**XENA**

*(smiling mischievously)*

Or a shy suitor. Someone so overwhelmed by our beauty, that he doesn't have the courage to come forward and just adores us from afar.

**GABRIELLE**

*(laughing)*

Oh-oh, then we'll have to be very careful.

**XENA**

About what?

**GABRIELLE**

Not providing him material for his fancy.

The two women burst out laughing together. Gabrielle wrapped her arms around the neck of her partner. Creeping slightly over her, she brings her face just above Xena's. Their lips almost touching.

**XENA**

Um... I thought you just said...

**GABRIELLE**

Never heard that women are contradictory creatures?

They kiss passionately for a long moment, then Gabrielle pulls off and rests her head on Xena's shoulder with a satisfied sigh.

**GABRIELLE**

You know, even now, I can't avoid thinking about it.

**XENA**

My magnetic charm?

**GABRIELLE**

*(chuckling)*

No, silly. My beautiful new pair of boots.

**XENA**

I still think that you  
paid too much for  
a simple pair of boots.

Gabrielle suddenly straightens her head, staring at her.

**GABRIELLE**

*A simple* pair of boots? For your  
information, Xena, they are not a  
*simple* pair of boots. They are the  
most beautiful and well-made boots  
I've ever seen. The cobbler who made  
them is the most popular throughout Greece.  
They were made from pure deerskin which allows  
the feet to breathe, while remaining warm and...

Xena put two fingers over Gabrielle's lips to stop the flood of words.

**XENA**

Okay, okay. Calm down.  
They're beautiful, I admit it,  
but with our kind of life how  
long do you think they're  
going to stay new  
and beautiful?

**GABRIELLE**

You don't think that I'm going  
to wear them on those dusty  
trails full of mud and stones  
where you drag me  
continually, do you?

**XENA**

Well, aren't you?

**GABRIELLE**

Of course not! For those trails,  
the same old boots that I always  
wear are perfectly fine. No, my new  
and beautiful boots will tread only  
the floors of palaces. I'll flaunt  
them only on the most  
important occasions.

**XENA**

Such as the palace of  
King Creon in Thebes?

**GABRIELLE**

Exactly. When we arrive  
in the courtyard of his palace,  
I'll pack these old, worn out  
shoes in the saddlebag, and  
only then will I put these on.

**XENA**

*(reflecting)*

I get it.

*(pause)*

Seems a good idea.

**GABRIELLE**

*(suspiciously)*

Really?

**XENA**

In fact, I thought you'd have  
trouble move around with agility  
on those 4-inch heels...

**GABRIELLE**

They are not that high!

**XENA**

...although in case of combat  
you could use them as a weapon.

**GABRIELLE**

Xena!

**XENA**

But now that you mention it, I feel  
quite reassured. On second thought,  
I can also understand why you  
care about them so much...

**GABRIELLE**

*(hissing threateningly)*

Xenaaa!

Careful what you say.

**XENA**

...and after all, it's good for me too.  
At least I won't have to carry you  
piggy-back anymore 'cause  
you'll be able to see...

**GABRIELLE**

*AARRGGHH! I'll get you for that,  
Warrior Princess!*

Gabrielle throws herself on Xena and a kind of battle comes on under the covers, between shrieks and laughter soon turned into gasps, as the movements take on a different beat.

Suddenly a voice is heard.

**VOICE**

*(VO)*

No. No. No. No!

The voice is lost in the distance until it disappears altogether. Xena's head pops up from beneath the hem of the cover. Her hair is disheveled and she spits out a lock which ended up in her mouth. Gabrielle emerges too, and her hair is no less ruffled despite the short cut.

**GABRIELLE**

*(protesting)*

Hey!

*(pause, looking at Xena)*

What?

**XENA**

Have you heard?

**GABRIELLE**

*(puzzled)*

No. What?

**XENA**

It seemed...

Xena looks around, staring at various points in the darkness around them, just broken by the flames of the small bonfire dying down. The silence is complete.

**XENA**

Oh, hell!

Xena again plunges her head under the blanket, and Gabrielle, after having cast a look around, follows with an impish smile. Her voice becomes muffled by the thick fur.

**GABRIELLE**

Where were we?

**CUT TO:**

## EXT. HIGH ABOVE - DAY - UNKNOWN P.O.V.

Once again, the images seem slightly blurred at the edges.

We are gliding into the sky among the clouds, as if we were in a dream. Below us, at a great distance, seas, forest landscapes, vast wilderness, inhabited areas, where people seem so tiny in size to be almost invisible, pass in rapid succession.

Speed increases more and more. Now the landscape below becomes an indistinct sequence of colors, as the solar disk appears before us, bright and dazzling. We are rushing at a breakneck speed toward the sun. Its light swallows us completely, invading the whole image and transforming it into a blinding white screen. The same disembodied voice of before is heard.

**VOICE**  
(VO)  
WOOOOHOOOOO!

The white light disappears suddenly, to again make room for landscapes similar to the previous ones, seas, lands, deserts, cities, woods and forests. Our speed is gradually decreasing, and now we are again able to distinguish them right below us. The height is decreasing too and our vision, as we slowly come down, seems to concentrate first on a forest, and then, farther down, on a wide clearing where at the center, there's a small farm that looks dilapidated and abandoned.

**VOICE**  
(VO)  
She is here. I can feel her!

**CUT TO:**

## EXT. FARM - DAY - UNKNOWN P.O.V.

We are getting closer and closer to the house, and when we are just a few yards away from the roof, the front door is opened and a tall, dark woman appears on the doorway. She wears only a shift that does very little to hide her curves. She has long black hair pulled back and gathered together in a ponytail. But despite the unusual hairstyle she's undoubtedly Xena, and with a big smile, she looks satisfied at the beautiful blue sky above her, as she stretches her arms and shoulders. Our flight stops in mid-air on this sight.

**XENA**  
It was a good idea to stop  
here for the night. It's nice  
to see this place again.

The figure of a tall, handsome man appears behind her. He's bare-chested and has a smirk on his lips, surrounded by a mustache and a beard. He's likewise undoubtedly Ares.



**VOICE**

*(VO, surprised)*

Well, I'll be damned!

The man approaches the woman from behind and wraps his arms around her waist, pulling her toward him, and kissing her neck.

**ARES**

I also found it  
very stimulating.

Xena turns to him and without trying to escape his hug, puts her own arms around his neck.

**XENA**

*(smiling)*

You didn't get enough last night?

**ARES**

I never get enough of you.

**XENA**

You know that Gabrielle  
and Virgil are waiting for  
me at Athens tonight.

**ARES**

And you know it's certainly  
not a problem for me.

Xena makes a face, but keeps smiling.

**XENA**

I'd rather go on horseback.  
I'm taking a bit too much advantage  
of your powers, and I think Argo has  
gotten a little fat. She needs  
some exercise.

**ARES**

Not only her.

Suddenly, Ares raises Xena in his arms. With a laugh, she clings to his neck, pressing her mouth to his. The two kiss for a moment, then Ares pulls off, staring at her with an ironic grin.

**ARES**

*(cont'd)*

So you like riding?  
Let me humor you.

And keeping her off the ground, Ares turns and runs back inside the house with Xena laughing in his arms, closing the door behind him with a kick.

For a moment, the image remains fixed on the now deserted porch of the house.

**VOICE**

(VO)

Interesting. Very interesting.

**FADE OUT.**

**END OF TEASER**

## ACT ONE

FADE IN:

### INT. FARM - BEDROOM - DAY - LATER

Xena and Ares (but apparently not the *usual* Xena and Ares, so we'll call them Xena II and Ares II) are lying in bed under the sheets. The room looks more or less as abandoned as its exterior.

**XENA II**

Now I gotta go.

She jumps out of bed, quickly putting on her leather clothes. She throws her head back to collect her hair and tie it together in back. Ares II, still under the sheets, turns on his side to watch her.

**ARES II**

*(slightly ironic)*

Say hello to your little friend  
and give her my best wishes.

Xena II turns her back to him, sitting on the edge of the bed to tie her boots.

**XENA II**

So you've decided  
not to come?

**ARES II**

What do you think?

*(pause, bitterly)*

When she and I are in the same  
room, the embarrassment  
is so thick you could  
slice it up and offer it to  
visitors as dessert.

Catching the tone of his words, she turns to him.

**XENA II**

That's not true, and you know it.  
Sure, I wouldn't say that she dotes  
on you, but she's learned to put up  
with you. If nothing else, for me.

**ARES II**

Hurray.

Glancing at him furtively, Xena II begins to put on her armor.

**ARES II**

*(cont'd)*

If you really want to know  
my opinion, I think she's  
still jealous of you.

She abruptly stops what she's doing, glares at him, then goes back to fastening the buckles on her armor, nervously, looking away.

**XENA II**

Oh, please, don't start again!

*(pause)*

How many times do I have  
to tell you that this story is  
just an obsession of yours?

There's nothing going on  
between me and Gabrielle  
and there never has been...  
in the sense you mean.

Ares II reaches out, gazing at her intently.

**ARES II**

*(in a wheedling tone)*

Oh, come on. All those years  
– all those nights – side by side,  
sheltered by the dense cluster  
of bushes, under the stars...

*(pause)*

Are you telling me that you  
never even thought about it?

Xena II sheathes her heavy sword in the scabbard on her back, and turns finally to look at him.

**XENA II**

*(coldly)*

I will not answer that question...

**ARES II**

*(sarcastically)*

...'cause the answer could incriminate you?

He gets out of bed and puts on his pants, looking away from her.

**XENA II**

No! Because just thinking about it  
makes me feel so ridiculous!  
Gods of Olympus!

**ARES II**

*(muttering, almost to himself)*  
Don't invoke us in vain.  
There are just a few of us left.

Xena II, arms on her hips, stares at his back.

**XENA II**

But what do you guys have  
in those warped minds of yours?  
You really believe that when women  
stay alone together, they do nothing  
but roll around on the couch?

Ares II busies himself in fastening his belt.

**ARES II**

Not necessarily.

**XENA II**

*(slightly relaxed)*  
Ah! Good.

**ARES II**

*(faking thoughtfulness)*  
A grass lawn would suffice.  
Or a fur pelt spread over a rock.  
*(pause)*  
Come to think of it, just the rock.

She cuffs him behind the head and starts to walk away, visibly angry, but Ares II grabs her by the wrist with a giggle.

**ARES II**

Okay, okay.  
Hey, I was joking.

He holds her in his arms.

**ARES II**

*(cont'd)*  
Where's your  
sense of humor?

**XENA II**

*(softened)*

I must have left it in Argo's  
saddlebag last night.

*(pause)*

Same place where  
you probably left your brain.

The expression on his face seems genuinely remorseful.

**ARES II**

I'm sorry. Sometimes my  
tongue has a mind of its own.

**XENA II**

Well, never mind. But  
let me go now. I'll have  
to spur Argo if I want to get  
to Athens before dark.

**ARES II**

Are you sure you don't want...?

**XENA II**

*(interrupting him)*

Absolutely. If I continue make  
you carry me around everywhere,  
Argo won't be the only one  
to become as fat as a sow.

In a resolute move, Xena II escapes the man's grasp. He lets her go reluctantly. She goes out and he follows.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. FARM - DAY**

Xena II goes towards to Argo and begins to saddle her. Ares II goes out on the porch and leans against a pole.

**ARES II**

When do you think you'll be back?

Xena II turns to look at him.

**XENA II**

*(puzzled)*

Are you gonna wait for me here?

**ARES II**

Why not? One place is as good as another.

**XENA II**

You could take this opportunity to pop up to Mount Olympus, to check on that hothead sister of yours.

**ARES II**

We'll go together after you get back. I know that she's arranging to have a wonderfully soft bed put in my apartments. I can't wait to try it out.

Xena II gives him a look, then shakes her head.

**XENA II**

Can't you think of anything else?

She pulls the horse's girth strap strongly, causing the animal to whinny in protest.

**XENA II**

*(cont'd, to Argo)*

Sorry, girl.

*(to Ares)*

I should be back in two or three days, the time it takes to find out how Gabrielle's pregnancy is going. I know her nights are restless, and poor Virgil has to look after her and the farm all by himself.

**ARES II**

The baby won't be born for at least two more months.

Do you intend to run up and down to nurse her all that time?

Xena II mounts her horse, laughing.

**XENA II**

No. Gabrielle is a strong woman. She would kick me out if she thought that I spent too much time on her. And then you know how irritable pregnant women can be.

**ARES II**

*(offhandedly)*

Not really. I hope to  
find out sooner or later.

Xena II turns the nose of the horse toward Ares II, staring at him with an ironic twinkling in her eyes.

**XENA II**

Sure you want to? Then you risk  
having to give up your favorite  
pastime for quite a while.

Without giving him time to answer, Xena II taps the horse's flanks and gallops off.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. PATH - DAY**

Xena and Gabrielle are traveling on horseback, side-by-side, down a wide path surrounded by trees and tall bushes, through which the rays of the sun filter from time to time.

**GABRIELLE**

And let's hope that King Creon got  
the hint last time, and spares us  
the embarrassment of seating us  
at the table next to his sons...

**XENA**

Mh-mh.

**GABRIELLE**

By now even the stones should have  
figured out how things are between us.  
Even if there wasn't much fanfare  
about our Amazon joining, I think  
it's pretty obvious that...

**XENA**

Mh-mh.

**GABRIELLE**

...that...

*(pause)*

*(glancing sideways at Xena)*

...that, after all, marrying Polyneices or Eteocles  
could also have its advantages. They're two  
gorgeous young men, and the idea of  
becoming queen and maybe giving



birth to the heir of the kingdom...

**XENA**

Mh-mh.  
*(pause)*  
What?

Like awakening from a daydream, Xena turns her face towards her partner, looking confused.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cheerfully)*  
Finally. Welcome back.  
I wondered what I had to invent to  
get your attention, but it seems  
I chose the right words.

**XENA**

*(sighing deeply)*  
Gabrielle...

**GABRIELLE**

No '*Gabrielle*', Xena. All  
day long, no matter what I say,  
you reply with grunts or monosyllables.  
Would you mind telling me what's up with you?

**XENA**

Nothing.

**GABRIELLE**

Really? You didn't hear  
a single word of what I said.

**XENA**

Not true. When you mentioned  
the possibility of marrying one of King  
Creon's sons, I heard you loud and clear.

**GABRIELLE**

Luckily!  
Or I'd be seriously worried.

Xena reaches out to spank Gabrielle's bottom. With a giggle, Gabrielle escapes and instead gives Xena a spank on her bottom.

**XENA**

Ouch!  
You've got big hands!

**GABRIELLE**

*(laughing)*

Right. Hands of a sailor. Remember?

Xena joins Gabrielle in laughter for a moment, then she falls silent again.

**GABRIELLE**

Are you sure you don't have anything to tell me? You've been behaving strangely since last night.

**XENA**

Nothing, Gabrielle. Really. If I had problems, don't you think I'd tell you?

**GABRIELLE**

So then what's with the sudden silence?

Xena remains silent for a moment yet, then sighs, appearing to make up her mind.

**XENA**

I told you. Nothing special. Only...

She stops.

**GABRIELLE**

*(impatiently)*

Only... what?

**XENA**

Last night while we were... busy with each other...

**GABRIELLE**

Yes?

**XENA**

*(quickly)*

I could swear I heard a voice.

**GABRIELLE**

*(puzzled)*

A voice?

Whose voice?

What did it say?

**XENA**

*(shrugging)*

I'm not sure. A voice.  
It said something like *no-no-no*,  
then it trailed off into the distance.

**GABRIELLE**

*No-no-no?!?*

But what does it mean?

Xena shrugs again.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

Is that why you jumped out from  
under the covers the way you did?  
You damn near head-butted me in the face!

**XENA**

*(smiling)*

Sorry.

**GABRIELLE**

Are you sure you didn't  
recognize the voice?

Gabrielle's question remains unanswered for a long moment. A bit too long.

**GABRIELLE**

So?

**XENA**

No. I don't think I  
ever heard it before.

Xena continues to ride, looking straight ahead, but perfectly aware of Gabrielle's gaze fixed on her.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. FARM - DAY**

Ares II watches Xena II disappear into the distance, until only the dust raised by the hoofs of her horse is visible. Then frowning, he turns and starts as if about to go back inside.

Instead, he springs up. His arms lunge out as if to nab a secret spy hiding in the dark shadows in a corner of the porch, but they pass unimpeded through the air.

Ares II draws his hands back suddenly, stepping back involuntarily. He stares at the faintly glowing human form now facing him.

**ARES II**

*(surprised)*

Who the hell are you?

The shadows of the porch make it impossible to discern the form's features. The few rays of sunlight that penetrate the shadows also penetrate the form, imbuing it with a bizarre and disturbing quality. The form seems to be constantly changing, like a reflection in a pool of water.

**UNKNOWN**

Then you can see me...

*(pause)*

Yeah, of course... naturally,  
you're the only one who can.

**ARES II**

*(threatening)*

Answer my question!  
Or prepare to face the wrath  
of the God of War!

The stranger chuckles wickedly.

**UNKNOWN**

*(sarcastically)*

The wrath of the God of War?  
But are you still able to feel it? Or  
have you let it suffocate? Or have you  
renounced the spirit of battle – your  
nature, our nature – so that you can get  
closer to her? Tell me, is this the price  
you had to pay to win her heart?

**ARES II**

*(angrily)*

That's enough!

Ares II leaps down the steps that separate the porch from the bare ground. Like magic, a blazing sword appears in his hand and he points it toward the hidden figure.

**ARES II**

*(cont'd)*

Come here into the light,  
and repeat your vile insults.  
Come out from the shadows,  
whoever you are, man or ghost,

and face me. I am not afraid of you.

For a long moment, there are no movements in the gloomy area where the intangible figure is standing. Then, slowly, the stranger starts to move forward, and as the sun reveals him, the god's face changes into a mask of bewilderment. His eyes open wide, and he has to make an effort to keep the tip of his sword pointed straight at the intruder. Despite the combined effects of the intruder's confused and wavering profile and the light which passes through him, giving new meaning to the word incorporeal, Ares II can now clearly distinguish the features of his own face. What he has before him is indisputably his own mirror-like image.

### ARES II

Who... Who are you?

### SPIRIT OF ARES

Strange that you continue to ask. At this point, you should have figured it out on your own.

### ARES II

*(almost stammering)*

How, how is it possible?  
If they were still alive, I would think  
it was some cruel joke of my  
father or Hera, but...

The disembodied image of Ares comes down the wooden steps, as if he was actually treading upon them, but he does so without provoking so much as a single creak.

### SPIRIT OF ARES

So, they died also here, huh?

*(pause)*

If I hadn't always considered it nonsense, I would really think that there was something true in the legend that says, whatever happens in one world has repercussions in all the others, in one way or another.

Almost without realizing it, seeing the ghostly figure coming closer, Ares II lowers the tip of his sword and flexes his leg, ready to retreat. But quickly he resumes control of himself, resolutely stands his ground, and raises his sword once again to the level of the other's chest, no more than a couple inches away.

### SPIRIT OF ARES

Stop it, brother. This unnecessary pantomime helps no one. You know very well that I am as much a god as you are, and even if I were here in flesh and blood, your blade could

do me no harm whatsoever. So  
let's stop all this, okay? And have  
a talk about serious matters.

Ares II lowers the blade with a hint of reluctance, but keeps it firmly in hand.

**ARES II**  
*(incredulous)*  
You... would be me?

The spirit of Ares crosses his arms over his chest and smiles.

**SPIRIT OF ARES**  
Obviously not. But we both  
represent the God of War  
in our respective worlds.  
We are both Ares.

The arm of Ares II, still holding the sword aloft with force, gives in and drops to his side. The two gods of war – one of solid flesh, the other immaterial – remain with eyes locked on each other.

**FADE TO:**

## **EXT. CLEARING - EVENING - TWO YEARS AGO**

Xena II (the one with her hair in a ponytail whom we saw earlier) is sharpening her sword, while across the fire Gabrielle II tidies up the small camp of the last traces of the meal they have just eaten. At a certain distance, from behind an outgrowth of vegetation, comes the rushing sound of what seems to be a waterfall.

Xena II looks up at Gabrielle II, then with a slight smile on her lips, she resumes her task.

**XENA II**  
Why don't you go join Virgil?  
*(pause)*  
Or didn't you notice the  
inviting tone in his voice when  
he said he was going to the river?

Gabrielle II turns to her, continuing to empty stew pot of its leftovers. On her face as well there is a slight smile, but one mixed with something more difficult to decipher.

**GABRIELLE II**  
Of course I noticed.

**XENA II**  
He likes you a lot.  
It seems clear.

**GABRIELLE II**

I like him too, Xena.  
I don't deny it.

For a moment, Gabrielle II stops scraping the pot, raising her eyes to the trees, in the direction of the faint sound of rushing water.

**GABRIELLE II**

*(cont'd)*

He's a beautiful boy.  
He's sweet, nice.  
He has great  
talent for poetry.

**XENA II**

*(looking at her)*

What are you waiting for, then?  
Go and ask him to help you  
with the dishwashing.  
I think he'll jump at the chance.

Without answering, Gabrielle II puts the pot to one side, next to the bowls and spoons, and goes to sit near her.

**GABRIELLE II**

*(reflecting, almost to herself)*

He's very different from his father.  
And yet, I don't know, when he smiles,  
or looks at me in a certain way, it really  
feels as though I'm looking at Joxer.

The sharpening finished, Xena II puts the stone back in her bag, and gently passes her finger along the edge of the blade.

**XENA II**

And that bothers you?

Gabrielle II is shaken from her thoughts and looks at her.

**GABRIELLE II**

No. Of course not.

Feigning deep concentration over the state of the sword, Xena II furtively glances at her companion.

**XENA II**

*(offhandedly)*

Joxer was in love with you.

Perhaps the idea of being  
involved with his son makes  
you uncomfortable.  
That's normal.

Gabrielle II watches her friend for a moment. About to say something, her mouth opens, then closes. Finally, she comes to a decision.

**GABRIELLE II**

Don't you think I'm a bit too old  
for him? I practically twice his age.

Xena II sheathes her sword, resting it against a rock on her right, and turns to her friend.

**XENA II**

Only technically. But you ought  
to stop counting the twenty-five  
years we spent under ice, Gabrielle.  
Those years never really passed for us.  
You still have your youth, and I think you  
ought to cash in on the credit that time owes you.

**GABRIELLE II**

*(lowering her eyes)*  
Maybe.

**XENA II**

*(smiling)*

Trust me. I saw myself how he  
looks at you. He's head-over-heels  
in love with you, and I think he  
doesn't give a damn at all  
about your real age.

Gabrielle II remains motionless, without looking up.

**GABRIELLE II**

I don't know, Xena. In fact, before  
I take any step whatsoever,  
I'd like to understand  
my own heart better.

**XENA II**

What do you mean?

Once again, Gabrielle II opens her mouth to say something. But then, as if suddenly decided, she stands up abruptly.



**GABRIELLE II**

It's getting late, and all that stuff  
certainly isn't going to wash itself.

A little surprised by the outburst, Xena II looks up at her companion who is already gathering the various pots and pans in a cloth. Tying the four corners into a knot, Gabrielle II hoists it onto her shoulder and goes off towards the river.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. CLEARING - EVENING - SHORTLY AFTER**

Xena II is seated in the same position, eyes fixed on the spot among the trees where Gabrielle II disappeared from view, when she feels a sudden warmth surround her. Two strong arms embrace her from behind, a powerful chest presses against her back, and warm lips settle on her neck. A chill runs down her spine. She gasps, closes her eyes and tilts her head back.

**XENA II**

*(whispering)*  
Ares.

**ARES II**

Finally. I thought  
she'd never leave.

Xena II turns her head and Ares II captures her lips in a long, passionate kiss.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. CLUMP OF TREES - EVENING - SAME TIME**

Gabrielle II is walking down the slope in a group of trees. Suddenly her foot slips, and she falls heavily on her bottom. The sack that she is carrying on her shoulder opens up and the crockery spills out onto the wet, soft grass.

**GABRIELLE II**

*(through gritted teeth)*  
Damn!

Picking herself up, she rubs her backside and start collecting the stuff scattered about on the ground. But in that moment, her ears catch the sound of two voices in the direction she has just come from. Puzzled, she looks that way, and almost as an afterthought, she finishes putting the crockery back in the cloth.

Then, with sudden decision, she closes her improvised sack and leaves it on where it is. Slowly, quietly, she retraces her steps.

**CUT TO:**

## EXT. CLEARING - EVENING - SAME TIME

At the end of the kiss, Xena II and Ares II move apart. The warrior and the god remain motionless, staring at each other.

**ARES II**

*(caressing her face)*

Don't you think  
it's time to tell her?

**XENA II**

It's too early. I came back  
from the world of shadows  
only a couple of months ago.  
I don't think she's ready yet to...

With a bit of exasperation in his eyes, the god stops hugging her, and stands up.

**ARES II**

I hate having to do this, but  
let me remind you that if it weren't  
for me, your Gabrielle would be  
spending the rest of her life  
with a jar of ashes as her  
only memory of you.

**XENA II**

She knows that, Ares, and she's  
very grateful to you. Believe me.

**ARES II**

*(bitterly)*

Well, then she's pretty good at hiding  
her feelings. Since I brought you back  
to life, I don't recall the slightest hint of  
gratitude on her part. Yet I had to go all  
the way down into the underworld of the  
Land of the Rising Sun to recover you,  
putting my own immortality at risk – yet  
once again, let me point out – to face  
the Guardian of the Dead and...

Xena II gets up, stands in front of him, and puts her hands on his shoulders.

**XENA II**

She knows, I tell you, and she also  
understands that you've changed. Like  
me, she too can see that the desire for

possession and violence that was once  
in your eyes has disappeared. She  
realizes that you really love me.

**ARES II**

So why don't you tell her the truth?  
Why do we have to see  
each other in secret?

She looks at him for a moment, then her hands slip off his shoulders. She turns and goes toward a nearby tree, leaning her back against its trunk.

**XENA II**

There's a bond between Gabrielle and me.  
Our destinies were intertwined long ago  
for a purpose, a purpose that will not fade  
in this life, but will continue in future lives.  
I cannot explain the why, but it is so.  
I have seen it.  
*(pause)*  
I don't want to compromise  
everything with a hasty move.

**ARES II**

*(angrily)*

Yet you haven't hesitated to abandon her.  
You let your adversary kill you in battle,  
aware that in fulfilling your mission you  
wouldn't be able to come back anymore.  
Where was all this consideration  
for your friend at that moment?

**XENA II**

I made a mistake. I admit it. I let my  
eagerness to redeem myself blind me  
to the point of forgetting everything else.

She moves away from the tree and approaches him.

**XENA II**

*(cont'd)*

This is why I'll never cease to thank  
you for coming to get me and making me  
understand my madness, and why  
I'll never stop loving you.

She stares intently at him, and the look in his eyes softens.

**CUT TO:**

## EXT. CLUMP OF TREES - EVENING - SAME TIME

Hidden behind a tree in the thicket, Gabrielle II, with eyes and ears wide open, follows the conversation between her companion and Ares II. Their voices are a little muffled by the distance, but perfectly audible.

**XENA II**

*(VO)*

I'll tell her everything myself,  
I promise, at the right time.

**ARES II**

*(VO, sighing)*

And when will that be?

**CUT TO:**

## EXT. CLEARING - EVENING - SAME TIME

**XENA II**

*(with a slight smile)*

Sooner than you think. Something  
is starting between her and Virgil. I see it.  
I can almost feel it. When the budding feeling  
between them blooms – and in my opinion, it  
won't take long – even a discussion like this one  
will be a lot easier to deal with.

**ARES II**

*(nodding)*

Very well. I'll be patient.

*(pause)*

But only for your sake.

His arms spring around her waist and draw her to him. They kiss again. Then she breaks away with slightly labored breathing.

**XENA II**

Go now. She could  
come back at any moment.

A bluish glow surrounds the god, and with a satisfied smile on his face, Ares II disappears. No longer supported by his arms, Xena II falters for a moment before regaining her balance.

Hearing a rustle, the crack of a twig broken, she turns quickly towards the dense cluster of trees behind her, but no one comes into view.

**XENA II**  
*(uncertainly)*  
Gabrielle?  
*(pause)*  
Is that you?

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. CLUMP OF TREES - EVENING - SAME TIME**

Breathless, Gabrielle II is completely flattened against the tree. For a long moment, everything remains as if suspended in time, then she barely dares to lean out from behind the trunk.

Xena II is facing away, laying down her bedroll for the night. With a sigh of relief, trying to avoid any other noise, Gabrielle II walks back to the point where she left the sack full of crockery, picks it up mechanically, and continues toward the river with a deeply thoughtful look.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. RIVER - EVENING**

Gabrielle II emerges from the trees into a grassy clearing, inclined slightly downhill and leading to the banks of a stream which flows briskly from a small waterfall to disappear among the surrounding dense vegetation.

Lying on the grass and leaning on his side, Virgil is throwing pebbles into the water. He is still as young and handsome as he was in the days of Gurkhan. He has his back turned to her and becomes aware of her presence only when he hears footsteps behind him.

Immediately he turns around and his face lights up with a big smile.

**VIRGIL**  
Hey, Gabrielle.

Gabrielle II, still deep in thought, is somewhat startled. She smiles, but it's a shy, slightly embarrassed smile.

**GABRIELLE II**  
Hey.

She goes to sit next to him, and Virgil gets up on his knees to free her of her sack.

**VIRGIL**  
Here, let me give you a hand.

**GABRIELLE II**  
Thank you.

Without looking up at him, Gabrielle II tries to unknot the wrapped cloth that she herself absently tied a short time before, but the knot resists. Cursing under her breath, she persists in the operation, stopping suddenly when Virgil's hand rests on hers.

**VIRGIL**

Wait. Leave it to me.

Without answering, Gabrielle II loosens the grip on the fabric, looking finally into the eyes of the young man who takes her place in fighting the stubborn knot. When she sees him vainly trying to untangle the tight knot with his big, ungainly fingers, the absurdity of the situation suddenly swoops down upon her, and impetuous laughter flows from her throat.

Seeing her laugh, even Virgil, whose face is starting to turn red in an effort to untie the diabolical knot, joins her in laughter.

**VIRGIL**

How clumsy I am, huh?

**GABRIELLE II**

How about me? *I'm* the one who tied it.

They laugh even harder, unable to stop, affecting one other.

Then, finally, when the crisis of laughter seems to fade, Gabrielle II pulls one of the sais from her boot.

**GABRIELLE II**

*(cont'd)*

In desperate times...

With a decisive blow, she cuts the tenacious knot, and the sack opens suddenly. Bowls and cups fall out in all directions, rolling down the slope.

It triggers a new wave of hilarity, while Gabrielle II and Virgil run in pursuit.

A moment later, everything gathered back, they fall down, still shaking with laughter.

**GABRIELLE II**

Gods! It's been a long time  
since I laughed like that.

**VIRGIL**

*(smiling)*

It's so good  
to hear you laughing.

Gabrielle II stops laughing, and looks at Virgil, whose face is now red again, maybe not just from laughing.

**VIRGIL**

*(cont'd)*

I am happy to see that you've  
regained your old spirit.

**GABRIELLE II**

*(smiling)*

I'm happy too.

With the mood lightened, she takes one of the bowls, plunges it into the river, and begins to wash it.

Virgil follows, glancing sideways at her. Now he's frowning and swallows hard, as if preparing to make a difficult speech.

**VIRGIL**

*(hesitating)*

Gabrielle...

Without looking at him, Gabrielle II pauses for a moment, then she resumes her job.

**GABRIELLE II**

Yes?

**VIRGIL**

I...

*(sighing)*

Damn, I don't know how to  
tell you. I thought I had found  
the right words, but now...

Abandoning the bowl in the water, Gabrielle II turns to him, sitting down. She's nervous, but she tries not to show it.

**GABRIELLE II**

Tell me. Don't be afraid.

Encouraged by the expression in her eyes, which seems calm and attentive, Virgil swallows again, and stares at her with all the resolution of which he is capable.

**VIRGIL**

*(all in one breath)*

I'm in love with you, Gabrielle.  
I've never had the courage to say it  
before now, because...

*(pause)*

I didn't know how you, or Xena,  
would reacted to this thing. I know

that you have a strong bond, and  
I didn't want to get between you two.

Virgil takes his eyes from her, looking embarrassed at the water rushing along the shore.

**VIRGIL**

*(cont'd)*

When I left for Athens, I  
decided to forget you, to  
leave it all behind. But then...  
with everything that has happened...

*(staring back into her eyes)*

I could not stand the idea of knowing  
that you were lonely and unhappy, and  
I went back to tell you what I felt for you.  
But Xena was back at your side, and  
I didn't know what to do...

Almost without realizing, Gabrielle II raises her hand and reaches out toward Virgil's face, caressing him. Virgil interrupts the continuous stream of words, watching her anxiously.

**GABRIELLE II**

You're right when you say that between  
me and Xena, there's a strong bond, but  
Xena is Xena and I am me, Virgil. We can  
also share a same fate, but we are two  
separate entities, and each of us has  
the right to cultivate the feelings she  
desires, without feeling limited  
by our bond.

*(pause)*

And I'm sure that even Xena  
feels the same way.

Virgil listens to her with incredulous eyes, and now a faint hope makes its way into his eyes.

**VIRGIL**

*(smiling)*

Gabrielle... then...?

Gabrielle II slowly moves closer to him, and her mouth rests on his in a mild, gentle kiss. Eyes closed, they enjoy the contact for a long time. Then their lips separate, and with a smile, she lets Virgil, who is still overcome with joy, lay her down on the grass. As he is leaning over her, about to kiss her again, her eyes become thoughtful once more.

Virgil stares at her puzzled.



**VIRGIL**  
*(worryingly)*  
What?

**GABRIELLE II**  
You realize that I could be  
the same age as your mother, right?

With a laugh of relief, he leans over her once again.

**FADE TO:**

**EXT. FARM - DAY - NOW**

We return to the course of current events and find Ares II and the spirit of his twin from our world still face-to-face. Ares II is sitting on the steps of the porch, looking dismayed and depressed. Obviously, he cannot make sense of what his double has told him.

**ARES II**  
But how did you get here?

**SPIRIT OF ARES**  
*(shrugging)*  
Who knows? All this time locked  
in that stinking hole. I used all my  
remaining strength to release my  
spirit, to search that betrayer and  
her girlfriend, but all I managed to  
accomplish was spy on them in their...  
*(laughing bitterly)*  
...intimate moments, which incidentally they  
have a bit too often. Then suddenly...  
Bam! here I am. I'd like to think that some  
avenging force had compassion on  
me and gave me this opportunity.  
*(pause)*  
That's why you can't  
deny me your help.

**ARES II**  
*(reflecting, almost to himself)*  
Made harmless by the Eye of  
Hephaestus and buried alive in  
the tomb of your own temple.  
*(pause)*  
My Xena could  
never do this to me.

**SPIRIT OF ARES**

*(at low voice, angrily)*

Nor could mine!

To underscore the emphasis of his words, the spirit comes up and reaches his hand out to place it on the shoulders of the other, but his fingers pass through flesh and bones, and end up disappearing inside. Immediately, as if burnt, he withdraws his hand, grimacing.

**SPIRIT OF ARES**

*(cont'd)*

*(returning to a normal tone)*

Nor could mine.

I had plenty of time to think about it,  
and now I'm certain that the idea  
had to come from that blonde witch.  
Behind her pretty angel-face that one  
hides a treacherous mind. I guarantee it.  
And she must have convinced Xena  
to get me out of the way once and  
for all, to have her all to herself.

With a carefully studied, dramatic gesture, the spirit whips the air with his fist, furtively watching the reactions of his double. Ares II, with an intent expression and his brow furrowed by deep wrinkles, follows his words with attention and growing concern.

**ARES II**

*(anxiously)*

Then, in your world

Xena and Gabrielle are...

*(pause)*

...they stay together?

The spirit of Ares turns toward him, trying to hide a grin of triumph. Evidently he has touched a sore spot.

**SPIRIT OF ARES**

Yes, they are lovers, brother.  
Say it. You must learn to call  
your enemies by their name  
if you want to defeat them.

*(pause)*

Actually, they are much  
more than that.

The spirit approaches again to deliver the final blow, but this time without trying to touch Ares II.

**SPIRIT OF ARES**

*(cont'd)*

*(emphatically)*

Some time ago their  
union was consecrated in  
the marriage ceremony  
of the Amazons.

The astonishment in his twin's eyes is like a melody for the God of War.

**ARES II**

*(in horrified tones)*

*They got married?!?*

**SPIRIT OF ARES**

*(gravely)*

Right. Now you understand  
my situation?

For a long moment Ares II looks at the spirit, eyes wide open, as if facing an event that represents for him the most concealed and painfully repressed fears has temporarily deprived him of speech.

Then, with an effort, he regains control.

**ARES II**

And how could I help you?

**SPIRIT OF ARES**

*(smirking)*

Simple. Follow me into my  
world. Create a bridge between  
our two worlds. Once we get there,  
just destroy the rock sealing the tomb  
and bring my body back out. Then you  
can go home in the arms of your beloved,  
and I'll take care of the rest.

**ARES II**

And then, what are you going to do?

**SPIRIT OF ARES**

Well, naturally, I'll win Xena back.

*(pause)*

*(in a threatening tone)*

And I'll get rid of that  
blonde haired pain in  
the ass once and for all.

Ares II crosses his arms over his chest, staring at the spirit in an inquisitorial way.

**ARES II**

How? If you haven't done it  
so far, why should this time  
be any different?

**SPIRIT OF ARES**

*(chuckling ominously)*

First of all, because this time  
they don't expect it. They think  
I'm a prisoner forever, and when  
they recover from the surprise,  
Gabrielle will be dead and Xena  
under my power again.

**ARES II**

*(skeptically)*

If you kill Gabrielle, Xena  
will never come back to you.

**SPIRIT OF ARES**

*(angrily)*

Yes, she will. Up until now I have  
always taken the wrong approach,  
trying to get Xena back with words or  
cunning. Now, I'll get her back by force!

*(shouting)*

I'll force her to be my Warrior Princess!  
I'll do everything in my power to make her  
dark side re-emerge and bind her back to me!

**ARES II**

And if she prefers to die?  
Or forces you to kill her?

**SPIRIT OF ARES**

*(dryly)*

It won't happen.

Ares II looks at him with a veil of irony in his eyes.

**ARES II**

Don't you think you are  
a bit too optimistic, brother?

*(shaking his head)*

No, if you want my help, in return I want  
your word as God of War that you won't  
kill Xena and won't allow her to kill

herself, no matter what.

The spirit gazes upon him in silence. Then he raises his hand.

**SPIRIT OF ARES**

Okay. I give you my word.  
But why?

A sudden flash of intuition makes him smile with an air of indulgence .

**SPIRIT OF ARES**

*(cont'd)*

Come on, don't tell me you really believe that when someone dies, their twin in the other worlds dies too, do you? It's absurd.

**ARES II**

Maybe. But I don't want to take any risks.

**SPIRIT OF ARES**

*(laughing)*

Okay. Whatever you want.

*(smiling evilly)*

But why didn't you ask me to spare Gabrielle too?

Ares II looked at him without answering. Then he stands up.

**ARES II**

Enough talk.

If you want my help,  
let's move.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. TEMPLE OF ARES - UNDERGROUND - MACEDONIA - DAY**

The darkness of the temple is torn by a faint light at first, that quickly becomes more and more intense. Then the light widens to form a circle slightly oblong, and gets three-dimensionality, turning out as a sort of air vortex opening towards the stone floor. A moment later, two figures emerge, two figures strangely identical. One of the two crosses the circle trampling the ground with all the weight and might of a pair of sturdy legs, while the other floats just out, remaining suspended in the air, at a distance of no more than three inches from the floor, giving off a vague luminescence.

Ares II runs a hand over his forehead.

## ARES II

Damn. I heard of it, but I've never before faced inter-dimensional travel myself. I feel somewhat disoriented.

*(looking around)*

Is this the place you told me about?

## SPIRIT OF ARES

*(smiling exultantly)*

Precisely. Your task is almost over, my friend.

The spirit indicates a huge rock that tightly seals all four sides of what appears to be a rectangular shaped passage in the wall.

## SPIRIT OF ARES

*(cont'd)*

Now open that door of stone,  
enter and take me out of there.  
When I leave that hellish cage,  
I'll reunite my body and my spirit  
and regain full possession  
of my powers.

The double of the God of War raises his hands, preparing to strike. A moment later two fiery rays come out of the tips of his fingers with incredible power, shattering against the stone door that explodes outward, throwing rocks and debris through the two figures, the solid one and the transparent one, with the same harmless effect.

Now the passage in the wall is almost completely wide open, still obstructed only by a few sections of blackened stones in the spot where the god's lightning struck them.

Ares II starts to go towards the opening, but his twin stops him with a wave of his hand.

## SPIRIT OF ARES

Remember that inside the tomb  
you won't have your powers. The  
Eye of Hephaestus is a potent inhibitor  
of every faculty divine or magical. So,  
just take my body and come back.

Simply responding with a nod, the other god enters the wide opening, stepping over fragments of rock still smoking, to re-emerge a few moments later, holding the lifeless body of Ares in his arms. After a few steps, he lays the body gently against the opposite wall.

The spirit observes avidly the whole scene. Then, without waiting, he lies on his material body, literally disappearing inside. For a moment, the unconscious body of the God of War is pervaded by the soft glow of his vital spirit, then Ares opens his eyes and gets to his feet, smiling, and holds out his arm to his twin.

**ARES**

I don't know how to thank you, my friend.  
Today you've rendered me a great service.

**ARES II**

*(smiling)*

How could I not? You were smart  
to gather all your strength to project  
your spirit out of here, despite the Eye.

He turns to the dark opening, turning his back on Ares.

**ARES II**

*(cont'd)*

I don't know if I would be able...

Suddenly, a bolt of lightning strikes him in the back, knocking him against the rock wall with all his weight, and the twin of Ares glides slowly to the ground, unconscious.

Towering over him with his arms folded across his chest, blue sparks still crackling in his hands, the God of War stares at him with a satisfied smile.

**ARES**

You know, I really hope not.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. FARM - DAY - SHORTLY AFTER**

With the sound of rushing air, the vortex closes on itself, giving way only to the clear sky of a spring morning, and an Ares totally pleased with himself, gazing around in his new world.

**ARES**

Well, well. Since in these parts  
the role of God of War is  
suddenly vacant, I think  
I'll take it for myself.  
*(pause)*  
With all the benefits.

Ares explodes in a large and prolonged laugh, as we...

**FADE OUT.**

**END OF ACT ONE**

## ACT TWO

FADE IN:

### INT. PALACE OF KING CREON - BANQUET ROOM - EVENING

In the great hall in the palace of King Creon, Xena is sitting comfortably in one of the seats of honor for the upcoming feast. She notes, with an unmistakable ironic light in her eyes, Gabrielle approaching at a slightly lame pace.

#### GABRIELLE

*(pointing her finger at Xena)*

Just you dare to issue the  
slightest semblance of a giggle  
and I won't speak or look at you  
for a whole month, Xena.

*(pause)*

*(smirking maliciously)*

Including *all the rest*, of course.

Gabrielle sits by Xena. Xena looks at her with an expression of innocence.

#### XENA

Why should I laugh?  
After all, I wasn't even there  
when you fell to the ground three  
times from the height of your new boots.

Xena's lips arch slightly upward at the corners. Gabrielle jerks her head quickly to glare at her, which makes Xena hastily conceal all traces of fun from her face, at once assuming a grave and serious pose.

#### GABRIELLE

*(coldly)*

My beautiful new boots  
*(pronouncing each word separately)*  
have-absolutely-nothing-to do-with it.

Gabrielle eyes the face of her partner with suspicion in search of a small sign of mockery, but not founding any she continues.

#### GABRIELLE

*(cont'd)*

I just have to get used  
to them. I'm sure that  
in a couple of days,  
I'll run like the wind.



**XENA**

*(muttering in a low voice)*

Assuming that you manage to slip  
them on with that swollen ankle.

Gabrielle immediately turns back toward Xena with blazing eyes, but Xena seems suddenly very interested in a fold of the cloth that covers the long table.

**GABRIELLE**

I heard you, you know?

You taught me to listen to *the sounds*  
*behind the sounds*, and now you expect me  
not to understand that mumbling of yours a few  
inches away?!? My ankle is fine! I immediately  
immersed it in icy water, and by tomorrow  
morning I won't have anymore problems.

**KING CREON**

*(VO)*

Gabrielle!

The sudden call startles the two women. They look with alarmed expressions at the threshold of the great hall, where old King Creon, in a state of visible anxiety, is advancing towards them, followed by a servant intent on holding the train of his ermine cloak.

**KING CREON**

*(cont'd)*

I learned of the misfortune that  
you suffered within my palace,  
my dear friend. I hope it didn't  
cause you serious detriment.

**GABRIELLE**

*(confused)*

Serious detr...?

For a moment, Gabrielle looks puzzled, staring at the concerned sovereign, then her face lights up with a smile.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

*(smiling)*

Oh, but of course not, King Creon.  
I assure you that it was nothing, just  
a trifle, ridiculously exaggerated  
by *rumors*.

Her eyes dart towards Xena, still very busy smoothing the folds of the rich cloth.

**KING CREON**

*(smiling)*

Oh, I'm so glad to hear that.  
I would not want you to be  
unable to ride tomorrow.

**GABRIELLE**

Ride?

Gabrielle's gaze shifts questioningly between Creon and Xena.

**XENA**

*(under her breath)*

Uh, yeah. I didn't have time to tell you  
yet. King Creon wants Polynices  
and Eteocles to escort us  
on horseback to visit the  
sights of the kingdom.

Gabrielle's head appears mounted on ball bearings, based on the speed with which she looks from Xena to King Creon, searching for an appropriate answer, a smile frozen on her face.

**GABRIELLE**

Oh well, Your Majesty...  
as I said, my ankle is not  
so bad, but... maybe... uhm...  
to put it through such an effort so soon...

**KING CREON**

*(sympathetically)*

I see, I see, but don't be afraid, my  
dear. My sons will be delighted  
to carry you in their arms  
whenever you need it.

Xena pokes Gabrielle in the side, and Gabrielle, heroically maintaining her lips in a radiant smile, responds with a stronger poke of the elbow in Xena's side, taking satisfaction in the her stifled groan.

**KING CREON**

*(cont'd)*

Now you must excuse me,  
my friends, but matters of the  
kingdom and tonight's banquet  
require my attention, so I'm forced  
to leave you. I look forward  
to seeing you this evening.

King Creon turns and leaves the room, walking with short and hurried steps, followed by the

servant still attached to his ermine.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Xena and Gabrielle open the door to their room and enter. In the distance, the peals, the laughter and the music of the festival are audible. The candles are already lit and Xena jumps on the big four-poster bed, opening her mouth in a big yawn while stretching, clearly pleased by the softness of the mattress.

**GABRIELLE**

*(reflecting)*

Hmm, do you think  
I exaggerated?

**XENA**

*(smiling mischievously)*

When exactly? When you  
presented me to everyone as  
your Amazon wife, or when you  
almost overturned my chair  
to kiss me on the mouth  
before King Creon?

**GABRIELLE**

*(grimacing)*

A bit too much, huh?

Gabrielle shrugs, and goes to lie down on the bed next to Xena.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

Oh well, they probably thought I  
was drunk. Which is also true.

*(giggling)*

But I wanted to clarify the  
issue with him for good.

**XENA**

Don't worry. I think he  
got the point this time.

**GABRIELLE**

So you think that this will  
save us the trouble of having  
to invent an excuse to avoid  
the trip with his sons tomorrow?

Gabrielle sits up, leaning on one elbow and looks at Xena hopefully. Xena gets up and begins to get out of her clothes.

**XENA**

I don't know. I guess  
it depends on how drunk  
they thought you were.

Gabrielle gets up, undressing for the night.

**GABRIELLE**

You mean they might think  
I made everything up?

**XENA**

*(smiling)*

Well, after all, you are a bard.  
Inventing stories is your job.

Freed of her last piece of leather clothing, Xena slips quickly under the sheets. A moment later Gabrielle joins her, immediately cuddling up against her.

**GABRIELLE**

If so, I'll give them  
a demonstration even  
more radical.

**XENA**

Yes, but try to be less  
impetuous. Or at least  
warn me next time.

**GABRIELLE**

*(smiling)*

Don't tell me that I caught you  
by surprise, Warrior Princess?  
I thought no one was able to do that.

Xena raises her head to lay a quick kiss on Gabrielle's hair.

**XENA**

Apparently nobody but you,  
little pest. But now let's  
sleep. We both need  
a good rest.

*(pause)*

How's your ankle?

**GABRIELLE**  
*(closing her eyes)*  
Fine. I even forgot  
it was twisted.

A few moments later, the two women are quietly asleep, in each other's arms.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF ATHENS - HOUSE OF GABRIELLE II - SUNSET**

A tall, slender young man is intent on letting the last stroke of ax fall on a sturdy trunk of wood that he's reducing into logs, when something catches his eyes, and his arms hang in midair.

**XENA II**  
*(VO)*  
Virgil!

**VIRGIL**  
*(happily)*  
Xena!

Virgil drops the ax and goes up to Xena II who is advancing toward him, with a big smile, holding Argo by the bridle.

**XENA II AND VIRGIL**  
*(together)*  
How are you?

The two burst out laughing simultaneously and vigorously shake forearms.

**VIRGIL**  
Fine, I guess.  
Gabrielle is inside  
waiting for you. Since  
she got your message,  
she's been looking forward  
to seeing you again.  
It's been long time, huh?

**XENA II**  
Four months and twenty days,  
but who's counting?  
*(pause)*  
How's the pregnancy going?

**VIRGIL**  
*(shrugging)*  
That's fine too.

But it's impossible to reason with her  
since the midwife ordered her  
to take it easy and to stay in  
bed as much as possible.

**XENA II**  
*(concerned)*  
How come?

**VIRGIL**  
*(smiling)*  
Nothing serious, just the usual  
problems of pregnant women at this  
stage. Restless sleep, mood swings.  
The midwife advised it only as a precaution.  
But you know her... there's no way to hold her down,  
and now her condition doesn't allow her  
to do the things she did before.

**XENA II**  
*(smiling sympathetically)*  
It must be hell for her.

**VIRGIL**  
*(laughing)*  
For her and for me.  
Come on, come inside.  
Let's not keep her waiting.

As Virgil makes his way towards the entrance of the house, Xena II leads Argo to the fence bordering the small property, tying the reins to a stake.

**XENA II**  
*(whispering)*  
Wait for me here, girl.  
I'll come back to settle you  
in for the night.

Argo neighs, shaking her head up and down, as if nodding, and begins to nibble the grass at her feet. Xena II pats her mantle, then she turns and goes back to Virgil who's holding the door open.

**CUT TO:**

## **INT. HOUSE OF GABRIELLE II - SUNSET**

Xena II has crossed the threshold, when she finds herself immediately pounced upon by about 140 pounds, in a nightgown, and suddenly hanging to her by the neck.

**GABRIELLE II**

*(almost shouting)*

Xena! Finally!  
Oh, Gods of Olympus,  
I can't believe it!

Gabrielle II begins to cover her face with kisses, but Xena II grabs her by her waist, and cautiously moves her away.

**XENA II**

*(surprised, almost breathless)*

Gabr... Gabrielle, calm down.  
You can hurt yourself. Remember?  
I'm wearing armor.

Xena II caresses the very prominent belly of her friend with one hand. Virgil immediately tries to get in the middle of them.

**VIRGIL**

Love, why are you standing?  
You know what the midwife said.

**GABRIELLE II**

*(snapping)*

To hell with her,  
and with you!

**XENA II**

*(shocked)*

Gabrielle!

Xena II looks at her, puzzled and vaguely worried. Gabrielle II looks away, in embarrassment.

**GABRIELLE II**

*(muttering)*

I'm sorry, Virgil. But I can't stand  
being locked up here anymore,  
or being in that damn bed either.

Virgil is also evidently a bit surprised by the reaction, but he recovers immediately and smiles.

**VIRGIL**

It's nothing, darling.  
Sit here, if you prefer.

Virgil escorts her slowly to a chair beside the crackling fireplace, and Gabrielle II sits down quietly.

**VIRGIL**

*(cont'd)*

Just don't overdo it.  
Now I'm going back to work.  
Xena, will you take care of her?

**XENA II**

Sure.

**VIRGIL**

Then I leave you, girls. You  
have a lot to catch up on, I guess.

With one last smile, Virgil leaves, closing the door behind him.

Left alone, the two women look at each other without speaking, as if a slight embarrassment were established between them. Then, suddenly, Gabrielle II's eyes cloud with tears and a moment later she bursts into sobs. Instantly forgetting any impression of discomfort, Xena II runs up to her and kneels beside her, gathering her in her arms.

**XENA II**

Hey, what's up?  
What's happening?

But Gabrielle II is shaken by tears and fails to respond.

**XENA II**

*(cont'd)*

*(cautiously)*

Is there a problem  
with Virgil?

Gabrielle II suddenly raises her face bathed in tears and looks at her.

**GABRIELLE II**

*(emphatically)*

No.

*(pause)*

*(more calmly, swallowing)*

No. Virgil is an angel. He's the  
best man a woman could ever  
hope to have close to her.

*(sighing)*

Oh, damn! I'm sorry, I'm sorry.  
We haven't seen each other for months,  
and instead of being happy, I welcome  
you this way... But it's just this damn  
pregnancy. I'm worn out.



As suddenly as she had burst into tears, Gabrielle II smiles again, wiping her eyes with her hand.

**GABRIELLE II**

*(cont'd)*

But now that you're here,  
I don't want to think about it.

She leans toward Xena II, taking her hands in her own.

**GABRIELLE II**

*(cont'd)*

Tell me about yourself.  
How have you spent these  
months? Did you miss me?

**XENA II**

Every moment.

Gabrielle II eyes her with a twinkle in her eyes.

**GABRIELLE II**

*(smiling maliciously)*

Hmm...

every *single* moment?

**XENA II**

*(frowning)*

What do you mean?

**GABRIELLE II**

*(offhandedly)*

You know, while  
your charming God  
of War holds you in his  
strong arms, I doubt...

**XENA II**

*(gaping)*

Gabrielle!

**GABRIELLE II**

*(ignoring her)*

...you're even able  
to remember my name.

*(laughing)*

Really! You're blushing  
like a schoolgirl! Come on,  
Xena, if you're in love, you can

tell me. By now, I've gotten used to the idea of you and Ares staying together. It doesn't upset me anymore.

With her face truly red with embarrassment, Xena II stands up, averting her eyes from hers.

**XENA II**

What makes you think I'm in love?

**GABRIELLE II**

Well, I know you've been dating him more or less regularly since Virgil and I got married, and it's already been a long time now, more than a year. And then...

Gabrielle II stops. Xena II turns to look at her.

**XENA II**

And then what?

Gabrielle II hesitates a moment as if she's about to say something else. Then a hint of sadness, which seemed to resurface in her eyes for a fraction of a second, disappears, and she smiles again.

**GABRIELLE II**

...if you weren't in love, you wouldn't have blushed that way.

Xena II nods, and reaches out, stroking her friend's hair.

**XENA II**

You never miss a thing, do you?

Gabrielle II takes her hand, holding it in hers for a moment before Xena II pulls away and turns to look out the window blankly.

**XENA II**

*(cont'd)*

But the truth is that I don't know exactly what I feel.

*(pause)*

What I can *allow myself* to feel.

Gabrielle II listens in silence.

**XENA II**

*(cont'd)*

My relationship with Ares has always been rather complicated, you know, and now even if he seems to have changed, *really* changed, I can't help but think that he's still the same God of War, and if I let myself get too involved in this story...

Xena II turns and goes to kneel again beside Gabrielle II, looking into her eyes.

**XENA II**

*(cont'd)*

...what would I do, if he returned to his old habits?

**GABRIELLE II**

Why should he, if, as you say, he's changed?

Xena II looks at her again for a moment, then looks down and shakes her head, without answering. Gabrielle II, sighing, takes Xena II's face in her hands and forces her to look up.

**GABRIELLE II**

*(cont'd)*

Look, Xena.

*(pause)*

I never thought I would say these words, but in my opinion, *Ares really loves you*. Now that he's conquered you, becoming the man you want, I doubt he would risk losing you again.

The two women look each other for a long moment, eye to eye. Then Xena II leans toward Gabrielle II kissing her lightly on the forehead.

**XENA II**

*(with a melancholy smile)*

You know, he thinks you can't stand him.

**GABRIELLE II**

*(sniffing)*

He's right. It's better if he stays away from me.

She throws her arms around Xena II's neck, crying and laughing simultaneously.

**GABRIELLE II**  
*(cont'd)*  
Damn pregnancy!

**CUT TO:**

**INT. UNKNOWN PLACE - XENA'S DREAMSCAPE**

Xena is walking along a dark corridor. In one hand she holds a torch that barely illuminates the engravings and pictures on the wall. The other hand holds the hilt of a sword with the tip of the blade pointing towards the dark. We can hear her constant heartbeat.

Suddenly, the torch lights up the wall at the end of the long corridor. In the middle of this wall, there is an entrance to another room, but it is closed and hermetically blocked with boulders and large stones embedded into each other.

The eyes of Xena scan every corner of that seemingly impenetrable passage, anxiety rising inside her, realizing where she is.

Then suddenly a voice echoes in her ears, making her jump with recognition.

**VOICE**  
*(VO)*  
**HELP ME!**

**CUT TO:**

**INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Xena and Gabrielle's room in the palace of King Creon is almost completely dark, apart from the faint light of a candle beside the bed. Suddenly there is a stifled groan, followed by a cry of surprise, a dull thud and a series of curses, apparently coming from the floor.

Xena leans her face over the edge of the bed, and pulls back immediately when a furious Gabrielle suddenly stands up in front of her like a jack-in-the-box.

**GABRIELLE**  
Xena! Have you gone crazy?!?  
The other night you nearly broke  
my nose with a headbutt!  
Now you throw me off bed!  
If you don't want to sleep with...

Gabrielle stops, watching her more closely. Xena looks bewildered, and gazes at her as if she can't really see her. Immediately placated, Gabrielle goes back to bed and takes Xena's face in her hands.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

But what's the matter?  
What's happening?  
You don't feel well?

At those questions, Xena seems to come to her senses, but that alarming expression remains on her face, like a shadow behind her eyes.

**XENA**

*(very softly)*

I had a dream...

**GABRIELLE**

A dream? A nightmare,  
I'd say. And what was it about?  
Do you remember? From the  
way you reacted, it must  
have been terrible.

Xena is silent for a moment, still staring at her, but it's as if her gaze went right through Gabrielle to look at something much farther away.

**XENA**

*(hesitating)*

I... think there's something  
I have to tell you.

**GABRIELLE**

*(getting frightened)*

What? Stop looking at me like  
that, please. You're scaring me.

Gabrielle takes a piece of cloth to wipe Xena's forehead running with sweat.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

Look at yourself. You're drenched.  
Now are you ready to explain  
to me what's going on?

Xena slowly moves back to rest against the sturdy wooden headboard, and Gabrielle follows her on her knees, holding her by the hand.

**XENA**

Do you... do you remember  
during these past few days, I told  
you that I felt like someone  
was watching us?

**GABRIELLE**

Sure. But there was no one.  
You checked several  
times yourself.

**XENA**

Yet I had an eerie feeling,  
something I didn't want  
to admit even to myself.  
*(pause)*  
And then there was that voice...

**GABRIELLE**

*(puzzled)*  
The one you heard  
to cry *no*? You said  
you didn't recognized it.

**XENA**

*(lowering her eyes)*  
I lied.

**GABRIELLE**

*(surprised)*  
You lied?!? You mean  
you knew whose it was,  
and you didn't tell me?

**XENA**

*(angrily)*  
I mean I hoped  
stupidly to be wrong!

Xena beats her fists on the mattress.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*  
I was an idiot to ignore my  
instincts, only to have a  
few moments of peace.  
*(bitterly)*  
By now I should have learned that  
peace and tranquillity are not for me.

**GABRIELLE**

Wait. I still don't understand.  
So whose voice was it? And  
what made you jump like

that a few minutes ago?

Xena hesitates for a long moment, then she raises her head, and looks at Gabrielle.

**XENA**

Ares'.

**GABRIELLE**

*(bewildered)*

Ares?!?

*(pause)*

No. It's impossible.  
You must be mistaken.

**XENA**

Same things I repeated  
to myself for days.

Xena gently frees her hand from Gabrielle's, and sits on the edge of the bed.

**GABRIELLE**

But Ares is buried in the  
tomb under his temple in  
Macedonia! The Eye of  
Hephaestus holds him  
prisoner! He's without  
power! He can't  
free himself!

**XENA**

Gabrielle, do you think  
I don't know that?

Xena gets up, turning to face Gabrielle.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

It was my idea to use  
the Eye to neutralize him forever,  
so imagine how I felt when I got the  
same sensations I used to get when  
he was about to show himself.

**GABRIELLE**

That's why you wandered  
around our camps at night.

**XENA**

If it had really been him, seeing me alone

would have made him reveal himself.

*(pause)*

But nothing ever happened, and every time, I convinced myself – I wanted to convince myself – it was only the power of suggestion. And when I heard the voice, even though I recognized it, I stubbornly continued to deny it.

**GABRIELLE**

*(in a tone of reproach)*

And you didn't tell me anything.

**XENA**

*(shrugging)*

If it was only my impression, there was no reason to worry you too. Then nothing happened for several days, and I really started to believe that I had imagined everything.

**GABRIELLE**

And what about the dream you had tonight?

Xena turns and heads toward the large window, drawing aside the curtain, and leaning her hands on the railing.

**XENA**

I was in the temple of Ares in Macedonia. I could recognize the surroundings, the corridor, despite the darkness, and I knew where I was going. I tried to turn back, but something drove me ahead, until I saw the entrance of the tomb, and...

Xena interrupts, and Gabrielle plies her impatiently.

**GABRIELLE**

And...?

**XENA**

The stone blocked it yet.

Gabrielle sighs with relief. Xena turns to her.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

But it was shattered, Gabrielle.



It was no longer a single, solid rock sealing the passage, but many smaller boulders wedged between them.

Xena's words remain suspended in the air for long moments, as Gabrielle tries to reconcile with their meaning.

**GABRIELLE**

You mean as if it had exploded and then was hastily reconstructed?

**XENA**

Exactly.

*(pause)*

And that's not all.

Xena turns back to the window, watching the starry sky above her. Gabrielle waits in silence.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

Just before I woke, I heard his voice again, clearly as I hear yours. He shouted *help me*.

**GABRIELLE**

*(puzzled)*

Help me?

**XENA**

Right.

Silence reigns a long time in the room, as the two women stare at each other, searching for an explanation. Then Gabrielle gets out of bed and approaches her, placing her hand on Xena's arm.

**GABRIELLE**

Listen, Xena. I want to keep believing that you've only suffered a series of impressions due to fatigue...

**XENA**

*(sighing)*

Gabrielle...

**GABRIELLE**

Let me speak, please.

*(pause)*

But even if it wasn't the case

– and note that I said *if* –  
and Ares had really managed  
to escape somehow from his prison,  
he wouldn't settle for these tricks.  
He would have already shown himself.  
Don't you think?

**XENA**

But the shattered door...

**GABRIELLE**

*(getting heated)*

It was only in your dream, Xena!  
You don't know that it really happened!

*(pause)*

And you're not doing what's going  
through that head of yours  
to set your mind at ease.

**XENA**

And what would that be?

**GABRIELLE**

Run to Macedonia  
to check it out  
*(almost furiously)*

Try to deny that you're  
thinking just that!

**XENA**

I must know if something  
has happened, Gabrielle.

**GABRIELLE**

*(nodding)*

Of course. Sure.

I should have known.

**XENA**

What?

**GABRIELLE**

He still has influence over you.

Xena stares at Gabrielle. She can't decide whether to be more surprised or angry.

**XENA**

Do you realize what you're saying?!?  
I buried him in that grave!

For you! For us!

**GABRIELLE**

*(controlling herself with difficulty)*  
And you've never forgiven yourself.  
Admit it. I watched you very closely  
when the tomb closed on him. You had  
an expression of sorrow in your eyes.

Xena shakes her head, looking at Gabrielle with pity.

**XENA**

You can't understand, Gabrielle.  
Ares was a cunning bastard and he  
often made my life a hell, but for better or  
for worse, he was part of it. And sometimes  
he could also surprise me with unexpected  
outbreaks of humanity.

Xena reaches out to touch her, but Gabrielle turns abruptly, walking away.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

Did you expect me to bury him  
forever, without batting an eyelash?  
*(shouting)*

He renounced his immortality  
to save you and Eve!

**GABRIELLE**

*(shouting)*

Because if he hadn't,  
he would have lost you. He  
boldly confessed it to me.

*(ironically)*

Well, you were quick to give  
it back to him, in any case.

**XENA**

To maintain the balance in  
the world, there must be  
a God of War!

**GABRIELLE**

Ah, ah. Right, great excuse.  
Then how did we get by all  
these years without him?

Gabrielle looks at Xena, putting her hands on her hips defiantly. Xena is flabbergasted for a

moment, as if the question has taken her by surprise.

**XENA**

*(doubtfully)*

Well, I suppose that it's enough that he exists as an entity and having possession of his powers, even if he can't use them.

**GABRIELLE**

*(smirking ironically)*

You've got an answer for everything, huh? Then answer this, didn't you think it could be a trick?

**XENA**

*(puzzled)*

A trick?

**GABRIELLE**

Yeah. Maybe he's just trying to lure you there to free him.

**XENA**

If Ares is still locked in there, he has no power to do something like that.

**GABRIELLE**

*(raising her voice)*

He's a god! How do you know what his limits are?

**XENA**

In any case, do you think I'm so stupid to actually free him?

Gabrielle is really furious now, and spreads her arms in exasperation.

**GABRIELLE**

*(shouting)*

*How should I know?!?*

I've never been able to calculate your level of stupidity, when he hangs around you!

Gabrielle sees the hurt look in Xena's eyes, and she would probably take her words back, but the anger she feels is too strong. Instead, she turns away, crossing her arms over her chest.

Xena stares at Gabrielle for a long time, then slowly goes to her things and starts getting dressed.

Hearing her movements, Gabrielle turns to Xena.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

What are you doing?

**XENA**

I'm leaving.

Xena ends to tie the buckles on her armor calmly.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

I'll meet you down at the  
stables in fifteen minutes.

*(pause)*

If you're not be there

I'll go alone.

Having fixed the scabbard with the sword on her back, Xena takes her bag and leaves without looking back.

**CUT TO:**

## **INT. STABLES - NIGHT**

It's still dark, but a faint glimmer on the horizon testifies of a dawn not too far away. Running, Gabrielle enters the stables, dragging her hastily packed bag. The left side of the big double doors is open, and her precipitous arrival frightens the horses tied in their stalls. They react by whinnying and stamping the ground with their hooves.

Gabrielle's eyes immediately run to Argo's stall, but the ring where the reins had been secured hangs empty from the wall. The fence where Xena had put the saddle is empty as well. There's no trace of the horse.

With a groan of disappointment, Gabrielle drops her bag, staring at the sadly empty stall. A voice rings out behind her.

**XENA**

*(VO)*

So, will you hurry up?  
The fifteen minutes I gave  
you ran out long ago.

Gabrielle spins around and in front of her, partially hidden by the open half of the double

doors, she sees Argo, already saddled and ready to leave, and Xena, leaning lazily against the wall, smiling slightly.

**GABRIELLE**

*(with a smile of relief)*  
You waited for me.

Xena advances toward Gabrielle, holding the reins of Argo.

**XENA**

Only because I know that you have  
a poor perception of time.

Gabrielle meets Xena halfway, hugging her tightly.

**GABRIELLE**

Forgive me, please.  
I didn't want to tell you  
those bad things.

Xena lifts her chin and lays a kiss on Gabrielle's forehead.

**XENA**

*(giggling)*  
Never mind. I've been told  
worse. It's normal that you  
are a little upset about this thing.  
*(pause)*  
And you may not be entirely in the wrong.

**GABRIELLE**

About what?

**XENA**

*(sighing)*  
Well, either that it could be  
only a suggestion...  
*(pause)*  
or it can be really  
a trick of Ares.

**GABRIELLE**

But I suppose that won't  
stop us, huh? We'll go  
anyway to verify that  
your fears have not  
come true.

**XENA**

Yeah. We have no choice.

**GABRIELLE**

Promise me that you  
won't do anything...

Gabrielle hesitates.

**XENA**

*(smiling)*  
Stupid?

**GABRIELLE**

*(staring at her seriously)*  
Rash. That if we find that  
damn tomb sealed, you won't  
run to open it, to check  
if Ares is still inside.

Xena stares at her very seriously.

**XENA**

I can't promise anything, Gabrielle.  
I'll see when we get there, depending  
on the situation that we find. I'll leave  
everything exactly as it is as long as  
I see no reason to do the contrary,  
that's all I can guarantee you.

*(pause)*

I made a decision a few years ago.  
It was a deliberate decision and nothing  
has or will make me change my mind.

Gabrielle and Xena look at each other for a long moment. Then Gabrielle frees herself from the hug.

**GABRIELLE**

Okay.  
So let's get going.

Gabrielle runs to the fence where her horse is, saddles it, and quickly secures her bag to the knob, deftly leaping on the horse's back and reaching Xena who's ready to go.

**XENA**

*(smiling)*  
I think that King Creon  
will be very disappointed when  
he doesn't find us tomorrow morning.

**GABRIELLE**

*(giggling)*

This is the only positive side to this story. Anyway, I left him a message to apologize. I think he's going to have to find other company for his sons.

And spurring their horses, the two women disappear, galloping into the dark.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. HOUSE OF GABRIELLE II - NIGHT**

Xena II walks out from the house, as silently as possible, closing the door behind her. The house is dark. She sees Virgil coming toward her with a hoe in his hand. The greeting of the young man turns into a huge yawn. Both are smiling, crossing paths on the small walkway.

**XENA II**

You look destroyed.  
Are you sure you don't  
need help?

**VIRGIL**

Don't worry about it.  
I'm fine. Besides you're  
helping already. Knowing  
you're with Gabrielle is very  
reassuring. At least I don't have  
to run and check on her every minute.

**XENA II**

Unfortunately I'll only be here a few  
days. But I will try to come back and  
see the two of you soon. I won't let  
so much time go by anymore.

**VIRGIL**

Come anytime you want.  
You're family.  
*(pause)*  
Are you sure you want to go  
sleep in the barn? The  
house isn't big, but...

**XENA II**

*(smiling)*

Oh, I'll be fine. I've slept in much  
worse places, I can assure you.



**VIRGIL**

Whatever you want.  
See you tomorrow, then.

**XENA II**

See you tomorrow.

They part with a nod, and as Virgil enters the house, Xena II goes towards the dark silhouette of the barn.

She's about to enter, pushing one of the double doors, when her hand freezes. The muscles tense. Sharpening all her senses almost automatically, Xena II looks around, eyes and ears wide open. She leaves the barn door and comes back a few steps, still turning her head from side to side, as if trying to find something she knows is there, but can't see.

**XENA II**

*(puzzled)*

Ares? Is that you?

No response. The yard is lit up by a crescent moon just risen. The barn and the house in the background are dark and silent.

Xena turns around once again, undecided, then with a shrug, goes back toward the barn.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. BARN - NIGHT**

Xena II enters and closes the great door behind her. Stretching, she moves toward the wooden staircase leading to the loft. She climbs, reaches the top, begins to take off the sword and undo the clasps of her armor. She yawns as she's untying her hair. She runs her fingers through it and lies down on the comfortable bed of straw piled in one corner.

Her gaze is lost in memories and thoughts. She stares at the ceiling a short distance away without actually seeing it. Gabrielle II's voice seems to echo in her ears.

**VOICE OF GABRIELLE II**

*(VO)*

*If you're in love, you can tell me.  
I'm used to the idea of Ares  
and you staying together now.  
It doesn't upset me anymore.*

**XENA II**

*(sighing, to herself)*

I wish I could  
believe you, Gabrielle.

With another sigh, Xena II turns on her side. Through the opening of the loft doors, slightly ajar, she looks at the stars that one by one are lighting the night sky.

**VOICE OF XENA II**

*(VO)*

*That bunch up there  
looks like a big dipper.*

**VOICE OF GABRIELLE II**

*(VO)*

*A dipper? It looks...  
(giggling)  
it looks like a bear to me.*

**VOICE OF XENA II**

*(VO)*

*A bear?  
How do you get a bear?*

Xena II smiles at the memory, but a tear runs down her cheek. She wipes it with a finger.

**XENA II**

*(to herself)*

*You were right, Gabrielle.  
It really looks like a great bear.*

With a melancholy smile, Xena II closes her eyes and lets sleep take hold of her.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. BARN - NIGHT**

A blue flash lights up the night for a split second, and Ares appears in the center of the courtyard in front of the barn. The God of War raises his head, looking at the loft doors high up in the wall of the barn, where Xena is sleeping.

**ARES**

*(quietly)*

*That was close. No matter which world  
you're in, you're always able to feel my  
presence, aren't you, Warrior Princess?  
But this is not the time nor the place for us  
to meet. I'll wait for you in the place where my  
idiot twin would have. And when you get there,  
you'll find a very different God of War,  
and you'll be mine.*

*(pause)*

*And this time I won't allow anything or  
anyone to come between us, Xena.*

Anything or *anyone*.

With an evil smile, Ares disappears in another blue flash.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. BARN - NIGHT**

With a jolt, Xena II wakes up, looking around confused and agitated. She has no idea what has woken her up, but she rises on one elbow to look down from the opening into the courtyard. It seems deserted.

With a restless look, Xena lies back down, but this time she keeps her eyes open.

**FADE OUT.**

**END OF ACT TWO**

## ACT THREE

FADE IN:

### EXT. TEMPLE OF ARES - MACEDONIA - DAY

Xena and Gabrielle arrive at the mouth of a gorge on horseback. Beyond the rocky wall to their right, the visible part of a temple suddenly appears. Xena pulls on the reins of Argo, who stops abruptly. Gabrielle also stops her horse.

**XENA**

Here's the temple.

Xena looks around, then nods silently to Gabrielle, and the two women dismount.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

Let's leave the horses here,  
and approach with caution.

Leading them by the bridles, Xena and Gabrielle direct the horses to a few lonely trees, which seem to have grown almost accidentally in that desolate area. Once the beasts are tied to the trunks, the women proceed cautiously, pressing their bodies to the rocks, to avoid the eyes of any possible sentinel, but at the same time the maneuver prevents them from seeing the building in its entirety.

Gabrielle leans out from behind Xena to scrutinize the temple, still about two hundred yards away.

**GABRIELLE**

*(whispering)*

I don't think there's anyone  
guarding the place.

**XENA**

*(whispering)*

No. But let's try to stay  
hidden as much as possible.  
It's better to approach from behind.

Although the facade of the temple remains largely invisible from their vantage point, the apparent state of abandonment of the temple, makes it quite unlikely that anyone takes care of it anymore. The golden friezes and the white marble that once adorned the walls seem only a distant memory, as if decades had passed since the day Ares rebuilt it in all its splendor.

Moving with extreme circumspection, Xena and Gabrielle continue to advance, a combination of sidling along the rocks and creeping over each small depression along their way. At last, they reach the steps at the back of the temple, where tufts of grass, yellowed by the sun,

sprout from the interstices between the stones.

Keeping silent, the two women quickly climb the short staircase, continuing their route along the walls until they reach the last corner that still separates them from the front of the temple, and so, their last chance to remain hidden for a possible sentinel. Then, slowly Xena leans her head out. Behind her, Gabrielle holds her breath, ready for anything. A moment later, when Xena abandons the precarious shelter, Gabrielle let's out a sigh of relief and motions to follow.

And a moment later, they are in front of the door of the temple.

**GABRIELLE**

Everything seems quiet.

**XENA**

If it really is,  
we'll find out shortly.

Xena leans against the door, pushing with all her strength, and the door begins to open inwards.

Immediately, a suffocating smell of humidity rushes out. Holding their noses and exchanging a meaningful glance, the warrior and the bard enter.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. TEMPLE OF ARES - DAY**

In the dim light coming through the open door, the inside of the temple appears in all the squalor of abandonment. Cobwebs hang everywhere, including from the statues and the votive altars, where worshippers now long-gone once left their offerings. The dust is deposited like a mantle on every surface. Little footsteps heard in the darkest corners along the walls testify to the fact that they are not the only living creatures in the place.

**GABRIELLE**

Ew. I hate rats.

**XENA**

Me too, but don't worry  
about them now. Follow me.

Xena grabs Gabrielle's hand and together they penetrate the darkness, in the sound of the little paws on the run.

**CUT TO:**

## INT. UNDERGROUND - DAY

Standing side by side, motionless, Xena and Gabrielle hold two lit torches taken from the metal supports located along the walls. They stare at the entrance of the tomb, where stones and boulders of all sizes – from a size easily held in the palm of a hand to ones large enough to require the combined efforts of at least two people to remove them – lie piled upon one another, covering the entire doorway, as if someone had fun interlocking them, one by one, with the blows of a hammer in order to fill every little crack in the meaningless mosaic.

**XENA**

So? You think  
this is a good enough  
reason to open it?

**GABRIELLE**

Is this the way it was  
in your dream?

**XENA**

In my *dreams*.

Gabrielle turns her head to look at Xena.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

In these last days,  
I dreamt of it every single  
time I fell asleep, even  
if only for a few moments.

**GABRIELLE**

You didn't mention anything about it.

**XENA**

*(shrugging)*

There was no point.  
Every time it was the same dream,  
some kind of message repeated  
over and over in my mind.  
It was useless to keep  
upsetting you.

**GABRIELLE**

But there's still a chance  
that it could be a trick  
to convince you  
that he has fled.

**XENA**

*(shaking her head)*

If Ares was still in there, the Eye would prevent him from destroying the stone door. And if he had somehow been able to neutralize the Eye and escape, why bother to reseal the entrance?

Gabrielle nods thoughtfully.

**GABRIELLE**

Right. So,  
what's the deal then?

**XENA**

I think there's only one  
way to find out.

Xena goes to the pile of stones.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

Take a deep breath and  
get ready to sweat.

**CUT TO:**

## **INT. UNDERGROUND - SUNSET**

After a few hours, Xena and Gabrielle, covered with dust from head to toe and short of breath with the effort, have finally managed to open a hole in the wall of stone, large enough to permit the passage of a person.

Xena gingerly extends her arm into the dark cavity, holding the torch, lighting up the vast interior space.

**GABRIELLE**

*(VO)*

What do you see?

**XENA**

*(sighing)*

I can tell you  
what I *don't* see.

*(pause)*

Ares.

**GABRIELLE**

He's not there?

Gabrielle's voice doesn't quite reach the adequate level of surprise. Xena moves the torch around to light every corner well.

**XENA**

Unless he's  
shut himself up in the  
sarcophagus, I don't see  
him anywhere.

**GABRIELLE**

What if he's invisible?

Xena draws her head out and looks at Gabrielle, slightly irritated.

**XENA**

The answer is the same as before,  
Gabrielle. If he had recovered his  
powers, he would simply have  
gone away, don't you think?

Gabrielle climbs impatiently next to Xena to take a look for herself into the dark hole.

**GABRIELLE**

Who knows? How do we  
know what might cross  
his twisted mind?

Xena moved slightly aside to make room for Gabrielle.

**XENA**

However, as you can see,  
the Eye of Hephaestus is still there,  
and from the way it shines I would  
say that it's working perfectly.

In the light of the torches, Gabrielle can only verify the accuracy of Xena's observations. Hanging from a chain on the opposite wall, the great talisman, with its uncanny eye in the center, shines ominously. Below it lies the stone sarcophagus, sealed by a heavy slab. Nothing and no one else is visible.

**GABRIELLE**

It's incredible. But how did  
he manage to get out of here?

Xena takes Gabrielle by the shoulders and moves her from the cavity.

**XENA**

Come on. Let me go first,



and then you follow me. We'll  
open the sarcophagus.

**GABRIELLE**

But why should he  
close himself inside?  
That slab is certainly  
heavy, and without...

**XENA**

Shhhh!

Quickly, Xena puts a hand over Gabrielle's mouth, shutting her up, and looks around with eyes agog.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

*(whispering)*

Did you hear that?

**GABRIELLE**

*(whispering)*

What? Your  
voices again?

**XENA**

No. Listen!

Although annoyed by Xena's behavior, Gabrielle tries to listen. After a while, she finally seems to perceive a weak and muffled sound, the sound of a voice.

**VOICE**

*(VO)*

Help me!

Even before Gabrielle realizes what she has heard, Xena creeps into the cavity.

**XENA**

*(shouting)*

Hurry!

The sarcophagus!

Xena disappears inside the tomb, and unable to utter anything else, Gabrielle follows.

**CUT TO:**

## INT. TOMB CHAMBER - EVENING

As soon as she gets inside the room, Xena rushes toward the sarcophagus, and starts to push and pull at the stone slab, with muscles already hardened by the efforts made to push her way through. Gabrielle, running after her, stops abruptly, when a new muffled call comes from inside the shell carved into the rock.

**GABRIELLE**

Xena! Wait! Don't you  
hear that? It's his voice.  
It's Ares in there.

Straining herself to stir the heavy slab, which is beginning to show signs of slackening, Xena's words come out of her mouth in a snarl.

**XENA**

I heard it.

**GABRIELLE**

Then why are you opening it?!?  
I don't know why he went into it,  
but at this point it's clear that  
he's trying to get free!

Panting for breath, Xena stops for a moment and rests her elbows on the stone, turning towards Gabrielle. Her gaze is ablaze, almost feverish. Gabrielle has rarely seen Xena's expression so tense.

**XENA**

Gabrielle, do you love me?

**GABRIELLE**

*(puzzled)*

But... Of course I love you!  
What's that got to do with anything?

**XENA**

If you really love me,  
you must trust me.  
*(pause)*  
And help me  
to move this thing, now.

Xena refocuses on her task, and Gabrielle, speechless once more, begins to push the stone, too.

Coordinating their movements and pushing the slab together, the two women manage to open the sarcophagus enough to peer inside. In the dim light of the torches, that seem to burn less intensely inside the tomb chamber for some reason, Xena and Gabrielle lean over the wide

opening. Their dumbfounded looks are mirrored in the look on the face of Ares II, who appears pale and emaciated, gazing at them blankly from the bottom of the sarcophagus on which he lies.

**ARES II**  
*(smiling weakly)*  
You came.

Then his eyes close and his head falls to one side.

**FADE TO:**

**INT. UNDERGROUND - EVENING**

Xena and Gabrielle are carrying the body of Ares II out of the tomb chamber. Gabrielle is outside the cavity, pulling his legs, and Xena is pushing him from inside.

Finally, they manage to pass him through completely, and the two women drop, totally exhausted, at the sides of the man, still unconscious, now lying on the floor of the corridor.

Gabrielle turns to Xena, whose profile she can see beyond the head of Ares II.

**GABRIELLE**  
*(panting)*  
Do you have the feeling we've already  
experienced something like this?

**XENA**  
*(smiling lightly)*  
Yeah. But this time I hope  
you keep your hands off.

Gabrielle responds with a light laugh, which sounds extremely incongruous in that place, and raises herself on one elbow, staring at Xena.

**GABRIELLE**  
So, now that I've showed how  
much I love and trust you,  
tell me finally the reason  
why you wanted to get  
him out at all costs.

Rising slowly and painfully from the ground, Xena squats beside Ares II, and raises one of his eyelids, scanning the pupil.

**XENA**  
I'm sure that our friend here  
will tell us soon enough.  
I think he's coming to.

Gabrielle stands up.

**GABRIELLE**

But you already realized  
what happened, right?

**XENA**

Not quite.

Xena stands up and begins to drag back Ares II by his arms toward the nearby wall. Then she puts him against it in a more comfortable position.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

Let's say I had a hunch  
of what might have  
happened.

**GABRIELLE**

What's that?

**XENA**

In my opinion, there's  
a good chance that  
this is not the Ares  
we know.

Gabrielle gasps for a moment, staring at her partner with eyes that almost pop out of her head.

**GABRIELLE**

*(bewildered)*

Wh... *what?*

But... but... what you mean *he's*  
*not Ares?* Of course it's him!  
Look at his... clothing... his...  
his frame... his... his...

**XENA**

Gabrielle, calm down.

Xena bends over her, placing her hand on Gabrielle's shoulder in a gesture of reassurance, to stop her confused stuttering, although her companion's eyes still look at her, mesmerized.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

I didn't say he's not  
Ares. I only said that

he may not be  
*our* Ares.

**GABRIELLE**

What does that mean?

**XENA**

Do you remember what Hercules  
talked to us about more than once?  
And even I have found myself a couple  
of times in other realities, worlds that  
seem similar to ours, but where  
things and people are... different.

Gabrielle covers her mouth in sudden recollection.

**GABRIELLE**

Other worlds? Like the time  
you found yourself face to face  
with the other yourself?

*(pause)*

The Conqueror.

**XENA**

*(nodding)*

Exactly.

Gabrielle looks at the man on the ground with renewed interest.

**GABRIELLE**

So, if I understand all right, you  
think this is another Ares, an Ares  
coming from a different world.

**XENA**

*(shrugging)*

Well, it's a theory, isn't it?

Gabrielle shakes her head, looking slightly skeptical.

**GABRIELLE**

Okay, but that doesn't explain  
how he ended up here  
and where *our* Ares  
has gone off to.

Just then, a groan rises from the body lying between them, and with a croak in his throat, the man opens his eyes.

Xena rushes right next to him, lifting his head.

**XENA**

*(to Gabrielle)*

Run and get my flask.  
You're about to get the answers  
to all your questions.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. UNDERGROUND - SHORTLY AFTER**

Ares drinks eagerly from Xena's water flask. Then after having emptied the bottle, he drops it, returning to rest against the wall with a sigh. Gabrielle crouches near Xena and looks at Ares II with a hint of contempt.

**GABRIELLE**

*(snorting ironically)*

The God of War. Doesn't  
look very impressive  
right now.

The comment collects only a furtive glance from Xena, as Ares II doesn't seem to have even heard it. He has been looking at Xena since he regained consciousness, and now he raises a hand to her cheek as if to caress her.

**ARES II**

*(whispering)*

Xena...

Instinctively, Xena pulls back, looking at him with suspicion.

**GABRIELLE**

It seems that all the Ares  
are the same, whatever  
world they come from.

Ares II withdraws his hand, with a sad look in his eyes.

**ARES II**

*(murmuring)*

No... You're not her...  
You're... the other one.

**XENA**

Well, actually I consider myself  
the original. But I suppose it  
depends on your point of view.

Ares II raises himself up slightly, looking around, and realizing at last the presence of Gabrielle. He looks at her for some time, puzzled. Then he turns back to Xena, doing the same thing.

**ARES II**

It's unbelievable. You're  
practically identical,  
yet so different...

Xena stands up, immediately followed by Gabrielle and the two women stare down at the man on the ground.

**XENA**

Okay, Ares. Let's straighten all  
this out. Now I'll ask you some  
questions, and if I don't like your  
answers, I'll lock you back into  
that grave. And this time I'll  
personally make sure that  
you don't get out again.

*(pause)*

So, none of  
yours usual tricks...

Ares II dismisses the threat with a wave of his hand and grimaces in disgust.

**ARES II**

Oh, come on. Do I seem like I'm in  
the mood for deceiving anyone?  
Besides, by now you should  
understand that I'm not the  
Ares you're talking about.

Xena looks at him without speaking for a few more moments. Then she nods.

**XENA**

Okay. Then begin  
by telling me how  
you got here.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. TEMPLE OF ARES - NIGHT**

Xena and Gabrielle have set up a small camp in the atrium that serves as entrance to the temple. A small fire is in the center, and the horses can be seen in a corner, tied by the reins to a column.

The long interrogation of Ares II has ended and the three sit around the fire, exchanging, or

more often escaping, the gaze of one another, as if a veil of embarrassment has dropped on everything, like the giant spider webs that cover almost every corner of the place.

Xena is cross-legged, with eyes fixed on the steaming cup she holds in her hands. Gabrielle is sitting aside on a step, staring thoughtfully at the god, who instead, with folded arms, seems to stare at the floor in front of him, but occasionally glances sideways at the two women alternately, as if he were about to ask something, without ever deciding to do so.

After an interminable moment of silence, Gabrielle stands up and puts aside her bowl, which, very uncharacteristically, has not yet been emptied. Without a word, she goes to the horses, takes out the currycomb from the saddlebag, and begins to brush their coats.

Ares II watches her, then leans toward Xena, talking in a low voice.

**ARES II**  
*(whispering)*  
Is it true what  
my double said?  
*(pause)*  
You two got married  
in an Amazon rite?

Interrupted in the course of her thoughts, Xena just raises her eyes from her cup.

**XENA**  
Yes, it's true.

Ares II looks at her for a moment without speaking. Xena returns his gaze.

**ARES II**  
*(bitterly)*  
And for good measure  
you've also locked  
him in that grave.  
*(snorting)*  
No wonder he's gone crazy.

Xena puts down her cup, wiping her mouth with the back of her hand.

**XENA**  
After what he did to you, you  
think it's the case to take  
his defense?

**ARES II**  
*(roaring)*  
I'm not defending him!

He jumps up, attracting the gaze of Gabrielle, who in the back of the room, becomes



motionless for a moment, before she resumes her grooming without intervening.

**ARES II**

*(cont'd)*

*(lowering his voice)*

But I can understand  
how he felt...  
And then, look.

He points his finger at the horses that Gabrielle continues to look after.

**ARES II**

*(cont'd)*

This is a temple of the God of War  
and you've reduced it to a stable!  
I can't bear to see what we've  
represented in our worlds for  
thousands of years, desecrated  
in this manner.

**XENA**

Calm down.

She taps her hand on the floor, motioning him to sit back down.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

And you can believe me when I tell  
you it has never been used better.  
Moreover, not even you are playing  
your role with the energy of the old  
days, according what you've told us.

With a resigned sigh, Ares II plumps himself down.

**ARES II**

You're right, unfortunately. But it's  
the price I had to pay because you...  
because *she* was mine.

*(pause)*

But it's been worth  
the price.

**XENA**

*(sounding skeptical)*

So you... *changed* for her?

Not finding anything more to be done with the horses, Gabrielle has decided to return by the fire. She sits back down in her place, and totally ignoring the food left in the bowl, in silence

she follows the conversation, of which she hasn't missed a single word, even from a distance. She does not look at this new edition of the God of War, and focuses instead on her partner, with the secret fear of catching in her eyes some emotion that those words might awaken. Completely ignoring Gabrielle, Ares II answers Xena.

**ARES II**

You're free not to believe me, this is not important. Now the only thing that counts for me is to return to my world and get my position back... and my woman. 'Cause it's clear that my double wants to steal both. For this, I spent all the little energy I had left trying to contact you, to get you to come here, and now we have no time to...

**XENA**

I told you to calm down! Gabrielle and I have ridden night and day to get here as soon as we could. Now we need a little rest, and you too could use a good meal and a good night of sleep. We need a God of War in perfect shape to fight the other one.

With a scowl, Ares II takes his bowl and begins to eat.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. TEMPLE OF ARES - NIGHT**

Some time has elapsed. Gabrielle, who continues to control the god and trying not to show it, has settled hers and Xena's bedroll, none too casually, in the opposite corner from where Ares II lies.

Xena is engaged in the first shift of the watch she decided to divide between them, a clear and unambiguous sign for Gabrielle that Xena is far from trusting their guest. Gabrielle, taking advantage that Ares II now has his eyes closed and is apparently sound asleep, quietly slips out of the bedroll, heading stealthily toward the figure of Xena, which stands out sharply on the threshold of the temple, leaning against the door.

Sensing faint movement behind her, Xena is about to turn then, recognizing Gabrielle from her footsteps, resumes her previous position.

**XENA**

Why are you still up?  
In three hours it'll  
be your turn.

**GABRIELLE**

I couldn't sleep, anyway.

Gabrielle puts her arm around Xena's waist, who attracts her, and Gabrielle soon finds solace in the arms of her partner. Xena lifts her chin and leans over Gabrielle. Their lips touch in a light kiss, but it quickly becomes deeper and more passionate, until their lips finally move apart. Gabrielle smiles, resting her head on Xena's shoulder.

**XENA**

You needed  
some reassurance?

Xena smiles, placing another kiss on Gabrielle's blonde hair. In response, Gabrielle gives a little laugh, hugging Xena even closer.

**GABRIELLE**

Well, you heard what he said,  
didn't you? You're with him, I'm  
married to Virgil and expecting a baby...

**XENA**

Hey, hey.

Xena interrupts Gabrielle, lifting her chin, to look into her eyes.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

First of all, let's clear things up.  
It's neither you nor me. If anything,  
they're our doubles from a distant world  
in which things have gone very differently.  
And we know that there are even other worlds  
where things have taken even different directions.

**GABRIELLE**

*(whispering)*

Yes, I know. But up to now,  
I'd always believed that in any world,  
the two of us were destined  
to be together...

**XENA**

There are probably many worlds out there,  
Gabrielle. Worlds in which you and I are  
together, as here, and others in which our  
doubles... or twins... or copies, call them as  
you want, have never met, or where they  
have lost one another, or even where...

*(hesitating)*

one may have killed the other.

Gabrielle, who had leant back on Xena's shoulder, raises her head suddenly, looking at Xena.

**GABRIELLE**

What?

Xena pushes Gabrielle's head back to her shoulder, as if she couldn't hold her gaze.

**XENA**

Think about it for a moment. Because  
I often do. What might have happened  
if I had met you in my days as a warlord?  
If your path had crossed with that of the ruthless  
beast I was then, huh? Believe me, I could have  
killed you without giving it a second thought.

*(sighing)*

So how do you know that there's not a world  
where things have gone exactly like that?

**GABRIELLE**

*(shaking her head)*

There's no way I believe that.

Gabrielle escapes the pressure of Xena's hand and raises her head back to stare into her eyes. Then she also frees her arms to grab Xena's face, forcing her to do likewise.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

Look at me. Look at me!  
I don't believe it, and I will never  
believe it. Never! You would never do  
a thing like that to me, either in this nor in  
any other world. Remember what you told  
me about the Conqueror and the Gabrielle  
of that world? Over there, that Xena had  
plenty of opportunity to kill her,  
but she didn't. She couldn't.

Xena remains motionless, without speaking, and without even trying to escape the iron grip of Gabrielle's hands who keeps staring at her firmly, on the verge of tears.

**XENA**

*(nodding)*

It's true. She couldn't.

The two women hug tightly once again, and Xena feels Gabrielle's tears dampening her skin, and a strange burning sensation at the corners of her own eyes.

**GABRIELLE**

*(whispering)*

Why should we go too?  
Let them solve it between  
themselves. Why should  
we bring Ares back here?

**XENA**

I can't explain it, Gabrielle,  
but still I think it's a  
question of balance.

**GABRIELLE**

*(snorting bitterly)*

Same old story.

**XENA**

But if you don't want  
to come, I can go alone...

Xena cannot even complete her sentence, because Gabrielle has raised her head up and is now once again staring at her with an unequivocal look.

**GABRIELLE**

And I should let you go alone  
into a world where there are  
two Ares? Forget it.

Xena emits a faint chuckle. Then, smiling slightly, she gives Gabrielle a slap on her behind.

**XENA**

Come on. Now go get some rest.

Gabrielle puts her hand behind Xena's head, pulling her toward herself, until their mouths reunite in a long kiss.

**GABRIELLE**

*(whispering)*

Call me when it's my turn.

**XENA**

Count on it.

Giving Xena one last smile, Gabrielle returns to bed, glancing quickly at Ares II who is still lying in the same position. A little calmer, Gabrielle pulls the blanket over her shoulders and turns to the wall, closing her eyes.

Across the room, the god opens his, staring at her through the flames of the small fire.

FADE TO:

**EXT. HOUSE OF GABRIELLE II - MORNING**

Coming from the barn where she has had a rather restless night, Xena II, visibly worried about the previous day's talk with Gabrielle II, and experiencing an unsettling feeling that the night has left on her, returns to the house, checking to make sure that no straw remains in her hair or clothes.

Thoughtfully she gathers her long hair in her stiff ponytail. She sees Virgil with a large basket attached to his waist, intent on feeding the chickens. Immediately she smooths her corrugated forehead, hiding her thoughts behind a smile.

Seeing her coming, Virgil waves his hand cheerfully in greeting, continuing to scatter feed to the chickens running around his feet, squawking.

**VIRGIL**

Xena!

**XENA II**

Good morning, Virgil.

**VIRGIL**

Good morning. How did you  
spent the night in the barn?  
Were you comfortable?

**XENA II**

*(shrugging)*

I can't complain.

*(pause)*

And Gabrielle? Is she awake  
already? I don't want to disturb her.

**VIRGIL**

Yes, she is, don't worry.  
She already asked about you.

With a nod, Xena II turns away towards the house.

CUT TO:

**INT. HOUSE OF GABRIELLE II - MORNING**

Cautiously, Gabrielle II gets up from bed and turns her legs until they protrude enough to set foot on the ground. Then she pulls all the way to sit on the edge of the bed. Having completed the laborious task, she stops for a moment, slightly short of breath, waiting until she is able to take the next step. When she's ready to push herself up by force of her arms, she hears knocking at the door.

**GABRIELLE II**

Come in.

Xena II enters.

**XENA II**

Hey.

**GABRIELLE II**

Hey.

Gabrielle II welcomes her friend with a smile, then resumes pushing out the overflowing part of her body which prevents her from seeing below her waist, for what seems an eternity.

Xena II rushes to support her.

**XENA II**

Wait. Let me give you a hand.

With the help of her friend, Gabrielle II is finally able to stand.

**XENA II**

*(cont'd)*

Now what would like you do?

Gabrielle points to a blackened metal pot on a shelf beside the wall.

**GABRIELLE II**

Take me to the  
water basin. I want  
to rinse my face.

Ambling, leaning on Xena II's arm, Gabrielle II advances toward the wall and leans over to take a pitcher of steaming water filled to the brim. Xena II tries to anticipate her, but she stops her arm, giving her an admonishing glance. Then she stretches her own arms and takes the pitcher.

**GABRIELLE II**

*(cont'd)*

I'm not an invalid, Xena. In the  
morning I'm not too brilliant,  
okay, but if I continue to  
move, then I feel better.

*(pause)*

Instead, if I'd listened to that  
damn midwife, now I wouldn't  
even be able to get out of  
bed. You can let me go.

I can do by myself now.

Reluctantly, Xena II lets her go, and Gabrielle II, after pouring the hot liquid into the basin, plunges her hands into it and brings them to the face, rubbing it. Then she takes a clean cloth, folded nearby and begins to dry herself.

Seeing that her friend doesn't seem to have trouble standing up, Xena II goes to the bed to remake it.

**XENA II**

How are you this morning?  
How do you feel?

**GABRIELLE II**

Much better.

**XENA II**

Really?

Gabrielle II puts down the towel, and leaning against the wall, heads toward the door of the room. Xena II rushes to her again, but Gabrielle II stops her with a gesture and continues to advance toward the door.

**GABRIELLE II**

Sure. I've been awake for almost an hour and yet I didn't cry even once. For me, this is a big improvement.

**XENA II**

*(smiling)*

I'm glad of it.

Gabrielle II stops and, still leaning against the wall, turns toward her.

**GABRIELLE II**

Xena, listen. I want you to know that the words that come out of my mouth these days, don't always come from me.

Xena II looks at her questioningly.

**GABRIELLE II**

*(cont'd)*

I mean, if sometimes I look strange, or you see me cry without reason, it's not me. It's the pregnancy that has this effect on me.



Xena II continues to look at her for a few moments in silence, then nods.

**XENA II**

I understand.

**GABRIELLE II**

So I apologize in  
advance for whatever  
I might say or do in front of you.

**XENA II**

*(nodding)*

Sure. Don't even mention it.

**GABRIELLE II**

*(smiling)*

Good.

Then, Gabrielle II starts toward the door once again, followed step by step by Xena II .

**GABRIELLE II**

*(cont'd)*

Now let's go for  
a breath of fresh air.  
It seems like a wonderful day.

**CUT TO:**

## **EXT. FOREST PATH - MORNING**

Nimbly, Xena and Gabrielle leap out of the vortex, landing on the ground with a flip in striking synchrony, immediately followed by a thud and a half-stifled curse behind them. The two women turn around and look curiously at the God of War no. 2, who, still on his stomach, is cleaning off his face, smeared with dust and mud, muttering something under his breath.

**XENA**

*(smirking)*

You look a little flabby.  
Are you sure that when you  
got your immortality back,  
they didn't saddle you with  
something second-hand?

Xena holds out her hand to help him up, but looking gloomy, Ares II pushes her hand away and gets up by himself.

**ARES II**

*(grimacing)*

These dimensional jumps  
just upset me. I hope  
never to repeat the  
experience.

**XENA**

Sorry, but I must  
remind you that we still  
need you to return with us  
to put your little brother  
under lock and key.

Xena steps a few paces away, looking around. A little farther on, Gabrielle has retrieved her bag, which in the flip had escaped from her shoulder, ending up at the edge of the path where the trio appeared moments earlier.

**XENA**

Couldn't you have left that  
bag back with the horses?

Gabrielle turns to look at her, shocked.

**GABRIELLE**

Are you kidding?!  
And risk that someone  
steals it with my new boots inside?

Xena rolls her eyes, but doesn't reply. Gabrielle looks around in her turn.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

But... where are we?  
I think I know this place.

**XENA**

*(smiling)*

Near the farm where  
I grew up, I guess.

Xena fills her lungs with crisp air, taking notice with satisfaction of the trees and the dense vegetation barely moving in the pleasant breeze.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

Should be more or less  
three hundred feet after  
the end of this path.

**ARES II**

Actually it's more distant.

Ares II indicates with a nod, slightly to the right of the direction in which Xena is looking.

**ARES II**

*(cont'd)*

Things in our two  
worlds are very similar,  
but not identical.

**GABRIELLE**

*(through gritted teeth)*

Luckily.

The god gives her a cold stare, but doesn't respond.

**ARES II**

I thought it was better  
to reappear in a place  
safe from prying eyes.

**XENA**

Do you think he might  
be at the farm?

**ARES II**

*(nodding)*

I can sense his aura. I don't dare  
probe the ether too much, 'cause  
I'd risk being sensed by him too.  
But I can feel that he's here.

**XENA**

Why did he stop at the farm? If, as  
you told us, the other me is away...

**ARES II**

Well, he was there in his  
spiritual form, while you and I...

Ares II breaks off abruptly when he sees Xena and Gabrielle turn their heads together and stare at him.

**ARES II**

*(cont'd)*

*(with mild embarrassment)*

I mean, Xena and I, we said

goodbye, and then he knows that she'll reach me down there in a couple of days. Maybe in order not to arouse suspicion, he's acting just the way I would.

**XENA**

*(shaking her head)*

Mhmm, I don't know. The Ares I know is not a very patient type. I can't imagine him stuck in a place for days, just to keep an appointment.

**ARES II**

After being shut in that grave for so long, he might have developed a considerable amount of patience.

The two exchange an indecipherable look. Then Xena turns toward the path with a look of determination.

**XENA**

Okay. It's no use staying here and arguing. Let's get going. We'll stop at a little way out from the farm. Enough to watch it, but not so much that we risk getting caught. Then I'll go ahead. If he's really there, I'll try to make him to believe I'm your Xena. I hope to distract him long enough to allow you to take him from behind.

**ARES II**

*(with a smirk)*

It'll be a pleasure.

Ares II closes his hand into a fist, and tiny blue sparks crackle between his fingers.

**XENA**

Didn't you say you're afraid he can feel your presence? You better keep your powers in check until the time is right.

Ares II nods, and with a wisp of smoke, the sparks in his hand go off.

**ARES II**

Good. Follow me,  
I'll lead the way.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. FOREST PATH - SHORTLY AFTER**

With Ares II still leading the way a few steps ahead, Xena and Gabrielle walk side by side along the path lined with dense vegetation of trees and bushes. From time to time, Gabrielle glances sideways at her companion, who keeps walking with a fixed gaze, pointed at the tall and sturdy figure in front of them. Eventually with a sigh, Xena surrenders.

**XENA**

What?

**GABRIELLE**

You want to make him believe  
you're your double? But she  
and Ares are lovers here.

**XENA**

So?

**GABRIELLE**

I hope that when you  
talked about distracting him,  
you didn't mean what I think.

**XENA**

Gabrielle, you can't make an omelet  
without breaking some eggs.  
*(glancing her ironically)*  
Anyway, you'll be there  
to protect my virtue.

**GABRIELLE**

*(nodding resolutely)*  
You bet. If necessary, I'll be  
more than happy to break  
a couple of "eggs"  
to someone.

With an affectionate laugh, Xena reaches over and strokes her companion's blond hair, who with a faint smile passes her arm around Xena's waist.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

In any case, I don't understand.

Wouldn't it be easier to go  
to the Xena of this world and  
explain to her what's going on?

**XENA**

I think that our new friend would  
prefer avoiding such an encounter.

**GABRIELLE**

Why?

**XENA**

*(smiling)*

You really can't  
figure out why?

Gabrielle looks at her puzzled, and Xena, laughing silently, hugs her, placing a kiss on her hair. Smiling, Gabrielle gives Xena one in return, on the neck. Just at that moment, Ares II turns suddenly, spotting the tender attitudes between the two women. For a split second, a strange expression crosses his face, but he recovers quickly, pointing to a recess among the vegetation close to the path.

**ARES II**

We're almost there. It's  
better to stop here.

The unusual trio leaves the path, heading for the shelter.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. BUSHES - MORNING**

Once crouched behind the tall bushes, Ares II turns to Xena.

**ARES II**

*(cont'd)*

There's a small detail  
I forgot to mention.

**XENA**

What?

**ARES II**

Your hair.

**XENA**

*(puzzled)*

My hair? What's the matter with it?

**ARES II**

My Xena does hers  
differently.

Xena looks at him angrily.

**XENA**

Why didn't you tell me before this?  
How does she do it?  
*(pause)*  
*(gaping)*  
I hope she hasn't cut it?!?

**GABRIELLE**

*(horrified)*  
Oh, no!

Ares II shakes his head, grimacing, and barely notices the sigh of relief of the two women.

**ARES II**

No. She keeps it as long as  
yours. Only she doesn't  
wear that kind of...

He makes a gesture, pointing at Xena's forehead.

**ARES II**

*(cont'd)*  
...fringe on her forehead from  
longtime. Now she pulls it back  
tying it in a tail.

**GABRIELLE**

*(sounding fascinated)*  
Really?  
*(to Xena)*  
It would look good on you too.

Xena gives her a significant glance, then turns back to Ares II.

**XENA**

And what am I supposed  
to tell him now? That I  
decided to change my look?

**ARES II**

*(shrugging)*  
Why not? After all,  
you women often like to change

your hairstyle, your makeup...

Xena gives him a withering look.

**XENA**

*(sarcastically)*

And don't you think  
that my extra likeness  
to the Xena of his world,  
might make him suspicious?

**GABRIELLE**

Wait! I have an idea!

Gabrielle opens her bag and began to rummage inside furiously.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

Where did I put...?  
Yet I was sure... *AH!*

The sudden shriek makes Xena and Ares II almost jump.

**XENA AND ARES II**

*(together)*

*Shhhh!*

But the now grinning Gabrielle doesn't even care, and triumphant she produces a black silk ribbon she has just taken out from her stuff.

**GABRIELLE**

*(to Xena)*

Now, you can't complain anymore  
that I brought my bag with me.  
Here. Turn around.

Gabrielle takes Xena's shoulders, forcing her to turn.

**XENA**

What are you doing?

**GABRIELLE**

Leave it to me.

With a last look behind her, a bit undecided, Xena resigns to comply with her partner, who, looking pensive, slides the ribbon through her fingers, and then slips it around Xena's neck, beginning to knot it on her nape.



**XENA**

Are you trying to  
strangle me?

**GABRIELLE**

Shut up and wait.

Gabrielle begins to pull the ribbon up along Xena's face, but it remains for a moment caught between her upper lip and her nose.

**XENA**

*(slurring)*

Hey, wazz ya tell 'e  
whazz ya up tah?

**GABRIELLE**

*(snapping out)*

Xena! Wait a minute,  
I told you!

Having brilliantly overcome the obstacle, Gabrielle brings the ribbon up on Xena's forehead. Then, slowly, gently pulling it back, Gabrielle catches Xena's thick hair in the ribbon's grip and secures it to her temples and behind her ears with a tight knot. Then with a satisfied look, she raises Xena's long black hair, letting it fall on her shoulders.

**GABRIELLE**

There. The fringe has  
disappeared. Now I just have  
to hide the knot of the ribbon  
under your hair, and the illusion  
will be almost perfect.

*(pause)*

And now the artist's  
last touch.

Gabrielle grabs the long hair on Xena's back and ties it tightly in a knot on the back of her head, being careful that the tail comes down to conceal the small knot fixing the ribbon.

Ares II has followed the entire operation, puzzled and intrigued at the same time, and now he's watching Xena, amazed.

The woman in front of him has suddenly become even more similar to the one he has always known. Her face has acquired brightness, her eyes seem bigger and deeper, the skin on her forehead and temples is smooth and taut right up to her ebony hairline which blends almost perfectly with the black ribbon. The hair is flat, stretched back, raised up behind her ears and gathered tightly behind her head, exposing the elegant line of her neck, before flowing down softly like a wave along her back.

Slightly embarrassed, under the almost reverent gaze of the god and the satisfied and

admiring one of her companion, Xena lets her fingers running through her hair.

**XENA**

*(almost timidly)*  
It pulls a little  
at the forehead.

Gabrielle smiles sweetly.

**GABRIELLE**

*(whispering)*  
You'll get used to it soon.  
Beauty is a sacrifice.

Then Gabrielle turns to Ares II with a mischievous smile.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*  
So, what do you think?  
Is she more similar to  
your Xena like this?

Shaking himself out from his almost hypnotic state, Ares II clears his throat.

**ARES II**

Umh... yeah, better.  
But he won't see the ribbon?

**GABRIELLE**

When he's in front of her,  
I doubt the first thing he looks  
at will be her hair. And in any case,  
the trick has to last only long enough  
to give us time to step in. *Right?*

The last word is addressed to Xena, accompanied by an eloquent look. Trying to resume her attitude as a warrior, Xena stands up to peer over the vegetation in search of their target.

**XENA**

Uhm, sure.  
Where's the farm?  
From here it's not  
yet in sight.

**ARES II**

A little farther ahead.

Ares II points to the sharp bend turning left down the path. Xena goes back onto the road.

**XENA**

Well. I'm going. You two  
follow me at a distance  
but stay within earshot.

Gabrielle and Ares II respond with a nod, and Xena starts down the path at a fast pace.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. FARM - SHORTLY AFTER**

Her lips tight in a determined expression, Xena turns at the bend of the path and stops in front of the crumbling facade of the house. Just as the God of War, the one and only in regard to her, emerges out of the door, exhibiting his more attractive smile and provoking a sinking feeling in her heart that she tries to ignore stoically.

**ARES**

Hey. I didn't expect you  
before tomorrow.  
*(pause)*  
Where's your horse?

The question leaves Xena dumbfounded for a second, as she curses to herself, but immediately she returns his smile.

**XENA**

Oh, uhm...  
*(hesitating a little)*  
I had to kill it.  
A snake on the path.  
There was nothing to do,  
unfortunately.

**ARES**

*(in a surprised tone)*  
You killed Argo?

Appealing to all of her coolness, Xena approaches to him, going up the steps of the porch.

**XENA**

No, not Argo. Luckily I left her  
in Athens. She was tired after  
the ride of yesterday, and I took  
one of Virgil's horses. I'll have to  
pay it back, but it was worth it.

Xena stops in front of Ares, who bridges the gap between them, and staring her in the eye, wraps his arms around her waist.

**ARES**

Oh yeah? Why  
such a hurry to return?

Xena, trying to keep his eyes riveted on hers own, moves slightly to the right where the shadow of the porch falls more sharply on her head, hiding the details of her hairdo. But Ares' gaze is so immersed in hers, that it is doubtful that he can see anything else. Smiling seductively, she strokes his chest with her hand.

**XENA**

*(whispering)*

'Cause I was keen to see you again.

With a flame that literally burns in his eyes, Ares raises a hand to her hair, but Xena immediately takes possession of it, bringing it to her mouth and begins to kiss his fingers, one by one. Then before he can make another gesture, she grabs him behind his head and draws him to herself, passionately pressing her lips against his.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. BUSHES - SAME TIME**

Hidden behind providential bushes that allow them to get close enough without the risk of being seen, Gabrielle and Ares II are watching Xena and the other god in their close rendezvous.

When she sees Ares and Xena kissing passionately, forgetting all precautions, Gabrielle starts up, her eyes open wide. Immediately she is pulled down by Ares II. With a muffled moan, she falls back on her bottom. Sparks fly from her glance.

**ARES II**

*(whispering)*

Are you crazy?!?  
Do you want him to discover us?

**GABRIELLE**

*(whispering)*

I don't care!  
If he dares to lay  
a finger on her, I'll...

**ARES II**

*(ironically)*

You'll what? Besides,  
you're already too late.  
As far a finger goes,  
I'd say that they've all been  
working away quite busily.

**GABRIELLE**

What?

Gabrielle quickly gets to her feet, but again the hand of Ares II forces her to keep her head low. Peeking out of the bush, from her eyes on up, she sees Xena who continues to kiss Ares passionately, with both arms around his neck. The original God of War instead hold his hands firmly around her waist. Just as Gabrielle focuses on that detail, he lowers his hands down to Xena's buttocks, squeezing them forcefully. The gesture has the effect of tightening the two bodies even more. Gabrielle continues to observe them open-mouthed.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

What the hell is happening?

What is he doing to her?

Ares II turns his eyes away from that show a moment, shifting them to Gabrielle.

**ARES II**

*(ironically)*

What do you think of that?

**GABRIELLE**

That's quite enough!

Trying to keep low her voice, Gabrielle is about to leave her shelter, but she cannot make even one step out, held back by the hand of Ares II, who grips her by the backside of the bodice.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

Let me go!

He brings his face close to hers, and now the ominous light in his eyes reflects perfectly what Gabrielle remembers of the original.

**ARES II**

*(hissing)*

Woman, if you don't stop this right now,  
you'll be counting stars in a minute.

Nobody here needs you,  
keep that in mind.

Brandishing her sais, Gabrielle points them at him, staring him down with a murderous look.

**GABRIELLE**

Just you try it!

But in that moment, a bluish flash illuminates the open space beyond the bushes, and the two instantly freeze like statues. Then both simultaneously raise their heads, looking towards the

porch of the farmhouse.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

But... Where have they gone?

Ares II merely stares at the porch, now deserted. Xena and his double have disappeared.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. FARM - SAME TIME**

The lightning that has enveloped her lasts only a split second, and Xena finds herself lying under the sheets of a bed with the body of the God of War on top of her, still embracing her. But this is not what makes her open her eyes wide.

**XENA**

*(shocked)*

I'm... naked!

Then, she gazes at the face of Ares who reciprocates with a malicious reflection in his own eyes.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

And you're... naked, too!

Ares presses his lips to her ear.

**ARES**

You know, I said to myself, it's  
useless to waste time entering  
the house and undressing.  
What good is it being a god  
if you can't save yourself  
a little trouble?

Ares begins to nibble her lobe, and Xena feels a shiver going through her entire body. She feels strangely confused. Her reflexes seem to dim, as if she is living in a dream.

**ARES**

*(cont'd)*

Finally.

*(pause)*

Finally I'll make you mine.

**XENA**

*(confused)*

It... It sounds as if you hadn't

seen me for years.

**ARES**

*(kissing her on the neck)*

Years? Oh yes. Years. How many?  
Two? Three? It's hard to keep  
account when you stay closed in an tomb.

**XENA**

Wh... What?

Xena turns her head to face him, but Ares grabs her by the neck, immobilizing her.

**ARES**

Oh, and in case you're counting  
on the help of those two idiots out there,  
forget it. I put a protective barrier around  
the house. Neither man nor god  
can get in, if I don't want it.

*(pause)*

Mmh, Zeus could probably have  
dissolved it, if Hercules hadn't killed him  
also in this world, a long time ago.  
What a shame, huh?

Xena has to muster all her willpower to keep a cool head and not succumb to the swoon that is assaulting her.

**XENA**

How do you figure out  
that it was me?

Ares bursts into laughter.

**ARES**

Are you joking?!?  
Where do you get off  
thinking you could fool me,  
even for a single moment?

His finger toys with the ribbon in Xena's hair.

**ARES**

*(cont'd)*

Nice trick, but you do really  
think it was enough to make  
me not recognize the woman  
I've been longing to possess for

decades? Besides I sensed immediately the arrival of my double, and I enjoyed turning your own deceit against you.

Xena feels her body react more and more at the contact with Ares. The desire for him is becoming irresistible, and her arms, almost independently of her will, are wrapped around the man's back.

**XENA**

Why do I feel like this?  
What have you done to me?

Ares smiles, relaxed now. He's smug and confident, and seeing Xena in his power stimulates his presumption.

**ARES**

You know, Xena, all the time in that tomb allowed me, at least, to reconsider all our past. To re-examine it carefully. And I concluded that my whole strategy of seduction had a defect of origin.

Speaking, almost without realizing it, Ares lies on his side once again, partially releasing Xena from his weight, while still continuing to keep his arm around her shoulders.

**ARES**

*(cont'd)*

I've always tried to  
play fairly with you.

**XENA**

*(snorting)*

Fairly?! Don't  
make me laugh!

Xena tries to move slowly aside, but she realizes with a sense of frustration that her body isn't responding and that it is still seeking contact with Ares'.

**ARES**

Yes, I did! I wanted you  
to come back to me of your own  
initiative. I didn't want to use my powers  
to make you to do so. And I paid for my loyalty  
with years of disappointment, humiliation, and  
finally condemned to perpetual burial. So...

With a smile, he returns to lie down on her completely.



**ARES**

*(cont'd)*

...I decided to change strategy.  
What you are now sampling is  
the famous seductive power of  
the gods to the nth degree.  
Trust me when I tell you that  
no mortal could resist it. Ask  
Zeus... ops... right, I forgot.

His smile is clearly one of derision, but Xena, with her eyes clouded by a desire that has overtaken her completely, draws him toward her, and presses her lips to his.

**FADE OUT.**

**END OF ACT THREE**

## ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

### EXT. FARM - SAME TIME

No longer worried about precautions, Gabrielle throws herself into the yard, running across the path and going full-speed to the farmhouse. As soon as she passes the outer fence, first her knee and immediately after the rest of her body slam against something invisible, but absolutely impenetrable. She bounces back several steps and ends up sitting on the ground with very little dignity.

Not giving herself time to feel pain in hurting once again that particular part of her body, twice offended in the course of a few minutes, Gabrielle jumps up and starts to charge again with the same result. Furious, and with a keen sense of frustration, she tries once again but is soon stopped by the voice of Ares II behind her.

#### ARES II

It's useless. You can keep  
throwing yourself against it till you  
break every bone in your body,  
but it will not yield.

Gabrielle turns to look at him, her eyes, like embers, burning with anger.

#### GABRIELLE

*(almost shouting)*

What is it?

*(pause)*

Never mind! Whatever  
it is, use your powers!  
Bring it down!

Ares II approaches the invisible wall, running a hand over it.

#### ARES II

It's a mental barrier. No one can destroy  
it, except the one who built it. Evidently  
he took Xena into the house with him and  
raised this barrier to keep us out. Obviously,  
this means that he's discovered who she is.

#### GABRIELLE

*(shouting)*

But you two are the same person!!  
You are also the God of War.  
Whatever he does, you can undo!

Now Gabrielle is screaming without hesitation, without worrying about being heard. Somehow she wants to release the fear that has assailed her and the helpless fury she feels struggling within.

**ARES II**

*(shaking his head)*

Sorry to dash your hopes, blondie,  
but it doesn't work that way. No one can  
pass through it, I tell you. Not even me.

**GABRIELLE**

But we must do something!  
Xena is in there with him!  
He's gonna hurt her!

**ARES II**

Well, judging from what I saw  
before they disappeared, I wouldn't  
say he was going to torture her.

**GABRIELLE**

Stop talking nonsense!  
We must enter to get  
her out, at any cost!

**ARES II**

*(exasperated)*

Stop fretting like that,  
you pocket Amazon!

In hearing herself addressed that way, Gabrielle stops abruptly, staring at him in disbelief.

**ARES II**

*(cont'd)*

It was your girlfriend who wanted  
go alone with him. You think she  
didn't foresee what might happen?  
If she's half the clever Xena I know,  
you can bet on it. And now she's already  
studying the countermeasures. Have  
a little confidence in her, if you  
really love her so much.

Silenced by those words, that somehow seem to echo Xena's words in the tomb in Macedonia, Gabrielle feels the anger subside within her, and with it some of the aversion she nurtured instinctively toward this new and unusual version of the God of War.

**GABRIELLE**

*(more quietly)*

So what do you think  
we should do?

Ares II turns to look at the entrance of the house, so close yet unattainable.

**ARES II**

Wait. And be  
ready for anything.

Gabrielle also turns towards the farm.

**GABRIELLE**

Okay. But try calling me that again,  
and you'll be carrying your divine  
attributes closed in a bag.

The lips of Ares II bend in a grimace that might even be a smile.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. FARM - SAME TIME**

Meanwhile, in the bedroom, Ares and Xena are still embracing under the sheets. Ares can speak only in the short intervals when their mouths part for breath.

**ARES**

*(panting)*

Fate binds us, Xena.  
Don't deny it.

*(pause)*

I was giving up. When my  
spirit got here, and I...

*(pause)*

...found out that there was another you...

*(pause)*

...from which I could get what  
you've always denied to me...

*(pause)*

...I thought I could settle for that.  
But when I saw you again... just *you*  
in front of me...

*(pause)*

...I realized that you're the only woman  
in any universe I want.

*(pause)*

The only one I ever wanted.

Crushed beneath him, Xena feels the excitement of Ares increasing moment by moment, as her mind clears. Continuing to mutter phrases ever less comprehensible, his breathing becomes more labored, and Ares doesn't seem aware that the mental concentration he's keeping on her is gradually diminishing, and perhaps the barrier that has built around that place is fading.

Xena indulges him, moving sinuously against his body, kissing him with even more passion, arousing him further.

**ARES**

*(whispering)*

Oh, Xena, you're killing me.

Ares rises slightly over her, ready to give the final attack. In that moment, sufficiently self-possessed once more, Xena wedges her knees in the space between their bodies, and immediately after she flips her powerful legs up like springs, hurling a very surprised Ares through the air, and slamming his back violently against the wall.

Too stunned even to feel pain, Ares tries to get up. The expression on his face changes from pure bewilderment at the suddenness of Xena's action to blind rage. A few paces away from him, the figures of Gabrielle and Ares II appear in a bluish flash.

Ares turns to look at them, breaking eye contact with Xena for a split second. Xena has rapidly gathered the large sheet and wrapped it around her naked body. She pivots on an arm with a pirouette and hits Ares again with both feet full force in the chest, making him fall heavily to the ground.

**XENA**

*(shouting, to Ares II)*

*Now!*

*Hit him now!*

Immediately, the other god holds out his hands towards his double, still lying on the ground, and sparks begin to form between his fingers, but not quickly enough.

With a roar of fury, the image of Ares literally explodes before their eyes in a glow so dazzling as to leave everyone in the room completely blinded for a couple of seconds.

When the three are finally able to see once more, the original God of War is gone.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

Damn! Did anyone ever tell you  
that you've got the reflexes of a turtle  
just out of hibernation?!?

**ARES II**

*(sounding offended)*

Hey! Don't insult me!  
I just managed to overcome  
his barrier and get inside here.  
I needed a moment to recharge.

Xena, angrily tears off the ribbon that still holds her hair and unties the tail letting her hair fall over her shoulders. She's furious at the wasted opportunity and does nothing to hide it.

**XENA**

You haven't  
overcome anything!  
It's was him who  
lost focus from f...

The phrase dies in Xena's throat, while her right pupil, darting towards the far corner of the eye, captures the shape of Gabrielle, her arms folded across her chest, staring at her and her finger pointed toward the bed unmade.

**GABRIELLE**

Go ahead. Act as  
if I wasn't here.

Xena lowers her arm, pretending not to have noticed the sarcastic note in Gabrielle's words and returns to stare at Ares II.

**XENA**

*(sighing)*

Forget it. What's done is done.  
Now we must find him. Where  
can he have gone?  
Could he still be nearby?

Ares II closes his eyes and takes a deep breath to sharpen his focus. Then he shakes his head.

**ARES II**

No. If he had stayed  
nearby, I'd sense him.

**XENA**

So?

The three remain silent for a moment. Gabrielle keeps looking furtively at Xena, who, dressing quickly beneath the sheet around her, doesn't seem to notice. Even if her posture seems a bit too stiff to Gabrielle, as if perfectly conscious of being observed and trying to avoid eye contact.

Ares II opens his eyes abruptly, as if struck by a sudden idea.

**ARES II**  
Unless...

Xena understands immediately.

**XENA**  
Athens?

He slams his fist into the palm of his hand.

**ARES II**  
Yes! I bet  
he went there.

Gabrielle looks at them puzzled, forgetting the pangs of jealousy for a moment.

**GABRIELLE**  
Athens?

**ARES II**  
Yes! Where my Xena is,  
along with...

Xena ends the sentence for him.

**XENA**  
Gabrielle!

**ARES II**  
I gotta go!

The figure of Ares II becomes transparent, but before the god can disappear, Xena's hand snaps and closes around his wrist.

**XENA**  
You're not going without me.

Gabrielle reaches over and grips Ares II by the other wrist.

**GABRIELLE**  
Without *us*.

The two women look at each other for a moment, then both turn back to Ares II, who has become a solid figure again.

**ARES II**

This is something that I must solve alone, god-to-god. I'll bring your God of War back to you, tied and bundled. It's a promise.

**XENA**

I'm sorry, but I've no intention of losing sight of you. I want to be very sure to bring back the *right* Ares.

**ARES II**

I can't bring you with me!

**GABRIELLE**

Why not? You brought us here.

Ares II looks alternately from one to the other, in a tone of supplication.

**ARES II**

There's no time to argue!  
Don't you understand?  
Every second lost  
could be fatal!

**XENA**

*(nodding)*

I agree. So what are you waiting for?

**ARES II**

*(under his breath)*

Damn!

Cursing to himself, the god closes his eyes and, with a flash that lights up the room erasing the light of day, the group vanishes.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. HOUSE OF GABRIELLE II - DAY**

Virgil once again plumps up the pillow behind the back of Gabrielle II, then smiling, he leans over his wife's head placing a kiss on her forehead.

**VIRGIL**

Here, you're comfortable like this, love?



**GABRIELLE II**

*(smiling)*

Yes, thank you. But I tell you,  
you shouldn't keep pampering me.  
I'm fine, Virgil. Really. You already  
have so much to do, with the  
animals and the house...

**VIRGIL**

Don't worry. It's okay. And plus  
Xena asked me to stay close to  
you, until she returns.

**GABRIELLE II**

*(shaking her head)*

I don't know which of you  
is more apprehensive. If I had  
you both here for the months  
left before I have the baby,  
I just might go crazy.

*(pause)*

By the way, where has she gone?

Virgil plumps up the pillow again, and she rolls her eyes, exasperated, but doesn't protest.

**VIRGIL**

To the fields down in the valley. She  
says she's seen some medical herbs  
that could alleviate your discomfort  
and make you sleep better.

The expression on her face softens, and Virgil catches her look. He slowly goes around the chair and squats beside her, taking her hand.

**VIRGIL**

*(cont'd)*

You miss her very much, don't you?  
Well, you'll see that in a few months,  
when you've recovered and  
are able to ride again...

The phrase of Virgil is broken in half by a sudden blue flash in the room. Startled, Gabrielle II and her husband turn to the corner from where the light has spouted. As it fades, it reveals in its place the tall figure of the God of War staring at them.

**GABRIELLE II**

Ares?!

She has not even the time to recover from her astonishment, than the body of Virgil subsides, falling to the ground apparently lifeless.

**GABRIELLE II**

*(cont'd)*

*(scared)*

Virgil! What's wrong?  
What's happening to you?

Instinctively, Gabrielle II starts to get up from her chair, but an invisible force pushes her back to her seat. She raises her gaze, where panic is already breaking through, to look at Ares who continues to stare at her.

**ARES**

Fear not. Your hubby  
is only sleeping. He will live.

*(pause)*

He will live to cry  
his last tear over you.

**GABRIELLE II**

What are you doing here?  
What do you want from us?  
What have you done to my husband?

Ares opens his arms, advancing toward her.

**ARES**

*(shaking his head)*

Questions. Questions. Questions.  
You never do anything else, do you?  
You've never been able to do anything  
but ask questions. Insinuating uncertainty,  
doubt, and suspicion into the mind of Xena.  
To keep her away from me. Her master!  
The god who forged her! Created her  
with love and patience! The god who  
made her the Warrior Princess!

With a furious movement of his arm, Ares throws to the ground a number of knickknacks from the mantelpiece. The dry sound of metal banging and rolling on the ground startles Gabrielle II.

**ARES**

*(cont'd)*

Since you entered her life, you've  
been nothing but a thorn in my side.  
Do you know how many times I  
could have taken her back if it

hadn't been for you?

Unable to move, Gabrielle II is trying to stifle the terror she feels growing inside herself. She seems to see the old, dark light reemerge in Ares' eyes.

**GABRIELLE II**

But... but you... you took her back.  
She's staying with you now.  
She... loves you.

Ares breaks into a cold and mirthless laugh.

**ARES**

You don't even know  
what you're talking about.

The god leans on her and, placing his mighty arms on the sides of the chair, shakes it violently. Now their faces are only a few inches apart and Gabrielle II can peer deeply into Ares' dark eyes that seem devoid now of any spark of humanity.

**ARES**

*(cont'd)*

But I don't care. As I don't care  
to continue this silly game  
of hide-and-seek in a fuzzy  
world where the God of War has  
turned himself into a ridiculous puppet  
just for slipping into Xena's bed.  
I made a mistake coming back here,  
I admit it, but I'm going to return to my  
world, and now that I'm free again,  
I'll start to fight once again for the body  
and the spirit of *my* Warrior Princess,  
*the one and only*. But first...

Ares raises his hand to caress the cheek of Gabrielle II. The woman, who has followed with difficulty what seem to be the ravings of a madman, pulls back instinctively from his touch. Ares bends the corners of his mouth slightly, in a cruel parody of a smile.

**ARES**

*(cont'd)*

First I will kill you.

Gabrielle II opens her eyes wide. Ares, standing full erect once again, resumes talking in a calm, almost soothing tone of voice.

**ARES**

*(cont'd)*

You know, some people say that

when somebody dies in one world, his counterparts in the other worlds also die. I always considered it nothing more than a legend, but now I can't help wondering if there isn't some truth to it. After all, every legend has an element of truth, right? It will be fun to find out. One way or another, I'll have the satisfaction of destroying the sweet romance of my stupid twin. I don't think that his Xena will take it too well, when she discovers that her lover has killed her best friend.

Speechless, unable to understand most of his words, Gabrielle II is paralyzed in the chair. Forgetting even the body of Virgil at her feet, she can only keep her eyes on Ares, who returns her blank stare, with no trace of emotion.

Slowly, the god puts his hand on the hilt of the long, decorated sword which always hangs from his side, pulls it out, and then points it to the her chest

**ARES**

*(cont'd)*

Don't be afraid. It will hurt only for a moment.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. ROAD TO ATHENS - SAME TIME**

Xena, Gabrielle and Ares II suddenly appear in a wide paved road, overlooked by many houses, nearly all alike, surrounded by stables, barns and yards, in the bottom of which the tops of buildings and temples of a big city can barely be made out.

Gabrielle, still holding her bag on her shoulder, and Xena look around.

**GABRIELLE**

Where are we?

**ARES II**

At the gates of Athens.  
And now let me go.

With one tug, the god frees himself from the two women's grip.

**XENA**

Where does the other Gabrielle live?

Ares II points a finger at a one-floor stone house about four hundred yards to their right.

**ARES II**

I'm going there.

*(to Gabrielle)*

You do up Xena's hair  
like her double, and  
then join me. There's  
no time to lose.

And with the usual accompaniment of lightning, the god disappears again.

**GABRIELLE**

But what...?

Gabrielle stares at the point from where Ares II disappeared, and then turns to Xena.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

If there's no time to lose  
why should we waste it on  
making you look like the other  
Xena? Why didn't he bring us  
directly inside the house?

**XENA**

You mean that you haven't  
figured it out yet? Forget  
my hair, Gabrielle. Run!

Xena breaks into a run towards the house, followed immediately by Gabrielle.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

And besides, I really don't think  
it would do any good now.

Gabrielle looks in the direction that Xena is indicating, and sees clearly a figure, all too familiar, disappearing quickly over the threshold of the house.

**GABRIELLE**

It's her! *The other you!*

**XENA**

Run!

The two women, increasing speed, continue running.

**CUT TO:**

## INT. HOUSE OF GABRIELLE II - SAME TIME

Ares holds the tip of his sword pressed against the neck of Gabrielle II, who stares at him, wide eyes open, in a scene that seems stuck in time, when suddenly a cry echoes in the room.

**XENA II**  
(VO)  
NOOOOO!!!

As if awakened from a spell, the two motionless figures turn to the door, and at the same time the metal whirr of the chakram cleaves the air. The blade is literally torn from the hand of Ares. Even before the sword touches the ground, the chakram bounces against the wall and splits in two, coming back at blinding speed. Surprised, the God of War ducks just in time, avoiding by a hair's breadth one of the parts in which the weapon has split, returning obedient and lonely in the hand of its mistress, while the other part finishes its flight in another hand.

Xena II turns to the figure that has suddenly appeared at her side. The cutting edge of the chakram nearly digs a groove in the palm of her hand from the force with which she suddenly squeezes it.

**XENA II**  
(shocked)  
Ares?!?

She glances incredulously between the two gods of war before her.

**ARES II**  
(smirking)  
Right. The real one.

Ares II reunites the part of the chakram he is holding to the part that Xena II has in her hand.

**ARES**  
Well, let me express  
my reservations about this.

With a feline lunge, Ares seizes back his sword, and getting up, throws a quick glance at Gabrielle II, sitting in the chair, who, still dazed, has watched the last events like in a dream.

**ARES**  
(cont'd)  
You're lucky, little Gabrielle.  
Now your death would be useless.  
And look, the company increases.

With a bitter laugh, Ares points his sword towards the entrance of the room where the other Xena and Gabrielle have now come out.

More and more stunned, Gabrielle II sees the two Xenas, side by side, distinguishable only by their different hairstyle, and an exact copy of herself, wearing clothes that she has not been able to put on for months.

For a few moments, as if the perception of time had suddenly dilated, the several figures that crowd the small room are motionless, as in a painting, then with a roar Ares II draws his sword and throws himself against his twin.

**ARES II**

Traitor! I come to free you,  
and you lock me up  
at your place?!?

The sharp sound of the two blades that clash reverberates like thunder between the walls. With a grin on his lips, Ares parries the blows skillfully.

**ARES**

Admit it, fellow. In my place,  
you would have done the same  
thing. After all we're equals.

**ARES II**

You're wrong! I am not  
like you. Not anymore!

Continuing to parry the slashing fury of his doppelganger, blow by blow, Ares recedes toward the wall.

**ARES**

*(grinning)*

Oh yeah. I forgot about your new  
good-boy image. How long  
will you able to keep it up?  
Uhm, Xena the second?  
I'm speaking to you!

Ares turns the tip of his sword for a moment toward the Xena with the long ponytail, before returning to engage his opponent.

**ARES**

*(cont'd)*

How long do you believe your  
sweetheart here will hold out before  
his true nature as God of War comes  
back to get the upper hand?

With another roar, Ares II frees his blade from his twin's, and attacks him again with a new series of blows in rapid succession.

**ARES II**

Enough! I'll make you  
eat your own words !

But despite the attacks, carried out with uncontrollable fury, coming from all sides, Ares continues to parry them without difficulty.

**ARES**

*(smiling)*

Well. It seems I've managed to  
awaken in you a little of your  
warrior soul. But this stupid  
duel won't get us anywhere,  
so my dear brother...

Ares fights back the final assault of his double and, pushing him away with a shove, lowers his sword, closing his eyes.

**XENA**

No! Don't let him vanish!

Xena pushes aside her own twin, who still hasn't fully recovered from the chaos, and tries to throw herself forward in a last attempt to block Ares. But already the familiar light begins to surround the god.

Before she can grasp him, a metallic clang echoes in the room, rebounding on the walls like the sound of a gong, and the body of the God of War, solid again, collapses on the floor, revealing the figure of Gabrielle II standing behind him, holding her belly with one hand, and the heavy basin in the other.

**GABRIELLE II**

This will teach you  
to threaten a pregnant  
woman, you braggart.

Then, before turning her attention to Virgil, who is slowly recovering, Gabrielle II looks up at the others who are staring at her, surprised.

**GABRIELLE II**

*(smiling)*

What? I told you,  
I'm not an invalid.

**CUT TO:**



## INT. HOUSE OF GABRIELLE II - SHORTLY AFTER

Carrying the unconscious body of his twin on his back, Ares II takes it into the next room, putting it on a bench. Both Xenas behind him watch the still figure with the same wary expression.

**XENA**

Are you sure that he  
can't pull some trick?

**ARES II**

Don't worry. He won't be able  
to move or speak, at least until  
we get him back into his tomb,  
and then there will be the  
Eye to hold him back.

**XENA**

Last time it wasn't enough.

**ARES II**

This time it will be.  
*(looking around)*  
Where's your Gabrielle?  
We must return to  
your world soon.

Xena II places an arm around the shoulders of Xena.

**XENA II**

*(smiling)*

What's the hurry?  
After all, it's not every  
day that you can speak  
with another you.

Xena smiles back, wrapping her arm around her double's waist.

**XENA**

Right. Even Gabrielle  
and Gabrielle are  
chatting together.

Sighing loudly, Ares II takes his twin again on his shoulder and heads toward the door.

**ARES II**

Okay. I'll wait outside.  
But try to hurry up.

As soon as the door closes behind him, Xena II looks at Xena.

**XENA II**

I wonder why your presence  
seems to be getting on  
his nerves so much.

Then, she smiles.

**XENA II**

*(cont'd)*

But I have to admit  
looking at you has a  
strange effect on me too.

**XENA**

*(laughing)*

Likewise. Yet we should  
have be accustomed to  
the doubles by now.

**XENA II**

*(laughing)*

Right.

When the brief moment of hilarity is over, the two women look at each other.

**XENA**

So in the end, he managed  
to conquer you, didn't he?

Xena II smiles weakly, almost with an apologetic expression.

**XENA II**

Yeah. It may sound  
strange to you, but  
he's really changed.

Then her gaze grows melancholy.

**XENA II**

*(cont'd)*

Who knows, maybe if I keep  
telling myself this, one day  
I'll really believe it.

**XENA**

*(nodding)*

No, I understand you.

You love him, right?

The look that Xena II gives to her is softened.

**XENA II**

Yes, I really think so.

Xena nods again in silence.

Xena II lowers her eyes on the chakram hanging from her twin's hip.

**XENA II**

*(cont'd)*

You still have the old chakram,  
I see. And you and your Gabrielle  
still travel together, huh? Well, maybe  
our lives are not so similar after all.

*(frowning)*

I can understand that with an Ares  
like him, there aren't any prospects, but  
you never found anyone else you liked?

**XENA**

No one...

*(smiling)*

...more than her.

Xena II looks at her, puzzled for a moment, then she slowly understands.

**XENA II**

*(hesitating)*

You mean that...  
you and her...?

Her eyes move to the door through which Ares II has gone only a few moments before.

**XENA II**

*(cont'd)*

Now I get his attitude.

She shakes her head, then turns back to Xena, apparently struck by an idea.

**XENA II**

*(cont'd)*

'Course. The night of the Bacchanalia –  
that was the night it happened, right?

**XENA**

*(surprised)*

It happened to you, too?

For a moment Xena II looks at her without answering, then she nods.

**XENA II**

Yeah.

**XENA**

But with different results, huh?

**XENA II**

Yeah. You want to tell me  
how things went with you two?

Leaning her back against the wall, Xena stares straight ahead, smiling at the memory.

**XENA**

We were in a tavern. There was the usual  
excited atmosphere of every Bacchanalia.

We had danced together, we were  
hot, perhaps even a little tipsy.

*(pause)*

Suddenly, she took me in  
her arms and kissed me.

Xena II listens to her, fascinated, without interrupting.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

I was surprised... and believe me,  
that doesn't happen often...

*(chuckling to herself)*

...and for a moment I didn't know what  
to say or do. She took my response as  
a rejection and ran away in shame. So  
I ran after her and told her that she had  
done nothing wrong, nothing she had to feel  
ashamed about. Then I brought her back  
into our room at the inn. And there...

Smiling, Xena turns to her twin.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

It was our first time. It was wonderful,  
and it has never ceased to be.

*(pause)*

And how did things go  
with the two of you?

**XENA II**

*(shaking her head)*

More or less the same... until the kiss.  
But I didn't chase her. I was about to, but  
I didn't... and when I left the tavern she had  
disappeared. I went back to the inn to wait... She  
didn't come back until the dead of the night. She  
said she had been drinking too much... that the  
atmosphere of the Bacchanalia had gone to  
her head and that she didn't know how  
to apologize. I told her that of course  
there was no problem and nothing  
serious had really happened...  
We went to sleep and didn't  
speak about it again.

Xena II leans against the wall in an identical gesture to that of her double.

**XENA II**

*(cont'd)*

But now I wonder what would  
have happened if I had run after her.

**XENA**

*(nodding)*

Yeah. And I bet she wonders, too.

**XENA II**

Yeah. Most likely.

The two women remain side by side, with their backs against the wall in a mirroring pose,  
reflecting.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. HOUSE OF GABRIELLE II - SAME TIME**

In the other room, Gabrielle and her twin, sitting at a table facing each other, are also in the  
middle of a sensitive chat, and the last statement made by Gabrielle, causes the other woman  
to stare at her, eyes wide open.

**GABRIELLE II**

*(aghast)*

*You got married?!?*

Seeing her expression, Gabrielle laughs.

**GABRIELLE**

Yes, what's so extraordinary about that? You are an Amazon yourself. Never heard about the joining ritual?

Gabrielle II seems to be having difficulty absorbing the idea.

**GABRIELLE II**

No, actually, I haven't. But in any case, I would never think of putting it into practice... and certainly not with Xena.

**GABRIELLE**

*(smiling indulgently)*

'Cause Xena is not the joining type, right?

**GABRIELLE II**

*(smiling)*

Right. I remember once when we were hiding from the gods because of Eve. I suggested we stop among the Amazons and set up house together, but I could tell from her look that the mere thought of it made her break out in a rash. So I gave up.

Smiling in her turn, Gabrielle rests her elbows on the table and leans toward the other.

**GABRIELLE**

Yes, I know. It occurred to us, too.

Yet in the end, she popped the question to me.

*(pause)*

And I refused.

**GABRIELLE II**

*(surprised)*

*What?*

Gabrielle II leans toward Gabrielle across the table, protecting her belly from the edge.

**GABRIELLE II**

*(cont'd)*

*(excited)*

Come on, out with it.

**GABRIELLE**

*(with a delighted smile)*

Well, we needed to escort the Amazons to new lands in order to escape the slave traders, and the only one who could do that was Xena, of course. But the warriors, especially the younger ones, didn't want to follow her because she was not one of us, and so the elders came up with this idea: if Xena married me in the joining ritual, she would become an Amazon, and the Queen's consort, and as such, all should owe her obedience. So Xena asked me to marry her.

**GABRIELLE II**

And you refused?

**GABRIELLE**

Exactly. I thought she was sacrificing herself, as always, to the Greater Good, and I didn't want such an important decision for the two of us to be taken for...  
...for political reasons, so to speak.

**GABRIELLE II**

And then what?

Gabrielle II is completely absorbed by the story of her twin.

**GABRIELLE**

But then I saw her eyes, heard her voice... and I knew she was being sincere. Perhaps the starting point could be traced to the urgency of the situation, but her desire to marry me was born from her heart. So I said yes.

Gabrielle II takes a deep sigh, pushing back her chair.

Gabrielle, seeing with surprise her twin's eyes full of tears, puts her hand on hers.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

Hey. I'm sorry.

I didn't mean to sadden you.

Gabrielle II shakes her head slightly, smiling and wiping her eyes.

**GABRIELLE II**

Never mind. I'm not sad. I was just thinking how, sometimes, making or not making a simple decision can affect the fate of many lives.

**GABRIELLE**

Xena says that nothing is written and that all of us create our fate with our own hands.

**GABRIELLE II**

*(nodding)*

Mine says the same thing too.  
And they're probably right.  
We're the best proof, right?

A soft knock interrupts the conversation, and the two women turn to the door that opens to reveal Virgil, smiling, on the threshold.

**VIRGIL**

Excuse me, I didn't mean  
to disturb you, but...  
*(to Gabrielle)*  
...your Xena and Ares  
are ready to go, and...

**GABRIELLE**

*(smiling)*

I'll be right there.

Virgil closes the door, and Gabrielle stands up, looking at the her twin.

**GABRIELLE**

He's a good man, isn't he?

**GABRIELLE II**

The best.

**GABRIELLE**

And you love him?

**GABRIELLE II**

Profoundly.

**GABRIELLE**

Have no regrets then.



Gabrielle helps her up, stroking her belly.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

Besides you're going to have a joy  
that Xena and I never will.

Gabrielle II shrugs with a smile.

**GABRIELLE II**

Who knows? If we can be  
impregnated by a demon or an  
angel, I think that you should  
never give up hope.

Both Gabrielles burst into laughter, hugging. Then, already with her hand on the doorknob,  
Gabrielle turns to the other, looking at her inquisitively.

**GABRIELLE**

Just out of curiosity,  
how did you convince the  
Amazons to follow you?

**GABRIELLE II**

We didn't.

Gabrielle forgets the handle and turns all the way to her twin.

**GABRIELLE**

What you do mean?

**GABRIELLE II**

The things you told me didn't  
happen here. Not yet, at least.  
The few remaining tribes of  
Amazons are still in these lands.

*(pause)*

After I deliver, I was thinking of going  
to visit them... maybe with Xena.

Gabrielle remains motionless and silent for a long time.

**GABRIELLE**

*(nodding to himself)*

I see.

*(smiling)*

I wish you the best.

**GABRIELLE II**

*(smiling)*

And all the best to you.

The two women stare at each other for a moment in silence, then Gabrielle leaves, shutting the door behind her.

**FADE TO:**

**INT. TOMB CHAMBER - LATE AFTERNOON**

The tomb chamber is still dimly lit by the sinister Eye that seems to observe the movements of the people inside. In the almost total darkness of the crypt, the body of Ares appears surrounded by a light halo. Ares II holds him gingerly in his arms and, leaning with his burden on the large stone sarcophagus, he delicately lays him inside.

Xena and Gabrielle attend in silence what seems a kind of ritual, standing in the doorway of the chamber. The eyelids of the inanimate god do not flutter even slightly, his body is motionless and has given no signs of life since the moment his twin invested him with his aura.

**GABRIELLE**

*(softly)*

Why does the spell on him continue to work even here? I thought that the Eye inhibited any kind of powers.

**XENA**

*(softly)*

It does. But in this case, I think it's making an exception, since the aim is the same, namely to render him harmless.

Ares II straightens from the sarcophagus and turns toward them.

**ARES II**

However, no spell is eternal, and he is immortal, don't forget. Give me a hand.

He nods to Xena, who approaches quickly, and together they close the heavy lid, by force of their arms.

**XENA**

How long it will hold him?

**ARES II**

*(shrugging)*

Who knows? Centuries, or maybe a couple of millennia, if we're lucky. Perhaps one day some of your descendants will be called upon to deal with him.

The three turn their back to the great sarcophagus, and head towards the exit.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. UNDERGROUND - SHORTLY AFTER**

Ares II is the last one to come out from the opening and emerge in the underground corridor of the temple.

**ARES II**

*(cont'd)*

Now I hope I never see him again, nor the two of you.

**XENA**

*(looking at him mischievously)*

You really fear our presence could... give strange ideas to our doubles, right?

Ares II glares at her. Then, without answering, he steps back a few paces from the entrance of the chamber and raises both arms. Two dazzling rays emanate from his hands and hit the pile of stones and small boulders stacked nearby, fusing them into a single, large, stone door, which now completely seals the entrance.

**GABRIELLE**

Well. This should be an adequate safeguard. Even if he got out of the sarcophagus somehow, he'd never be able to open it without his powers.

**XENA**

Better to err on the side of caution. Once we get outside, put another seal on the temple door as well, to prevent any grave robber from getting this far. Let's try to keep his rest undisturbed for as long as possible.

CUT TO:

**EXT. TEMPLE OF ARES - SHORTLY AFTER**

Outside, Ares II closes the heavy door, and once again moves back a couple of steps. Then he shows Xena a point, about halfway up the door.

**ARES II**

Put your right hand on it.

Puzzled, Xena comes up and, glancing at him suspiciously, does as he said. Another ray shoots from the fingers of the god, brightly lighting up her hand. Gabrielle nearby jumps, crying out, and Xena immediately pulls her hand away, as if scalded. Then she looks at it surprised. There are no traces of wounds or burns. Her eyes then go back to the point on the door where she had laid her hand. Now a circle etched in stone is clearly visible with the imprint of a hand at the center and two glittering stones embedded in the upper and lower extremities.

**ARES II**

*(smirking)*

There. Now only your hand can open this door. If you want to come back sometime and make sure everything is okay, you simply have to put your hand on the imprint, press it, and swing it until it touches first the ruby stone, and then the emerald. The stones are showy but they're not real, if you were about to ask, and no thief will be tempted to desecrate a temple of Ares, to steal fakes stones.

Gabrielle approaches to examine the bizarre lock.

**GABRIELLE**

Ingenious.

*(to Xena)*

It doesn't remind you that box Pandora used to carry everywhere?

Xena looks up at the temple that, with the fall of the first shadows of the evening, seems even more sinister and decrepit.

**XENA**

Anyway, I don't think we'll come back here often.

Ares II turns to the desert behind them, and with a wave of his hand, re-opens the purring vortex that points its big mouth toward them.

**ARES II**

Good. Now it's time I went back to my world. See you no more, my dears. And though I can't say that it's been a pleasure, thanks for your help.

With a chivalrous bow, he jumps into the vortex that swallows him, disappearing in an instant.

Left alone, Xena and Gabrielle watch the horizon darkening before them. Gabrielle looks at her companion.

**GABRIELLE**

Are you okay?

**XENA**

*(nodding)*

Yeah. Fine.

**GABRIELLE**

It's almost dark. You prefer to leave tomorrow morning?

Xena heads resolutely to the already saddled horses who are waiting nearby.

**XENA**

No. The sooner we leave this place, the better.

**GABRIELLE**

Right behind ya.

Gabrielle runs after Xena and a moment later, they jump upon their horses and gallop at full speed toward the mountains.

**FADE OUT.**

**END OF ACT FOUR**

TAG

FADE IN:

EXT. FARM - NIGHT

As soon as the vortex opens on the landscape of the old and dilapidated farm, Ares II sees a human form on the porch, leaning against one of the posts. Here too the light of day is surrendering to the darkness, and the figure is nothing more than a shadow, indistinguishable from the dark of night. For a moment he feels a shiver of anxiety grabbing him by the throat. Then the shadow raises its head, and Ares heaves a sigh of relief when he clearly distinguishes a long ponytail.

With a leap far more graceful than previous ones, the god lands. The vortex closes behind him, as its persistent buzz dies out. Silence reigns on the rural landscape.

For a long moment, Ares II and Xena II remain motionless, looking at each other. Then slowly, Ares II moves toward the house, slowly going up the few wooden steps. Xena II continues to watch him without speaking.

ARES II

How's Gabrielle?

XENA II

*(raising her eyebrows)*

Why ever are you asking about her? Usually you don't even mention her. In any case, she's well, thank you. It doesn't seem that her pregnancy has suffered any from this bad experience. Actually, she seemed almost thrilled to be back in action, despite her condition.

ARES II

I'm glad.

Ares II scratches his bearded chin, with what appears to be a bit of embarrassment.

ARES II

*(cont'd)*

Next time we could visit her together. I think it's time to break down this barrier between us.

XENA II

*(smiling)*

Hmm... If the visit of our

doubles has such an effect  
on you, I hope they come back  
and visit us soon.

The sideways glance that the god gives her doesn't seem very convincing, because Xena II breaks out in a slight chuckle and, finally moving away from the post and approaching him, she stares at him with an indulgent gaze.

**XENA II**

*(cont'd)*

Tell me the truth, you hoped  
that I wouldn't find out that  
they'd been here, right?

Ares II doesn't answer, just looks at her.

**XENA II**

*(cont'd)*

Why? Were you afraid that meeting  
them would make me think that  
Gabrielle was my destiny, and  
that I would have left you  
to run away with her?

He looks down, shaking his head.

**ARES II**

I don't even know what I thought.  
I think it was the fact of being  
suddenly confronted with the  
materialization of my nightmare.

Xena II lays a hand on his arm.

**XENA II**

A nightmare that saved you...  
*that saved us all.*  
*(pause)*

Or in this moment, you would be  
buried in an underground tomb in  
a distant world... and I'd be crazy  
at the thought that the man I love  
had killed my best friend.

Ares II nods in silence. She takes him by both arms, staring straight at him, looking serious and determined.

**XENA II**

*(cont'd)*

Listen to me.

Out there, there are probably thousands of worlds, where many other Xenas have made many other choices that have taken them in many other directions.

But here in this world, *I* am Xena.

*(pause)*

*I*. And I chose to join my road and my life to yours. Even with all the doubts and problems that implies.

It was *my* choice and I'm not going to turn back.

The god and the warrior look at each other in silence. Then Ares II puts his arms around her, bending over her, while Xena II raises her face toward his and their lips merge in a long passionate kiss.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. CAMP - NIGHT**

The fire crackles merrily in the small camp. At a short distance among the trees, the shadows of Argo and Gabrielle's unnamed horse can just be seen. By the fire, Xena and Gabrielle are wrapped in the warmth of the thick fur of the bedroll and each other's soft embrace.

Suddenly Gabrielle raises her blond head from her preferred position, in the hollow between Xena's bosom and shoulder, watching her companion who is looking up into the starry sky.

**GABRIELLE**

Not asleep?

**XENA**

In a little while.

**GABRIELLE**

You're not sensing his presence again, I hope.

**XENA**

*(sighing)*

No. And I don't think I'll sense it anymore.

*(pause)*

At least, not in this life.

**GABRIELLE**

And do you mind?



Xena remains silent for a moment.

**XENA**

No. Ares was out of control.  
We had to stop him.

Partly reassured, Gabrielle leans back down on her.

**GABRIELLE**

I'm glad to hear that.  
'Cause when I saw you  
kissing him...

Xena wraps her more tightly in her arms, smiling.

**XENA**

I told you so. It was  
part of the plan.

**GABRIELLE**

I know. But...

Xena lifts her chin, so that their eyes meet.

**XENA**

No *buts*. That was just  
a role I played. Nothing else.

Gabrielle nods, before laying her head down again on Xena's shoulder.

**GABRIELLE**

Congratulations. You're  
a great Thespian.

**XENA**

I have many skills.

**GABRIELLE**

*(giggling)*

Finally. Also this time  
you've managed to say it.

**XENA**

You gave me the chance.

**GABRIELLE**

Right.

The two women remain silent yet for a few moments. Then Gabrielle sits up suddenly.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

Oh, no! Damn it anyhow!

Xena sits up, looking at Gabrielle, alarmed.

**XENA**

What's wrong?

**GABRIELLE**

*My boots!!* I forgot the bag with my boots inside, back at my twin's house!

Xena stares at Gabrielle for a moment, then drops back with a laugh.

**XENA**

Well, forget about them. I'm not making another dimensional trip just to recover them.

Gabrielle collapses prostrate on her partner.

**GABRIELLE**

No! How could I... I'll never find such beautiful boots ever again. I'm inconsolable.

**XENA**

*(smiling mischievously)*

Really?

**GABRIELLE**

*(gravely)*

Absolutely.

Xena turns to Gabrielle, pulling the furs over their heads.

**XENA**

Let's see if it's true.

Through the thick fur comes a series of muffled shrieks and giggles, which soon turns into gasps and moans, punctuated by movements that are perceived under the blanket. Then Gabrielle's voice, breathless and stifled, comes out.

**GABRIELLE**

*(panting)*

Let's hope... at least...

*(pause)*

...they... fit her.

*(pause)*

Pregnant women... sometimes...

*(pause)*

...get swollen ankles...

**XENA**

*(growling)*

Gabrielle...

**GABRIELLE**

You know... she thinks...

*(pause)*

...that one day... we could have...

*(pause)*

...a child... even... the two of us...

**XENA**

*(roaring)*

*Gabrielle! You're making me  
lose my concentration!*

**FADE OUT.**

**DISCLAIMER**

The dimensional vortex was not damaged during the making of this motion picture;  
however, the Agency for Interdimensional Travels recommends moderate use.

Thank you.