

Xena: Warrior Princess - Subtext Virtual Season 7



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STORY BY

Melissa Good

SCREENGRABS

Judi Mair

PRODUCED BY

Carol Stephens

ARTWORK

Lucia

DIRECTED BY

Denise Byrd

TITLE GRAPHIC

Linda (Calli)

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TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. ROAD TO ITHACA - DAY

Xena and Gabrielle stroll along a well-tended road. They pass a few others going the same way. Their fellow travelers seem friendly. They wave at Xena and Gabrielle as they go past.

GABRIELLE

Ithaca. It's been a long time, hasn't it?



XENA

A lot longer for them than for us. We got it good - we get to see all our old friend's kids grown up, and we don't have to get old to do it.



Gabrielle chuckles.

GABRIELLE

Yeah, that's true. Still, I'm glad we heard about Ulysses' daughter getting married in that old port town. Wonder if he'll remember us?

XENA

Probably not. It's been a lifetime for him.

Gabrielle gives Xena a look.



GABRIELLE

Oh, I bet he remembers you, Xena, no matter how many lifetimes it's been.

XENA

What's that supposed to mean?



Gabrielle walks on, starting to whistle as she walks. Xena rolls her eyes, and shakes her head.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY OF ITHACA - GATES - LATE AFTERNOON

Xena and Gabrielle approach the city gates. They are among a crowd of people headed in the same direction... some in wagons, some on foot.

Xena notices that the walls seem to be newly repaired, and that the gates are patched in several places.

XENA

Looks like everyone else heard about the wedding, too.



Gabrielle dodges a cart, narrowly avoiding getting run over.

GABRIELLE

Yeah. Doesn't look that different though, does it?

Xena turns in a circle, examining the city. A man bumps into her, and reacts, reaching for his weapon.

MAN

Watch it, you....

Both Xena and Gabrielle outdraw him, and he thinks better of it. He removes his hand from his sword hilt and backs up.



MAN
(*Cont'd*)
Hey! Sorry!

The man slips away. Xena and Gabrielle relax.

GABRIELLE
Touchy, huh?

Xena looks around. She notices the nearby buildings seem patched and battered.

XENA
Looks like they've had trouble.



GABRIELLE
(*thoughtfully*)
And we weren't here? Amazing.



Xena winds a finger into Gabrielle's heart necklace and leads her on.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY OF ITHACA - TAVERN - LATE AFTERNOON

Xena and Gabrielle find a tavern. Gabrielle buys Xena a mug of ale. They sit at the bar, drinking and watching the crowd. The bartender leans on the bar next to them and watches, too.

BARTENDER
Look at 'em.

Xena and Gabrielle look at the crowd. They don't see anything really interesting.

GABRIELLE

What are we looking at?



The bartender points at a group of people. They are standing together, looking around with suspicious faces.

BARTENDER

Keffalonians.

A moon ago, they were fighting us.
Now look at 'em.

The group moves on, pointing at some of the buildings and laughing.

BARTENDER

(Cont'd)

Bastards.

Xena notices a group of city men following the Keffalonians at a cautious distance.

XENA

You were at war with them?



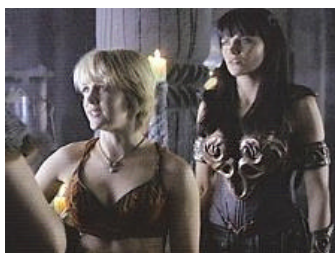
BARTENDER

For years.

Still would be except for the truce.

GABRIELLE

A truce? That's good to hear.



The bartender watches as the Keffalonians walk back past them.

BARTENDER

If you can call it that.
More like Ulysses bought peace.

XENA

What do you mean?



BARTENDER

You new around here? He traded his
daughter to the Keffalonians to stop the war.

Xena and Gabrielle look at each other in consternation.

XENA

Doesn't sound like the Ulysses I know.

The bartender shrugs and walks off.

GABRIELLE

You think he's telling the truth?



XENA

Let's go find out.

Xena and Gabrielle down their ale and start to head off. Before they can get far from the bar, a loud horn blares, and soldiers start clearing the road.

Xena pulls Gabrielle to one side, and they watch as a troop of people mounted on horses trot by. The man in the lead is tall, handsome, and young. He is dressed in rich velvet and silks, and his horse has gold trimmed tack.

The bartender walks up behind Xena and Gabrielle.

BARTENDER

Speak of the Bacchae, and there he is.

GABRIELLE

Who?

BARTENDER

Prince Kelvin of Keffalonia.
Here to pick up his bride.

XENA

Nice clothes.

BARTENDER

Bought with the advance on his dowry.

GABRIELLE

But... What if the wedding falls through?

An older, heavyset man who had been listening to them now leans closer and interrupts.

OLD MAN

Then it's back to war, lassie, and we'll
strip that silk off his back and send
him home to papa in a burlap sack!

The crowd around them nods in agreement. There is some grumbling.

BARTENDER

(under his breath)

That wedding better go through. Or else.

Xena and Gabrielle look at each other, and we....



FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. CITY OF ITHACA - MARKET - MORNING

Xena and Gabrielle stroll through the marketplace.



GABRIELLE

You don't think we should go find
Ulysses and see if we can help, Xena?

XENA

Help what? It's already a done deal, Gabrielle.
Besides, it's not the first time rulers have
used their kids to make alliances.

GABRIELLE

I know, but....

XENA

No buts. We'll go to the ceremony,
congratulate them, and that's it.

Gabrielle stops and picks up a colorful blanket. She examines it in silence. Xena watches her.

XENA

(Cont'd)

Besides, maybe she likes the prince.
He's not bad looking.



Gabrielle pays for the blanket, and slings it over her shoulder. She rejoins Xena.

GABRIELLE

Every kid likes to dream about being a princess. If they
only knew it's not all it's cracked up to be, huh?

XENA

Hmm. Yeah.

Xena stops and picks up a wicked looking hatchet. She examines it, while Gabrielle watches her.

GABRIELLE

Maybe they will be happy together.
You never know.

Xena flicks the hatchet into a nearby piece of wood. It sticks. Xena pays for the hatchet and takes it with her. Gabrielle puts her arm around Xena as they walk.

GABRIELLE

(Cont'd)

I'm glad I was able to give my heart to someone for
no other reason than that I loved them, though.



Xena smiles.

XENA

Me, too.



They turn a corner, and spot a large, fancifully ornate building right at the corner of the market. The walls are colored a surprising shade of pink.

GABRIELLE

What is that?



XENA

Beats me. Let's go find out.



Xena and Gabrielle approach the building. On the front door is a sign.

GABRIELLE

"The Celestial Abode of the Artist."
Sounds different.

Xena pushes the door open and they walk inside.

CUT TO:

INT. ARTISTS' STUDIO - DAY

Xena and Gabrielle enter the room and close the door. Inside, the building is even more eccentric. The walls have been painted with all sorts of designs, and there are statues stuck in odd corners. A woman spots them and rushes over. This is the ARTIST LOOCHA - she is medium height, with chestnut brown hair and is dressed in flowing, albeit paint cover robes.

LOOCHA

Hello! Hello! My!
What has the morning brought me?

The artist circles them like a hummingbird, darting in and out and examining both of them closely.

GABRIELLE

Um... hi. Could you, um....



The artist grabs Xena and pulls her over to the window that lets in a good amount of light.

LOOCHA

You! You! Ah! This is wonderful!
Magnificent! Perfect!



Xena looks like she's been attacked by a talking cat. The artist starts to reach up and touch her hair and Xena clamps her hands down on both wrists and holds the woman still. The rest of her body continues to move, however.

XENA

Hey!

Gabrielle walks over to watch. The artist realizes she's not going anywhere and stops.

LOOCHA

Ah, your pardon! I just got so excited.
Forgive me.

Xena cautiously releases the artist.

XENA

Who are you?

LOOCHA

You must let me paint you. You must.
You simply must. You are perfect.

XENA

What?



LOOCHA

You are perfect. Your face, your body - you are
simply perfect. And those eyes! Magnificent.
You must let me paint you. You must.



Xena looks at Gabrielle. Gabrielle seems amused.

LOOCHA

(Cont'd)
(to Gabrielle)

I'm sure you agree, don't you?

Gabrielle ponders the question.

GABRIELLE

Mm... She's got her good points,
but I don't think we have time....



Xena's eyebrows go up.

LOOCHA

But you must! Really!

XENA

Good points, eh?
Hey, how long with this take?

The artist is thrilled. She hops up and down and claps her hands.

LOOCHA

Just a day! From dawn to dusk, you must sit
for me without moving! I will capture perfection!

Xena starts to leave.

XENA

Ah....



GABRIELLE

A whole day? I don't think Xena could
sit still for a whole minute. Sorry! Bye!

LOOCHA

Wait! Wait! You must stay! Wait!
I could give you some scrolls to
read while you were posing! Wait!

Xena and Gabrielle make their escape, with the artist chasing after them.

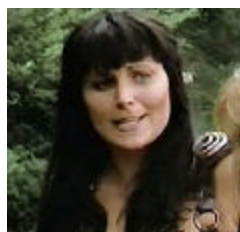
CUT TO:

EXT. ITHACA MARKETPLACE - DAY

Xena and Gabrielle duck past some wagons and try to find a route through the packed market stalls.

XENA

Good points?



GABRIELLE

Honey, I'll swoon over your perfection later, okay?
Let's just get out of her clutches first.



Xena lifts the edge of a tent flap and they duck under it. They run between two fabric stalls and almost get tangled in them, then emerge into a main crossroad and stop dead.

Coming right at them is a large party of mounted horsemen, complete with guards. On the lead horse is Ulysses. He spots them and his eyes fall on Xena. He has, of course, aged almost thirty years since the last time they saw him, and is now a reasonably distinguished looking older man with almost silver white hair and a neatly trimmed beard.

He pulls his horse to a halt and stares, his jaw dropping.

GABRIELLE

(Cont'd)

Looks like he remembers you.

XENA

Yeah. Wonder if he'll recognize you.

GABRIELLE

Bet he doesn't.

ULYSSES

Xena?

Behind them, the artist catches up, then spots the royal party and halts. She snaps her fingers, then backs up and disappears back into the crowd.

Xena and Gabrielle walk over to Ulysses' horse. The rest of the riding party clusters around curiously.

XENA

Hello, Ulysses. Been a long time.

ULYSSES

A lot longer for me than for you,
it looks like! By the gods!

Ulysses finally looks at Gabrielle.

ULYSSES

(Cont'd)

Gabrielle! At least you got a haircut!

Surprised, Gabrielle laughs.

GABRIELLE

Among other things. How are you, Ulysses?
We heard about the wedding, and thought we'd stop by.

Ulysses seems overwhelmed.

ULYSSES

I don't know what to say. But I'm glad you're here!
Come on, we're going up to the castle.
Now there's really reason to celebrate!

Xena and Gabrielle join the party, and they move off.

CUT TO:

INT. ULYSSES' THRONE ROOM - DAY

Ulysses sits with Xena and Gabrielle at a large table. They are all drinking wine.

ULYSSES

I just can't believe it. How can you both
be sitting here, as though nothing changed?

Xena and Gabrielle exchange looks. Xena takes out a coin and flips it.

GABRIELLE

Heads.

Xena shows her the coin. Gabrielle sighs.



XENA

It's your turn anyway.
I explained the last time.

Ulysses just watches them, obviously amazed at their appearance. He keeps staring at Xena.

ULYSSES

I only wish Penelope were here to see this.
We talked about you all the time.

GABRIELLE

What happened?

ULYSSES

A plague, years back. The healers tried everything, but she was too weak.

XENA

I'm sorry.



Ulysses nods.

ULYSSES

It's the way of life.
Except in your case, it seems!

GABRIELLE

Xena and I... got trapped someplace where
time had no meaning. It's not magic.



ULYSSES

Ah. Well, I'm glad no matter the reason
that you decided to come here.
It's been a tough year for us.

XENA

I saw the damage. War?

Ulysses nods. He gets up from his chair and paces. He is uncomfortable.

ULYSSES

Many say I bought my way out of it.
Maybe I did, but it was that or risk fighting
until nothing was left of either of our islands.

Xena gets up and walks around as well.

XENA

Looks like you did all right.

ULYSSES

It was a tough treaty. My enemy wasn't easy to convince, and I had to give up a lot. But if the truce holds, it means our survival so perhaps it's worth it.

XENA

What does he get out of it?



ULYSSES

Come on, I'll show you.

CUT TO:

INT. ULYSSES' TREASURE ROOM - DAY

Xena, Gabrielle, and Ulysses enter. Inside is a vast treasure that Ulysses collected on his many travels.

ULYSSES

Besides my daughter, of course. Half of this, and what he truly covets.

Ulysses points at the wall. Xena and Gabrielle look. It is a picture of Penelope, painted in gorgeously realistic color. It is truly spectacular.

GABRIELLE

Wow.

ULYSSES

He said he'd heard me bragging about having a painting of the most beautiful woman in the world, and he wanted it. That was the lynch pin of the treaty, and I almost....

Ulysses stops speaking, and just shakes his head.

GABRIELLE

I think your wife would be honored to know her image saved her people.



Ulysses looks at Gabrielle and smiles.

ULYSSES

You always had a way with words, Gabrielle.
You haven't changed a bit, either.

GABRIELLE

Actually, we've both changed more than you
could possibly imagine. But thanks anyway.

Xena walks over to look at the painting. She is honestly impressed.

XENA

Incredible work.



ULYSSES

Yes, it is. The artist is a native of Ithaca,
and her work is without compare.

Xena and Gabrielle exchange looks.

GABRIELLE

She doesn't live in a pink house, does she?



ULYSSES

Why, yes! Did you meet her?

Xena starts laughing.

XENA

Oh, yeah.

Ulysses joins her near the painting and looks up.

ULYSSES

I will be sorry to see her go. But you're right, Gabrielle. She would be honored.

(beat)

Enough of this reflecting - my friends are here. Let's go celebrate!

Ulysses offers his arm to Xena. Xena takes it, and they walk out. Gabrielle examines the portrait for a moment in silence.



Thoughtfully, she turns and follows Xena and Ulysses.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. XENA AND GABRIELLE'S ROOM – ULYSSES' CASTLE - AFTERNOON

Xena and Gabrielle are in the extravagant room Ulysses has brought them to in the castle. There is a large, four-poster bed in the center, and a lot of suspiciously poofy looking cushions around. The walls are covered in drapery, and there is a bowl of fresh flowers on the table.

XENA

Not bad. Once I convinced him we didn't need separate rooms.



GABRIELLE

(chuckling)

Still clueless after all these years.

(beat)

Still grabbing at you after all these years too, I see.

Xena sprawls on the bed on her side, propping her head on one hand. She smiles.

XENA

Still a little jealous after all these years, Gabrielle?
C'mon. He could be my father now.

Gabrielle sits down on a ridiculously overstuffed chair. She has, again, a thoughtful look on her face. Her eyes take on a far off expression.

GABRIELLE

Yeah, well. Maybe that memory still stings a little, even now.

(pausing)

It sure did then.



Xena sits up. She looks at Gabrielle uncertainly, and then she gets up off the bed and walks to the window to look out. They both start speaking at the same time.

XENA

I wasn't really....

GABRIELLE

You know I'd thought things were going along pretty good between us then, and....

They both stop.

XENA

I was scared.



Gabrielle just looks at her in silence.

XENA

(Cont'd)

I knew my feelings about you were changing, and I wanted to... I didn't want it to be just some physical thing.

Gabrielle closes her eyes, a pained expression on her face.



XENA

(Cont'd)

So I thought if I... anyway, it was stupid.



They are both quiet for a few moments.

GABRIELLE

(quietly)

You almost broke my heart that night.



Xena slowly turns to face her. She walks over and kneels down by the chair, and they look into each other's eyes.

XENA

I'm sorry I did it.



Gabrielle reaches up and lays her hand on Xena's cheek.

GABRIELLE

So was I. But you know, when you started talking to him about soulmates, something inside me told me you weren't talking about the two of you, so I just held on to that.

XENA

(wistfully)

I wasn't and when I said that, I knew.

GABRIELLE

About us?

Xena nods. Gabrielle leans forward and they kiss. When they part, they both smile at each other.

XENA

Glad we got that out.

GABRIELLE

Me too.

(pausing)

But if he touches you again, I'm going to shove a sai up his butt.



They both chuckle.

XENA

Let's go party.

Xena gets up and brushes herself off.

GABRIELLE

You're not going to wear that, are you?

Xena looks down at herself.

XENA

This or what I wear under it.
Not a lot of choice, since it's all I've got.



Gabrielle gets up and goes to her bag.

GABRIELLE

I'm sure I've got something else you
can wear in here, Xena... it's a party!



Xena rolls her eyes, and watches in amusement as Gabrielle starts to pull things out of the bag.
There is a knock at the door, and she goes to answer it.



Xena opens the door to find a valet, holding two gowns.

VALET

My master sent these. He thought
you might like to wear them.

Xena accepts the gowns.

XENA

Thanks. Nice timing.

Xena closes the door. Gabrielle pauses in her digging to look.

GABRIELLE

That was thoughtful.

Xena selects the longer of the two gowns and holds it up to her body. The neckline plunges
approximately down to her belly button.

XENA

Very.

Gabrielle's eyes narrow.

GABRIELLE

He's toast.



CUT TO:

INT. ULYSSES' BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

The banquet hall is a huge room. It has high ceilings, and many tables full of people. On one side of the room, a group of musicians are playing.

Xena and Gabrielle enter. They are dressed in their borrowed gowns. Ulysses spots them and hurries over.

ULYSSES

Xena! Great.

I saved a seat for you, right next to me.

C'mon.

Xena evades his outstretched hand.

XENA

Thanks, but no thanks. I've got a partner already.

We'll find a seat. G'wan back to your guests.



Confused, Ulysses looks at Xena, then looks around, obviously trying to figure out who she's talking about. Finally, his eyes fall on Gabrielle, who is giving him a look that would have easily curdled goat's milk into cheese if he'd had a glass of it in his hand.

ULYSSES

Oh! Ah, I didn't mean....

Xena swats him on the back and points to the high table. Chastened, a little like a spanked puppy, Ulysses retreats.

GABRIELLE

Think he got the hint?



XENA

Probably not. C'mon.

Xena and Gabrielle stroll after Ulysses, and find themselves a seat next to the tall prince from Keffalonia, and a pretty, dark haired girl dressed in a modest, though pretty gown.

GIRL

Hello. I'm Shana. You must be Xena.

XENA

How'd you guess?

The sarcasm goes over the girl's head.

SHANA

Oh, my father's spoken of you many times.
This is my betrothed, Prince Kelvin.



The prince is looking at them curiously.

KELVIN

Nice to meet you... Um... Xena, is it?

XENA

That's right. This is my partner, Gabrielle.

Both the prince and Shana look at Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE

Hi.

A server comes by and offers them a tray of tidbits. They all take some.

XENA

Thanks.

The prince turns to Xena.

KELVIN

So... what line of work are you two in?

Xena and Gabrielle, caught in mid bite, exchange looks. Gabrielle swallows hastily.

GABRIELLE

We do a lot of... ah... free-lance work.

KELVIN

Oh? Really? What kind?

XENA

I'd tell you, but then I'd have to kill you.



That shuts the prince up. There is an awkward silence.

GABRIELLE

(under her breath)

So. How about those Spartans?



CUT TO:

INT. ULYSSES' BANQUET HALL - MUCH LATER THAT NIGHT

The musicians have gone from playing stately pavaues to bawdy drinking songs. In the corner, some of the guests are singing along. Some of the guests have serving wenches in their laps. Some of the guests are in the laps of serving wenches.

At the high table, Ulysses and his friends are sitting around telling tall tales. The crowd listens and applauds. Kelvin and Shana have moved closer, wanting to hear the stories.

Xena and Gabrielle sit and listen.

GABRIELLE

I don't remember it happening like that, do you?



XENA

No, but let him have his fun.

They watch as Kelvin and Shana hold hands.

GABRIELLE

I feel better about them now.
I think they really like each other.

Xena slaps Gabrielle's shoulder lightly.

XENA

Yeah, see? Everything turned
out fine for a change.

GABRIELLE

Nice, isn't it?

Ulysses stands up, very unsteadily. He starts to pantomime drawing a large bow. One of the watching, very drunk men stands up.

DRUNK MAN

Betcha can't do that now, ya old goat!

Gabrielle leans over to Xena.

GABRIELLE

He couldn't do it then, either.

Xena smirks.



ULYSSES

To Hades with ya! I can! I'll prove it!
Baltaroth, bring me my bow!

GABRIELLE

What is it with guys and their weapons?

Xena starts chuckling.

GABRIELLE

(Cont'd)

I mean it. First thing they do to prove
a point is whip it out, and wave it around.

Xena laughs harder.

GABRIELLE

(Cont'd)

What?

BALTAROTH

But sir!

ULYSSES

Baltaroth! Do as yours told! Get me bow!
I'll pull it back, and let 'er fly!

Xena continues to laugh.

GABRIELLE

I didn't think it was **that** funny.



CUT TO:

INT. ULYSSES' BANQUET HALL - SHORT TIME LATER

Baltaroth enters, carrying the famous bow. He carries it over to Ulysses, holding it carefully in both hands.

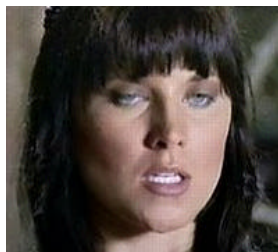
BALTAROTH

Here, sir, but....

Ulysses takes the bow and strokes it lovingly. Then he sets about stringing it. But due to the wine, the time, and the fading of his youthful vigor, he can't quite do it.

XENA

Been here, done this.



Xena gets up and starts to cross over to him. Gabrielle, however, reaches after her and snags her by the back of the gown. Gabrielle holds on, only barely keeping her seat by grabbing the chair arm. Xena turns and looks at her.

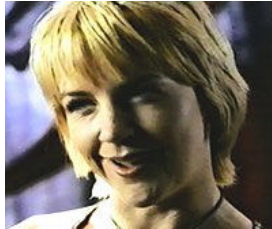
GABRIELLE

Ah ah ah. Get back here.

XENA
Gabrielle!

Gabrielle hauls her back. Xena humors her and returns to her seat. Gabrielle hops up and goes to Ulysses side. He is still struggling with the bow.

GABRIELLE
Hi.



Ulysses looks at her.

ULYSSES
Ah... Gabrielle. Be just a minute, here.

Gabrielle reaches up and grasps the top of the bow, then neatly braces her foot against the bottom and draws the bow forward, slipping the string on for him.

GABRIELLE
There ya go.

Ulysses gapes at her, then recovers.

ULYSSES
Oh! Ah, thanks Gabrielle!
You're a real trooper!

Gabrielle smiles, and waggles her fingers at Ulysses, then she turns and waltzes back over to Xena and taking her seat again. She lets out a little, contented sigh.

XENA
Happy?



GABRIELLE
Very.

Ulysses takes an arrow and nocks it, then he lifts the bow and with a mighty heave, pulls the string back. The effort unbalances him, however, and he stumbles, inadvertently releasing the arrow. The powerful bow lets loose, and the arrow speeds true through the air, ripping right through the newly mounted painting of Penelope in its place of pride above the mantel.

Everyone stares in shock. The arrow has pierced the painting right between Penelope's eyes.

ULYSSES

Ah.... Ah.... Ah....

Slowly, the painting comes away from the wall, and tumbles forward, landing with a crash as the fabric is pierced by the dozen fireplace tools it fell on.

There is absolute silence. Even Xena and Gabrielle are staring at the painting with their mouths open.

KELVIN

Uh....

Everyone looks at Kelvin.

KELVIN

(Cont'd)

You... uh... don't have two of those, do you?



Ulysses falls back into his chair with a crash, and we....

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

INT. XENA AND GABRIELLE'S ROOM – ULYSSES' CASTLE - MORNING

Xena stands by the window. She is dressed in just her leathers. Gabrielle steps out of the bath area, a bit of towel wrapped around her. The big bed is mussed, and a pillow has somehow found it's way to the very far side of the room.

Xena turns and saunters back over to the bed. She sits down and relaxes as she waits for Gabrielle to dress.

GABRIELLE

That was certainly an unexpected end to the evening.

XENA

Thanks.

Gabrielle turns and looks at her. She removes the towel from around her body and snaps it at Xena, hitting her on the shoulder. Xena grins, but doesn't move to avoid the towel.

GABRIELLE

I meant Ulysses shooting that picture.

The door flies open, and Ulysses enters. Xena reacts with lightning speed, snatching the towel from Gabrielle's hands and whipping it at Ulysses. The fabric wraps around his head, blocking his vision, and he stops short.

ULYSSES

Xena!

Ulysses reaches for the towel to remove it.

XENA

Touch that, and you're a dead man.



ULYSSES

But... but!!!

XENA

I mean it.

Ulysses decides not to risk it. He stands still.

Gabrielle slips on her skirt and fastens it, then she drapes her top around her neck. Xena gets up and goes behind her, tying the velvet strings. She peeks over at Ulysses, then plants a kiss on the back of Gabrielle's neck. Gabrielle grins.

XENA
(Cont'd)
Okay.

Cautiously, Ulysses removes the towel. He turns to face them.

XENA
(Cont'd)
Got a problem with knocking?

ULYSSES
Xena, I need your help. I'm in real trouble.

XENA
I noticed.

A little exasperated, Ulysses walks over to her.

ULYSSES
Xena, I'm serious.

Xena sits down on the bed.

XENA
All right, I'm listening.



Gabrielle continues dressing as she also listens.

ULYSSES
Kelvin's father will be here soon... today! If I don't deliver the whole dowry to him, he'll call the wedding off or worse!

XENA
C'mon, Ulysses... it's just a painting!
Put something else in instead!

GABRIELLE
(under her breath)
How about a nice used bow?



Ulysses paces back and forth obviously upset.

ULYSSES

You don't understand. He won't take anything else. He wants that painting!

GABRIELLE

Why not just get another one from the artist?
You said she lives here, right?

Ulysses turns to look at Gabrielle.

ULYSSES

Don't you think I've thought of that?
She never copies herself. She won't do it!
I've already asked her!

Gabrielle looks past Ulysses at Xena, who is still seated on the bed.

GABRIELLE

Bet she'd do it if Xena asked her.



XENA

Gabbbrieeelllee.

Ulysses jumps at the suggestion eagerly.

ULYSSES

Hey! You know her? Yeah! You've got a nice set of.... Ah... you've got a great way of....

(beat)

You can be real persuasive
when you want to be, Xena.

Xena gives both Ulysses and Gabrielle a look that could calve a cow at ten paces. However, she nods.



XENA

All right. I'll ask her. No promises.

Ulysses looks relieved.

ULYSSES

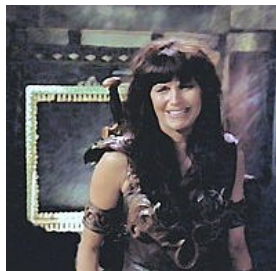
Thanks Xena, I really owe you one this time.

Ulysses rushes out. Xena glares at Gabrielle. Gabrielle affects a very innocent look. Xena throws a pillow at her.

CUT TO:

INT. ARTISTS' STUDIO - DAY

Xena and Gabrielle enter. Or, more precisely, Gabrielle enters, and pulls Xena in after her. If it is possible for a six-foot tall woman in leather to look like a small child being brought to the dentist, Xena manages to do it.



GABRIELLE

Hello?

XENA

No one's home. C'mon.
Let's go find another way to....

The artist pops out of somewhere. She spots them.

LOOCHA

Ah! My perfection! You're back!
I knew you'd come back!



Xena growls under her breath.

GABRIELLE

Um, hi. Listen, we really need your help.

The artist stops. The artist looks at both of them. The artist cocks her head to one side. The artist's eyebrows go way, way up. Xena decides to throw the artist's train of thought off the track into the water.

XENA

Your city's in trouble.
They need your help. We don't.

LOOCHA

(under her breath)

Booorring....

(brightly)

All righty! What's the trouble?
Walls all drab again?
I told them that orange would fade.

GABRIELLE

Not exactly.



LOOCHA

Don't tell me he's whining about me
painting that Oddy whatever thing
on the castle ceiling again.

XENA

No. It's more complicated and
less egotistical than that.

The artist looks interested again.

LOOCHA

Well then, come into my parlor
and let's get comfortable, shall we?

The artist goes to the doorway and crooks her finger at them. Xena and Gabrielle look at each other, sigh, and follow.



CUT TO:

INT. ARTISTS' STUDIO WORKROOM - DAY

The artist's workroom is a wild mix of works in progress, works no longer in progress and very odd items whose purpose seems very obscure. Xena and Gabrielle sit on a padded round banquette. Gabrielle holds a cup of tea. Xena is looking behind her at a clay gargoyle in the center of the banquette. The artist is standing in front of them.

LOOCHA

HoooooIIddd on there! Are you telling me that pompous old windbag shot my picture?

GABRIELLE

Well, ah....

XENA

Yeah.



The artist puts her arm over her eyes in a dramatic pose.

LOOCHA

I feel like I've lost a child.

Xena and Gabrielle exchange significant looks.

XENA AND GABRIELLE

No, you don't.

The artist drops her arm in surprise.

LOOCHA

You don't understand. I worked on that painting for days... weeks... moons!

XENA

Was it days, weeks or moons?

GABRIELLE

I'm sure you must have. It was beautiful.

LOOCHA

It was the longest, the biggest....

(beat, to Gabrielle)

Why, thank you! A discriminating eye!

But then, you must be used to perfection - living with her!

GABRIELLE

(mischievously)

Oh, absolutely. It's a joy to wake up every morning, let me tell you.



Xena is over it.

XENA

Look. Can you replace it? Ulysses promised it to the Keffalonians as part of his daughter's dowry.



LOOCHA

No.

GABRIELLE

No?

LOOCHA

No, no, no. I never, ever, ever, ever copy myself. Never.

GABRIELLE

But, Loocha, there's a lot at stake here.

Ulysses said if he doesn't give up the picture, you could go back to war.



The artist shrugs.

LOOCHA

So I put the boards up over the windows and put up with commissions to paint guys on horses with swords again.

XENA

That's what war means to you.
What about the guys who die in it?

LOOCHA

Commissions for tombs. Very lucrative!

Xena is ticked off. She gets up.

XENA

C'mon, Gabrielle.
I told you this was a bad idea.



Gabrielle is ticked off, too.

GABRIELLE

And you were right. Sorry. Let's go.

They both turn and walk towards the door. The artist watches them curiously.

LOOCHA

Was it something I said?

Xena and Gabrielle keep walking.

LOOCHA

(Cont'd)

Okay, okay. Come back here.
I was only joking.

Gabrielle turns and faces her.

GABRIELLE

Dying is not funny. Trust me.



Xena prudently remains silent.

GABRIELLE

(Cont'd)

Are you going to help us or not? Because if you're not, we'll find someone who can.

The artist hurries over.

LOOCHA

Hey! No need to make threats!

XENA

So you'll do the picture?

LOOCHA

No.

Xena and Gabrielle both throw up their hands and turn to walk out again.

LOOCHA

(Cont'd)

Atatatatat.... I can't! Wait! I can't do the picture again. Penelope's dead, remember?

Xena and Gabrielle turn around again.

GABRIELLE

Can't you fake it?



LOOCHA

Do you?

Xena slaps her forehead.

GABRIELLE

Do I what?

XENA

No, she doesn't. Listen....



LOOCHA

I can't repaint Penelope!
(pausing)
Buttttt... I can do a painting of the most
beautiful woman in the world to replace it.

XENA

All right. Now we're getting
somewhere. You have to g....

Loocha speaks over Xena and grins.

LOOCHA

IF you pose for me, my little Perfection.

Xena realizes she's been neatly caught. So does Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE

It's for a good cause.



LOOCHA

Nude, of course! The Keffalonians
will forget everything else!

GABRIELLE

Wait a minute!



XENA

(drolly mocking)
It's for a good cause.



LOOCHA

That's my offer. Pose, and I paint you a masterpiece.
No pose, I start mixing colors for battle scenes.

Xena and Gabrielle look at each other. Neither is thrilled, but they both realize they have little choice.

GABRIELLE

The things we do for the greater good.

XENA

We?



LOOCHA

Great! Now, you....

(pointing at Xena)

Take your clothes off. And you....

(pointing at Gabrielle)

Scout. I must have privacy in which to create my wondrous art.

Gabrielle looks outraged.

LOOCHA

(Cont'd)

Ah ah ah! We have a deal. Make like a tree and leaf!

Xena hastily grabs Gabrielle around the waist before she does anything rash. She whispers into her ear.

XENA

Go tell Ulysses we've got this covered.

GABRIELLE

(hissing)

Xena!!!

XENA

Faster you go, faster you get back.



With the mother of all glares, Gabrielle removes Xena's arm from around her and storms out. Loocha watches her go.

LOOCHA

Feisty! I love a girl with a nice little a....

Xena gives her the look of death.

LOOCHA

(Cont'd)

Attitude.

Loocha smiles at Xena. Xena unhooks her armor. Loocha smiles wider.

CUT TO:

INT. ULYSSES' THRONE ROOM - DAY

Ulysses sits on his dais. His men surround him. One of the guards toots his horn and opens the door to admit a group of older men. In the center of the group is RADWAR, Kelvin's father. Radwar is a very big man, obviously a soldier, with a permanent scowl on his face. Ulysses stands to greet him.

ULYSSES

Ah, Radwar, my friend. Welcome.

RADWAR

I'm not your friend, you nitwit.



Gabrielle enters, and hears the exchange.

ULYSSES

Well, ah, yes. All right.
Welcome, Radwar, my former enemy.

Radwar stomps over to the dais, and glowers at Ulysses.

RADWAR

Show me the dowry.

ULYSSES

And it's wonderful to see you
here too. How was the trip?

RADWAR

Show me the dowry.

ULYSSES

Lunch? Would you like something
to cut the dust of the road?

RADWAR

No!

Ulysses looks very uneasy. Gabrielle slips up behind him and taps him on the shoulder. He turns.

ULYSSES

Ah! Gabrielle! Just who I was looking for!

Gabrielle's eyebrow goes up.

GABRIELLE

Xena says to tell you we're
taking care of your little problem.

ULYSSES

I knew I could count on you to
come in here and en.... Huh?

GABRIELLE

(lowering voice)
Your little problem?



ULYSSES

Oh! You are? Really?
(beat)
Of course you are!
I knew I could count on Xena!
Never had a doubt in my mind!

Around Ulysses, his men are all wiping their brows in obvious relief.

RADWAR

What are you babbling about?
Let's get this over with!

ULYSSES

(lowering voice)
Tell Xena she'd better hurry. I'll try to stall him.
(to Radwar)
Of course! Of course. Come with me, dear Radwar.
I know you're anxious to see your new property,
but my chef's prepared a wonderful feast for you,
as your son requested. Shall we indulge him?

RADWAR
(*grumpily*)
Will it take long?

ULYSSES
Depends on how fast you chew.

RADWAR
Fine, fine. Let's just get moving!

Ulysses leads Radwar out. Gabrielle turns and marches in the opposite direction.

ULYSSES
Gabrielle!

Gabrielle stops, and reluctantly turns around.



ULYSSES
(*Cont'd*)
I'm sure Radwar would love to
hear some of your stories.
(*beat*)
To pass the *time*?

Gabrielle's eyes narrow, but she knows Ulysses has a point. Gritting her teeth, she joins them as they leave the room.

CUT TO:

INT. ARTISTS' STUDIO - AFTERNOON

Xena stands in the middle of the studio, naked. Loocha examines her with interest. Slowly, she walks in a complete circle around Xena, looking at every inch.

Xena's eyes follow her suspiciously.



XENA

You'll have to paint around the scars.

LOOCHA

Boy, you sure have them.
Accident prone, huh?

XENA

No.

The artist starts sketching on her canvas, placed very close to Xena. She keeps a long handled brush in her hand. She pokes Xena with it.

LOOCHA

What's that one from?

Xena looks down.

XENA

Gabrielle bit me.



The artist stops in mid motion and looks at Xena. Xena smiles. The artist goes back to sketching. She pokes Xena again.

LOOCHA

What about that one?

XENA

Gabrielle's oyster knife slipped.

The artist stops again.

LOOCHA

That one?

XENA

Gabrielle wanted to practice her sewing.
We were out of cloth.

LOOCHA

Ever consider getting a
less dangerous partner?

XENA

Never.

LOOCHA

Kinky. I like it.

Xena is already getting antsy. She looks around for something interesting to do.

XENA

Done yet?

LOOCHA

What? I've just started!
Perfection can't be rushed!

Xena sighs and taps her fingers on her thigh.

CUT TO:

INT. ULYSSES' BANQUET HALL - AFTERNOON

Ulysses, his men, Gabrielle, and Radwar sit at table. On the table are the remains of a sumptuous feast. Radwar, however is sitting in the best chair, with a bored, irritated expression.

RADWAR

Enough! You've stalled me
long enough, Useless!

ULYSSES

That's Ulysses.

RADWAR

Show me the dowry!
No more food, no more tales!

GABRIELLE

(dryly)

Glad you enjoyed them.



Ulysses knows, however, that he can't stall Radwar much longer.

ULYSSES

Well, now that we've all relaxed, and
had a great meal... how about a tour?

Radwar has had it. He stands up and shoves his plate across the table, sending crockery flying everywhere. A large splat of something green lands on Ulysses chest.

RADWAR

I've had enough. Either you show me
what I want, or it's off! I'll take my
son and call in my troops!

ULYSSES

But, Radwar!

Radwar points at Ulysses in a rage.

RADWAR

Now! Show me now, or we're at WAR!

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. ARTISTS' STUDIO WORKROOM - AFTERNOON

The artist is painting. Xena is visibly bored out of her mind.

LOOCHA

Stop fidgeting.

XENA

I'm not fidgeting.

The artist looks around her canvas. Almost every part of Xena's body is moving as Xena stands and waits.

LOOCHA

What is that, then?

XENA

What? I'm thinking!



LOOCHA

Look, can't you just think about something else?

Xena looks around, spots an artists pallet. She picks it up and examines it, then she throws it across the room. It bounces off the wall, off the window, off several statues, and ends up back in her hand.

LOOCHA

(Cont'd)

That's an interesting talent.

Xena tosses the pallet again. It bounces over several more surfaces, takes the nose off a clay work in progress, and startles Loocha's cat. The cat bolts. The pallet zooms on, hitting a column.



Gabrielle enters just as the pallet streaks past. She catches it without breaking stride or even appearing to notice.

GABRIELLE

Xena, we're running out of time.

Gabrielle stops, looks at the pallet in her hand as if wondering where it came from. She frowns and tosses it aside. She walks over to Xena.

XENA

Problems?



GABRIELLE

Ulysses' rival is here, and he wants to see the dowry. All of it, now, or he'll back out of the deal.

LOOCHA

Men.

(shaking head)

He'll have to wait. This can't be rushed.
I'm an artist, not a magician.

The artist peers around her canvas at Xena.

LOOCHA

(Cont'd)

Especially not with a subject like that!
I won't do it!

Xena starts pacing.

LOOCHA

(Cont'd)

Hey! Hold still! This isn't a landscape!

GABRIELLE

You're going to have to paint faster.

LOOCHA

Paint faster? How insensitive!
I am an artiste! A perfectionist!
You have no idea of what
you ask, oh biter of breasts!

GABRIELLE

Look, I....

Gabrielle stops dead. Xena finds something interesting to examine on the other side of the room.

GABRIELLE

(Cont'd)

What did you just call me?



LOOCHA

What you have done to my perfection!
It's a crime!

GABRIELLE

What??

LOOCHA

A crime!

Xena gets across the room just in time to get between Gabrielle and the artist. She grabs Gabrielle and holds her still.

XENA

Look. Either you do this fast, or not at all.

The artist sighs melodramatically.

LOOCHA

This is such a travesty. All right.
I'll see what horrible inadequacy I can manage.
But you have to stand still!

Xena releases Gabrielle.

LOOCHA

(Cont'd)

Hey! Feisty one! Can't you do
something to keep her quiet?!

Gabrielle peers around Xena's breast at Loocha. Her look is deadly.

LOOCHA

(Cont'd)

I hear you've really got a way with your tongue.

Gabrielle's deadly look transfers itself to Xena. Xena pats Gabrielle's cheek with deep affection.

XENA

I told her what a good storyteller you are.



GABRIELLE

(mollified)

Oh.

LOOCHA

Must be something you can do to keep her still.

Gabrielle considers.

GABRIELLE

Mm....

(grinning)

There is, but I'll just tell a story
instead since we're in public.



Xena actually blushes. Gabrielle seats herself on a banquette, smirking.

LOOCHA

Nice tint. I like it.

CUT TO:

INT. ULYSSES' TREASURE ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Ulysses has sweating men dragging bags, barrels, and boxes one after another in front of Radwar.

ULYSSES

And here are the fleeces. Beautiful, huh?

Just like I promised.

They came from some gorgeous sheep.

RADWAR

I am sure you are well acquainted with them.

The men drag a barrel of smoked fish in.

ULYSSES

Fish, from the most beautiful of our rivers!

RADWAR

Yes, yes, fine. This is all trivial.
Where are the riches you promised?
The wondrous painting? Show me that!

Ulysses checks the sundial. It's not looking good.

ULYSSES

All righty! If it's the good stuff you want, let's
bring it in! Get the pearls gleaned from the Aegean

Radwar grabs Ulysses by the scruff and shakes him.

RADWAR

I don't need to see pearls! I've got pearls coming
out my ears. I've got rocks, I've got gold, and I've
got soldiers that can smash you flat! The only
thing you got that I want is that picture!
So cough it up! Now!

CUT TO:

INT. ARTISTS' STUDIO WORKROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Gabrielle is lying on the banquette with her feet up, telling a story. Xena has her eyes closed, apparently in some kind of zen state. The artist is busy painting.

LOOCHA

Wait a minute....
Did you just say Caesar, Julius Caesar?

GABRIELLE

Yes. And he went and took his troops....

LOOCHA

Wasn't that twenty years ago?

GABRIELLE

Twenty-six. Anyway, as I was saying....



LOOCHA

You beat Caesar in your cradles?
That's pretty funny!

Gabrielle starts to correct the artist's impression. Xena's voice interrupts her. Xena still has her eyes closed.

XENA

Don't bother explaining.



Gabrielle stops.

GABRIELLE

Then I should start putting in the part where you diaper whipped Crassius, right?



Xena opens one eye and looks at Gabrielle. Gabrielle blows her a kiss. Xena rolls the open eye and shakes her head.

XENA

Are we done YET?

LOOCHA

Done? Hah!

CUT TO:

INT. ULYSSES' TREASURE ROOM - EARLY EVENING

Ulysses is being backed down the hallway, step by step.

ULYSSES

It's only fair that you let me prepare you for seeing it, Radwar! Slowly!

RADWAR

Stop stalling! Show me the picture!!!

ULYSSES

But....

RADWAR

NOW!!!!

CUT TO:

INT. ARTISTS' STUDIO WORKROOM - EARLY EVENING

Gabrielle paces near the window. Xena looks like she wants to be pacing anywhere but where she is. It is silent except for the artist's brush scratching. Finally, Gabrielle turns, Xena takes a breath, and....

XENA AND GABRIELLE

A....

LOOCHA

Done!

Xena and Gabrielle stop.

XENA

What?

LOOCHA

Done. Finished. Complete.
Ended. No more! Finite!



Gabrielle darts behind the canvas to look. Her jaw drops. The artist has completed a masterpiece, and in its center is Xena in all her naked, slightly blushing glory. The artist smirks at the reaction.

GABRIELLE

Wow!



LOOCHA

Am I the best, or what? Perfection!!!!

Xena is pulling up the straps on her leathers. She grabs the painting as she starts for the door.

XENA

C'mon. Let's hope we're not too late.



The artist sticks her brush behind her ear and races after Xena.

LOOCHA

My masterpiece!!!

Gabrielle puts her hands on her hips and speaks to the empty room.

GABRIELLE

That'll hang in some guy's
castle over MY DEAD BODY.



Gabrielle turns and runs out.

CUT TO:

INT. ULYSSES' TREASURE ROOM - EVENING

The door flings open. Ulysses is pushed inside. He stumbles and falls, but scrambles out of the way as Radwar charges after him.

ULYSSES

Now, Radwar... just take it easy!

RADWAR

I will take it easy, you fraud!
Once I've seen with my own eyes....

Radwar stops in his tracks. His eyes are on the wall. His jaw drops.

ULYSSES

Okay, okay - I'll come clean!
It was an accident! Honest!
I didn't mean to....

Ulysses realizes Radwar isn't hearing a word he is saying. He turns around to see what Radwar is staring at. Mounted on the wall is a perfect picture of beauty, shining in the torchlight.

ULYSSES

(Cont'd)

Keep you waiting!
No, but wasn't it worth the wait?
Is that a picture, or what?

Radwar is in love. He pats Ulysses on the head absently as he stares at the picture.

RADWAR

Now that is worth suffering peace for.

Ulysses takes a second look at the painting, and suddenly realizes who it is of. He drums his fingers on his thigh in thought.

ULYSSES

Peace. Hm. You know, now that I'm
thinking about it.... Boy, this picture
sure means a lot to me....

Ulysses looks around. Seated on a treasure chest, he finds Xena glaring at him.



ULYSSES

(Cont'd)

And I'm sure you understand how hard...
it is for me to let it go as part of
my dear daughter's dowry.

RADWAR

A king's ransom, indeed. All right.
Let's go get the damn kids hitched so I
can take this home. I've got a spot
just waiting for it. Heh heh heh.

Ulysses takes Radwar's arm and leads him out. He gives Xena and Gabrielle a big thumbs up. The artist strolls out and regards the picture.

LOOCHA

Well, it sure beats being known as the
face that launched a thousand ships, huh?

They follow Ulysses and Radwar out.

CUT TO:

INT. ULYSSES' BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

The hall is full of people celebrating Kelvin and Shana's wedding. Xena and Gabrielle are at the head table, along with the artist, as honored guests. They are once again dressed in their borrowed finery.

Ulysses sits down next to them.

ULYSSES

I owe you guys a big thanks.

LOOCHA

You owe me a big commission. Pay up!

Ulysses gives her a look.

ULYSSES

You'll get it! I promise. Tomorrow.

LOOCHA

I've heard that story before.

Xena gives them both a glare. The artist gets up.

LOOCHA

(Cont'd)

Well, I'm at least going to get my money's worth of wine. See ya later, perfection!
Thanks for the gorgeous memories!

The artist disappears into the crowd. Xena sighs and shakes her head.

XENA

Well, it was for a good cause, anyway.



ULYSSES

You can say that again. My daughter's happy, and my people are at peace. Thanks, Xena.

Xena looks at him meaningfully. Ulysses looks back at her. Xena kicks Ulysses under the table.

ULYSSES

(Cont'd)

Oh! And, of course! Yes! Thanks, Gabrielle!

Gabrielle smiles politely.

GABRIELLE

Glad we could help you and
Radwar work out your differences.

ULYSSES

Turns out we've got more in common than we
thought. We worked out a deal to share that
picture, heh heh. Well, gotta go mingle.
Thanks again!

Ulysses leaves. Gabrielle drums her fingers on the arms of her chair.

XENA

Sharing the painting. That's a riot.

GABRIELLE

Riot. Hmm.

Xena looks at Gabrielle.

XENA

C'mon, Gabrielle. It's just a picture.

Gabrielle leans forward and looks at the painting, mounted prominently on the wall and gathering great attention.

GABRIELLE

It's not JUST a picture, Xena.



Xena looks at the painting. She leans closer to Gabrielle.

XENA

(softly)

But you've got the real thing.

Gabrielle allows herself to be charmed. She smiles and lifts her cup, touching it against Xena's.

GABRIELLE

Darn right I do.

They drink, then get up to join the dancing as the crowd celebrates both the joining, and the peace it brings to all of them.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR

TAG

EXT. ULYSSES' CITY - MORNING

Xena stands outside the gates with Argo II. She fiddles with Argo's saddle, obviously waiting for something.

The gates open, and Gabrielle runs out, a rolled up tube in one hand. She goes to Argo II's side, and puts the tube inside her bag, tying the top very securely.

GABRIELLE

Ready! Let's go.

Xena peers at the bag.

XENA

What was that?



Gabrielle takes up her walking stick and starts off down the road. She's smirking.

XENA

(Cont'd)

Lemme guess. It's the picture.

Gabrielle smirks harder, and chuckles to herself. Xena catches up to her and they walk along.

XENA

(Cont'd)

How'd you con them out of it?

Gabrielle pauses, and though she is savoring the moment. She turns to look at Xena.

GABRIELLE

I... have many skills.



Xena chuckles and puts her arms around Gabrielle's shoulders.

XENA

You've been waiting twenty-six years to say that, haven't you?

GABRIELLE

Bet your boots I have.

They both laugh, as they start their journey down the long road.



FADE OUT.

DISCLAIMER

Xena's modesty was not harmed during the making of this motion picture and Gabrielle's REALLY glad there were no Xerox machines.