

# Xena: Warrior Princess - Subtext Virtual Season 9



**Production #V901 – Who Watches the Watcher – Part 1  
(Season Premier)**

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## TEASER

FADE IN:

### EXT. SMALL BACKWATER VILLAGE - LATE AFTERNOON

In another of a very long series of small, nondescript villages, a tiny festival is in session. The villagers are gathered around in a central area, listening to three musicians play some tunes.

Nearby, the tavern keeper has set up a table, and is selling cups of ale and pita sandwiches including an indeterminate meat species and a greenish sauce equally anonymous.

The musicians are surprisingly good. The crowd starts clapping in more or less rhythm and some of them dance.

Xena and Gabrielle wander in from down the road, entering the village behind the crowd and stopping to listen.

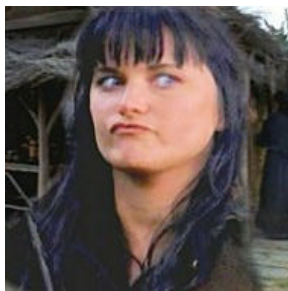


They are wearing heavier clothing. Xena has a cloak on, and Gabrielle has found her coat of many colors she stashed away in some magical tree bole because she ran out of room in her bag, and is wearing that.

They appear a little travel weary, a little ragged around the edges. Xena has a bandage wrapped around one hand, and Gabrielle seems to be limping slightly - using her staff to lean on.

XENA

Catchy.



Gabrielle nods in agreement. She walks over to the tavern keeper's table, while Xena stands and listens.

**GABRIELLE**

How much?



**TAVERN KEEPER**

Well, it's a very good year this year....

Gabrielle raps her staff against the barrel of ale, making a sharp bang. The tavern keeper jumps. Xena watches in amusement.

**GABRIELLE**

Buster, I'm thirsty, she's thirsty, and we're both in a bad mood. How much?

**TAVERN KEEPER**

A q-q-q-q-q-quarter dinar.

Gabrielle slaps two coins on the table.

**GABRIELLE**

Two cups.

**TAVERN KEEPER**

Want a sandwich?

Gabrielle looks at the sandwiches, then at the man. Then she looks down at the sandwiches quickly as one appears to possibly be moving.

**GABRIELLE**

No thanks.

The man gives Gabrielle two cups of ale. Gabrielle takes them over and hands one to Xena. The musicians continue to play, the villagers continue to dance. Xena and Gabrielle sip their ale together in silence briefly.

**XENA**

I like your new bargaining style.

Gabrielle hitches herself up onto a barrel and sits there.

**GABRIELLE**

My knee's killing me. I just wasn't in the mood to dicker with him.

**XENA**

Ah. Is that a subtle hint you  
want to stay at the inn tonight?

**GABRIELLE**

*(grumpily)*

I'm not hinting. We're staying here.



Xena gives Gabrielle a look. Gabrielle just watches the musicians.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. SMALL BACKWATER VILLAGE - A LITTLE LATER**

The musicians finish playing, and take their bows. The villagers applaud, and congratulate the performers as they moved through the crowd.

The tavern keeper hustles over to offer them drinks. They accept, appearing a little surprised but very grateful.

**LEAD MUSICIAN**

Thanks! Glad you enjoyed it.

**TAVERN KEEPER**

Great stuff! You folks staying long?  
Glad to put you up in my inn.

**WOMAN MUSICIAN**

Wow. Sure. That'd be great, but....

The tavern keeper wipes his hands on his apron and starts to head off.

**TAVERN KEEPER**

No trouble! No trouble....  
Glad to have you.

The musicians watch the tavern keeper go, then look at each other.

**LEAD MUSICIAN**

Boy, that's different.

**WOMAN MUSICIAN**

You can say that again. Not like the last place. We were lucky we got out of there when we did.

**LEAD MUSICIAN**

Good thing is right. Making their own rules like that.... Ought to be a law.

**WOMAN MUSICIAN**

Yeah? Who'd enforce it? Those guys were mean, and they sure didn't like our stuff.

Gabrielle has been listening.

**GABRIELLE**

Why? What was the problem?  
Your music is really good.



The musicians look at Xena and Gabrielle. The lead musician walks over to where they are sitting.

**LEAD MUSICIAN**

Hi. I can see you're fellow travelers.  
My name's Gorat, and these are my mates Ela and Dano.

**GABRIELLE**

Yes we are. My name's Gabrielle, and this is Xena.

The musicians all stare at them.

**GORAT**

You don't mean....

**GABRIELLE**

Yes.

**ELA**

Are you...?

**GABRIELLE**

Yes.

**DANO**

But are you the real...?

**GABRIELLE**

We're the only ones we know.

**GORAT**

Wow. Ah... uh.... We didn't mean to sound like we were complaining....

**ELA**

Or bother you.... Ah....

Thunder rumbles overhead. Xena looks up.

**XENA**

Can we take the awe inside?  
I'm over getting rained on.



**GORAT**

I... inside?

**XENA**

Inside.

Xena points. Everyone starts walking where she points, even Gabrielle. This seems to surprise Xena just a little.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

*(under breath)*

Hmph. Just like in the good old warlord days.

Gabrielle turns and looks at Xena, both eyebrows raised. Xena smiles at her and joins her as they walk on towards the inn.

**GABRIELLE**

You think it's trouble?

**XENA**

*(wryly)*

You and I are here.  
What do you think?



It starts to rain. Gabrielle looks up at the rain, looks over at Xena, and just shakes her head.

**FADE OUT.**

**END OF TEASER**

## ACT ONE

FADE IN:

### INT. VILLAGE INN - NIGHT

The inn looks better than might have been expected. It is small... a half dozen wooden tables, a firepit and some benches and stools are inside. Xena, Gabrielle, and the musicians sit around the largest table; there are three other villagers at a second. The rest are empty.

**GORAT**

So, you asked me about the last village we were in. It was Petronikus. Have you been there?

Xena and Gabrielle exchange looks. Xena shrugs.



**GABRIELLE**

Not lately. What happened?

**ELA**

It was the craziest thing. We'd been there a couple months before, and it was fine. But this time....

The musicians all shake their heads.

**GORAT**

This time they nearly arrested us. Told us music wasn't welcome there anymore. Real strange.

**ELA**

They ran us out of town.

**GABRIELLE**

Is it some kind of local superstition?

**GORAT**

No. Some kind of new god.



Xena rolls her eyes.

**GABRIELLE**

A god who hates music?  
That makes no sense.

**GORAT**

That's what we thought. But they told  
us their new teachings said music  
and dancing were immoral.

Xena rolls her eyes again.

**ELA**

Not only that, they were talking  
about spreading all this teaching  
stuff to the other villages.

**GABRIELLE**

*(reassuringly)*

I'm sure it's just a temporary thing.  
Next time you go back there, it'll be fine.

**ELA**

I don't know.... They seemed  
really well organized.

**XENA**

Goats look well organized  
when they're being herded.



Gorat looks uncertain, but shrugs and nods. He gets up. The other musicians join him.

**GORAT**

Maybe you're right. I hope so.  
If that spreads far, we're sunk.

He looks at the others.

**GORAT**

*(cont'd)*

So let's enjoy our nice  
reception while we can.

The musicians leave. Xena and Gabrielle sit for a moment, then get up and follow them.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. XENA AND GABRIELLE'S ROOM - NIGHT - SHORT TIME LATER**

Xena is sitting up in the somewhat small bed. Gabrielle is lying down with her legs over Xena's thighs. Xena is applying a bandage to Gabrielle's knee. They are both dressed in their all purpose muslin shifts, and near the window their regular clothing is hung out to dry.



**XENA**

How's that?

Gabrielle flexes her leg.

**GABRIELLE**

A little better. How's your hand?

Xena flexes her hand, also encased in a new bandage.

**XENA**

A little better. Teach me to  
punch a bear in the head.

**GABRIELLE**

*(wryly)*

Teach me to try stealing  
honey from one.

*(beat)*

Hey, Xena?

**XENA**

Mm?

**GABRIELLE**

I think we should go back to  
that town and see what's up.

**XENA**

With the music?

**GABRIELLE**

Sounds like it's more than music.  
I'd just like to be sure.

Xena thinks about it.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

Maybe it's nothing, but on  
the chance it isn't....

**XENA**

We can nip it in the bud.

**GABRIELLE**

Yeah.

**XENA**

Sure. It's not like we've got anyplace  
we've got to be otherwise. Might as well.

Gabrielle looks up at the ceiling.

**GABRIELLE**

Good a direction as any, huh?



**XENA**

Yeah.

They both sit quietly for a few minutes, relaxing and enjoying the peace.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

But let me tell ya, we find a guy  
in a condom hat again, I'm  
not wasting time on talking.

Gabrielle groans, and covers her eyes.

**GABRIELLE**

*(wryly)*

And if we find another Tara, I'm not waiting to get my ear bitten.

She makes a punching motion.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

Bam. She's going down.

They both start laughing and we -

**FADE TO:**

**EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - MORNING**

Xena and Gabrielle walk down a dirt wagon road. Gabrielle still uses her staff as a prop, and Xena appears to be weaving something out of tree vines in her hands.

Argo II ambles along behind them, appearing moderately bored.

It is bright and sunny, but there is a strong wind, and it blows leaves across the road, pelting both Xena and Gabrielle with them. Gabrielle catches a leaf, and examines it.

**GABRIELLE**

Why do leaves fall, Xena?

Xena gives Gabrielle a strange look.

**XENA**

Because they're dead.

*(beat)*

You know, it's that whole circle of life... thing.



**GABRIELLE**

Well, yeah, I know, but why do the leaves all die every year? You'd think it would be better for the tree to keep them around it to keep it warm in the cold weather.

Xena continues her work. She is braiding some kind of basket.

**XENA**

Trees' got limited resources in the winter, so it kills off its leaves so it doesn't have to feed them.

**GABRIELLE**

Ah.

**XENA**

Nature. It's practical.

**GABRIELLE**

*(musing)*

And sometimes very brutal.

They both look up as they hear people coming down the road towards them. It is what is left of a merchant train... a wagon that has seen much better days, two bony, tired looking horses, and eight or ten men and women walking beside it. The wagon has a few boxes and some bundles of cloth in it.

As the people come up to them, they slow and stop, obviously wanting to speak.

**MAN**

Ho, strangers. Where are you headed?

**GABRIELLE**

*(under breath)*

Ho?

**XENA**

Who's asking?



The people look at Xena and Gabrielle uneasily.

**MAN**

I meant no offense! My name is Elios, and I was just going to pass on a friendly warning! But never mind... we'll just go on our way.

**GABRIELLE**

*(under breath)*

Xena, be nice.

**XENA**

*(under breath)*

You're the nice one, remember?

So get cracking.

The people start to move on, edging around Argo II who is standing in the middle of the road. Gabrielle goes after them.

**GABRIELLE**

Sorry about that... we don't usually  
find friendly people in our travels.

We're headed to Petronikus.

Elios is still in a bit of a snit. The others react visibly to the town name, however, whispering to each other and giving Xena and Gabrielle doubtful looks.

**ELIOS**

Have a nice trip, then.

A woman behind him pokes him.

**WOMAN**

Elios, tell them.

**XENA**

*(scowling)*

Tell us what?

Gabrielle takes Elios arm.

**GABRIELLE**

Really, we're sorry.

What's wrong?



Elios allows himself to be charmed. Xena watches this and rolls her eyes, then she goes to Argo II and starts packing away her vine basket.

**XENA**

*(over her shoulder)*  
She's Gabrielle, by the way.

**ELIOS**

If you're going to Petronikus, I  
hope you're not staying long.  
We've just come from there.

**WOMAN**

Ran from there, you mean.

**ELIOS**

It was horrible. They invited all  
the merchants in the area to  
come to their festival, and then....

**WOMAN**

Then they robbed us blind!

Xena looks up over Argo's back in surprise.

**GABRIELLE**

Robbed you?

**ELIOS**

They did! Oh, they claimed it  
was god's tax. Some new temple  
they put up there... they've taken  
the place over. Everything's changed.

**XENA AND GABRIELLE**

I see.

**WOMAN**

Oh, we could sell our things, sure,  
but they took half of whatever we made.

**XENA AND GABRIELLE**

Really?



**ELIOS**

And they made us sit and listen to  
this new doctrine they're preaching.  
All about how we have to listen to  
god, and do what god says, and  
give god all of this, and all of that....

**GABRIELLE**

Which god?

**ELIOS**

*(shrugging)*

Doesn't have a name, according to  
those guys. It was creepy. How can  
you pray to a god with no name?  
What do you call him, hey you?

Xena and Gabrielle exchange looks.

**GABRIELLE**

Well, thanks for telling us. Sorry  
you had such a rough time.

The wagon starts to move on. Xena, Gabrielle and Argo II move in the opposite direction.

**ELIOS**

Hey.... Where are you going?

Gabrielle turns and walks backwards.

**GABRIELLE**

Petronikus.

**WOMAN**

But we told you what happened to us!

**GABRIELLE**

That's why we're going. We  
don't want it to keep happening.

Gabrielle turns and catches up to Xena. They continue walking away down the road.

**XENA**

I don't like the sound of that.

**GABRIELLE**

Me either. You think it's a scam?

Xena looks vaguely troubled.



**XENA**

Maybe.

**GABRIELLE**

Well, we'll find out soon enough.

*(pausing)*

And next time, you get to be nice. I'm over being the nice one all the time.

Xena looks at Gabrielle.

**XENA**

You ever see me try to be nice?



**GABRIELLE**

You can be very sweet when you want to be, Xena. Don't give \*me\* that old curmudgeon act.

Xena gives Gabrielle an evil look.

**XENA**

Hmph.

**FADE OUT.**

## ACT TWO

FADE IN:

### EXT. PETRONIKUS - DAY

Petronikus is a medium-sized town, with a well kept road leading up to it lined with stones. There is a mud brick wall around the town, with a gate standing wide open.

Everything seems neat and tidy, and the town has a general air of being prosperous.

Xena and Gabrielle pause just before the town and look it over.

**GABRIELLE**

Looks peaceful.

**XENA**

Very. C'mon.



Xena and Gabrielle walk towards the gates. As they approach, a man standing just inside them turns and sees them coming.

Both Xena and Gabrielle stiffen, and in reflex, reach for weapons. But the man only holds a hoe, and he hesitantly waves at them.

**MAN**

Afternoon, strangers.

Xena and Gabrielle relax.

**XENA**

Afternoon.

**MAN**

Just passing through?

**GABRIELLE**

Not exactly. We were hoping to stop and rest a while.

The man looks them over, but remains apparently friendly.

**MAN**

Well, this is the place to do it. Our inn's the best around. Just go right down that road there, and it's on the left hand side.

**XENA**

Thanks.

Xena and Gabrielle move past the man and continue on into the town.

The town spreads out on either side of them. It contains small, well kept houses and neatly tended paths. A few chickens dash past them as they walk by, and in a yard, a milk cow looks up as Argo snorts.

**GABRIELLE**

Looks....

**XENA**

Idyllic.

**GABRIELLE**

Hm.



Xena examines one of the small houses. It is whitewashed, and has a small box of flowers planted outside. Everything does seem neat and perfect.

**XENA**

Last time I saw a place that looked like this, it was....

**GABRIELLE**

Potadeia. When Hope was there.

Xena looks around and nods.

**XENA**

Yeah.

Gabrielle walks close to one of the walls, and touches a symbol painted there... a circle, with triangles surrounding it somewhat resembling a crown.



She looks over to the next house, which also has the symbol.

They reach the town center, and find a square filled with soft grass. On one side is a larger house, on a second, an inn. The third side has a set of three wells and the forth is a path lined with stones leading off between the trees.

A woman comes out of the large house and starts across the grass. She spots Xena and Gabrielle and changes direction, coming over to intercept them. She is young and pretty, and dressed in a bright yellow apron over a gray shift like dress.

**WOMAN**

Good day! Welcome to our town.

Xena looks at Gabrielle. Gabrielle looks pointedly back at Xena. Xena rolls her eyes.

**XENA**

*(forced smile)*

Thanks. Nice place you have here.

**WOMAN**

Oh, thank you! We're very proud of it.  
Everyone loves living here. Are  
you just passing through?

**XENA**

Matter of fact....



**GABRIELLE**

*(interrupting)*

We were thinking of settling down  
around here. Would that be a problem?

Xena's eyes grow to the size of duck eggs before she realizes Gabrielle is not serious.

**WOMAN**

Ah.... Why no! Of course not.  
We welcome everyone. What  
did you say your name was?

**GABRIELLE**

Gabrielle.

**WOMAN**

Nice to meet you, Gabrielle. I'm Heriet,  
and I live over there in my father's  
house. He's in charge of the town. I'm  
sure if you talked to him he'd let you stay.

**XENA**

Great. Let's talk to him.

**HERIET**

Oh... well, maybe you can't right now.  
He's busy. But he'll be free around  
dinner time. Why don't you go over  
to the inn and wait there?

Xena appears impatient. Gabrielle takes a step in front of her.

**GABRIELLE**

Great. That's over there, right?  
I'm hungry. Aren't you, Xena?



Xena watches Heriet's face. Heriet does not react to Xena's name.

**XENA**

Sure.

Heriet turns and leaves them, looking over her shoulder as she returns towards her house. Xena and Gabrielle wait for her to disappear, then they turn towards the inn.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. HERIET'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER**

Heriet enters. A woman, her mother, sits near the window, sewing.

**MOTHER**

Who were you talking to, daughter?  
They looked like very odd girls.

**HERIET**

Newcomers. They were all right, I guess.  
(beat)  
They say they want to stay and live here.

Heriet's mother looks up at her. They both smile grimly.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. PETRONIKUS INN - DAY - MOMENTS LATER**

A woman, the inn keeper, stands near the open kitchen stirring a pot. The room is meticulously clean, and pieces of cloth are draped over the eight or ten trestle tables stretched across the big room.

The woman hums softly to herself. Over the fire pit, the wall has the crowned sun symbol painted on it in blue.

The door opens, and Xena and Gabrielle enter. The woman looks up in some surprise.

**INNKEEPER**

Oh! I wasn't expecting anyone today.

Xena and Gabrielle exchange looks.

**GABRIELLE**

Do you usually know when  
people are coming through town?

**INNKEEPER**

(warily)  
Well, for the festivals, you know.  
Otherwise we don't get many visitors....  
Are you just passing through?

**XENA**

No.

The woman seems a little apprehensive.

**GABRIELLE**

Could we get some lunch?

The inn keeper starts to get some bowls down.

**INNKEEPER**

Of course, of course. Please sit down. I'll be right with you.

Xena and Gabrielle take a seat. Gabrielle notices the sigil over the firepit, and points at it. Xena frowns.

**GABRIELLE**

*(whispering)*

Ever seen that before?

**XENA**

I don't think so.

*(to woman)*

Hey!

The innkeeper hustles over and puts down two bowls and two mugs.

**INNKEEPER**

Yes?

Xena points to the sigil.

**XENA**

What is that?

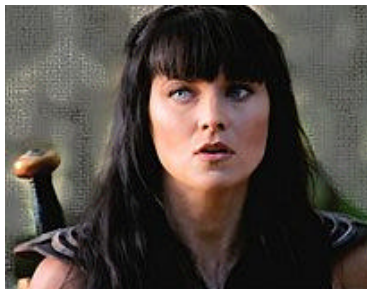
The woman stares at the wall.

**INNKEEPER**

That is the sign of the one who watches over us.

**XENA**

Yeah? And who's that?



**INNKEEPER**

The beneficent one. The rule maker  
who guides our lives. But you  
know nothing of this, I take it.

The outer door opens, and a man enters. He is tall and broad-shouldered. He gives Xena and Gabrielle an obvious once-over then dismisses them.

**MAN**

Helga, there be six  
of us tonight, yeah?

The woman nods. The man leaves.

**INNKEEPER**

I have to go. Enjoy your meal. It  
will be two dinars, plus one  
dinar for the one who watches.

The innkeeper vanishes out the back door. Xena and Gabrielle are left alone.

**GABRIELLE**

Beneficent one? One who watches?  
Xena, this is all new. Isn't it?

**XENA**

Yeah. The rule maker. Why do  
I get the feeling we're not  
gonna like the rules?



Gabrielle examines the piece of bread on her bowl.

**GABRIELLE**

When do we ever?

**FADE TO:**

**INT. HERIET'S HOUSE - EVENING**

Heriet is setting the table. Her mother is putting dinner out. The door opens, and a man enters. It is Heriet's father. He is a tall, bearded man, heavysset, with very good quality clothing.



**HERIET**

Good evening, father!

Heriet's mother hurries out.

**MOTHER**

Alstan.... You're early. I....

**ALSTAN**

I keep the schedule of the one who  
watches over us, woman. Not yours.  
Have I not told you that many times?

Alstan hangs up his cloak, and comes to the table.

**HERIET**

Father....

**ALSTAN**

The brothers and I are meeting  
after the sun sets. Get the soup on.

Heriet's mother goes to the pot and hurriedly puts soup in a bowl.

**MOTHER**

But I thought we....

**ALSTAN**

Soup, woman! I don't have time for talk.  
Those damned merchants ran out  
without tendering us what was due,  
and there's a shortfall to be made up!

**HERIET**

Father....

**ALSTAN**

*(gruffly)*

What? Did you finish those baskets?

**HERIET**

Not yet, father, but....

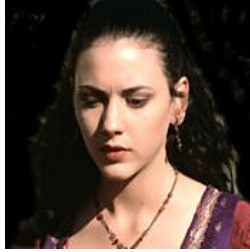
**ALSTAN**

Not yet!!! What?

Alstan stands up and bellows, waving his arms.

**HERIET**

Father! Wait... I will finish them tonight, I promise, but there are....



**ALSTAN**

You had better!

**HERIET**

Father, there are some strangers here! They want to see you.  
They want to live here!

Alstan pauses, and looks at her, suddenly wary.

**ALSTAN**

Strangers? What kind of strangers?

Heriet's mother brings the soup over and places it down before her husband. She seems very glad of the subject change.

**MOTHER**

Odd ones, to my eyes. Women!  
Outlandishly dressed! Can you imagine?  
You should have seen them!

Alstan grabs Heriet's arm.

**ALSTAN**

Where did they go? You just let them wander through the town?  
Why didn't you come get me?

**HERIET**

*(frightened)*

Father, I sent them to the inn to wait for you! You were in the temple! You told me never to....

**ALSTAN**

Ah.

*(suddenly calm.)*

So I did. So I did. To the inn, you say? Good. Women? Hah.

Alstan starts to eat, ignoring his wife and daughter. After a moment, he chuckles.

**CUT TO:**

### **INT PETRONIKUS INN - NIGHT**

The inn is now full. Xena and Gabrielle are at a smaller table near the back wall. The biggest table near the front has been taken up by six men, including the man who had come in that afternoon. They are all dressed in dark over-tunics with the crowned sun emblem on the back.

The crowd seems to be giving the six men a wide berth... more so than they seem to be even giving the two strange women at the back table.

**GABRIELLE**

Something's really off here, Xena.



**XENA**

Oh yeah.

Xena leans forward and points at the six men.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

I've seen those guys before.

Gabrielle appears surprised.

**GABRIELLE**

You have? Where?  
I don't remember it.

**XENA**

You wouldn't. They could be six  
of my men, back in the bad old  
days. People treated us just like  
the folks in here are treating them.

**GABRIELLE**

Oh.

One of the men stands up.

**MAN**

*(loudly)*

In the one who watches name,  
I say to you, listen.

The room quiets immediately.

**MAN**

*(cont'd)*

Starting tomorrow, we will be collecting  
every trade item from all at the temple.  
It will be blessed, and sent from us for  
the glory of the one who watches.  
What is sent back to us for it will  
be shared with us all. So be it!

The crowd looks at each other uneasily, but....

**CROWD**

So be it.

The man sits down and continues to eat.

**GABRIELLE**

You really want to wait  
here for that guy?

**XENA**

Nooo.... I think I've heard enough to make  
me want to go and find him. C'mon.



Xena and Gabrielle get up. They leave out the side door just as the front door opens up again, and Alstan enters. The six men spot him, and hastily stand up. The rest of the crowd stands as well, and bow respectfully.

**ALSTAN**

My children. Be at ease.

Everyone sits down. Alstan looks carefully around the tavern, but doesn't see what he's looking for. With a slight shrug, he turns and leaves again.

**CUT TO:**

## EXT. PETRONIKUS TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

Xena and Gabrielle walk along in the darkness.

**XENA**

Okay, so he's not at home.

**GABRIELLE**

And he's not at the inn.

They both stop, and look at one of the rocks in the path, which has a crowned sun painted on it. As they look at the next rock, and the next, they all have the sigil. Xena peers off into the shadowy darkness, where the path goes.

**XENA**

Any bets?

**GABRIELLE**

Nope.

They start off down the path.

**CUT TO:**

## EXT. PETRONIKUS TEMPLE - NIGHT

In the middle of a clearing, under a canopy of trees stands the temple. On either side of the door there are torches burning. The building is large, and made of stone, and the doors are shut. The sun sigil is painted on both the doors, and the lintel overhead.

Gabrielle walks over to the doors and gives them a tug. They are locked tight. She turns and looks at Xena in question.

Xena makes a dismissive gesture, and starts to circle the building looking for another entrance. After a moment, Gabrielle joins her.

**GABRIELLE**

We could just knock.



**XENA**

Nah. That'd be boring.

Xena spots a thick ivy growing up one side of the building. She heads for it, pausing to spit on both hands and rub them together before she commences climbing up it.

Gabrielle leans against the wall and watches Xena until she gets near the roof. Then she sighs and starts climbing after her.

**GABRIELLE**

*(under breath)*

Least I get a nice view first.

**XENA (V.O.)**

*(whispering)*

I heard that!

**CUT TO:**

### **INT PETRONIKUS TEMPLE - NIGHT**

Inside the temple several men are working, arranging boxes and bundles in an efficient and methodical way. They drag several bales across the large open space inside, which appears more a warehouse than a place of worship. There are benches around the perimeter of the room, apparently shoved out of the way for later use. Near the front of the room is a raised area, which has an altar-like platform behind it complete with a carved, wooden crowned sun symbol.

Above them in the rafters, Xena and Gabrielle creep into view, and peer downward.

More men continue to come in, all in their dark tunics. They work mostly in silence, sorting and arranging things with a businesslike air.

**MAN**

We're gonna need more  
space in here for sure.

Several men laugh.

**SECOND MAN**

You can say that again. Hope  
those wagons show up soon.

**FIRST MAN**

For what we should get for all  
this, we can double the size of  
this place. I'm getting tired  
of sleeping with six of  
you guys in one room!

The men all laugh now.

Xena and Gabrielle both look grim.



Alstan enters, and walks through the crowd of men. They all stop and bow.

**ALSTAN**

Well done, men.

Alstan goes to the raised platform and stands on it. The men all turn to face him and stand respectfully.

**ALSTAN**

*(cont'd)*

I have great news. We have been so successful here, I have been given permission by the one who watches to spread out our cause to the neighboring towns.

The men murmur to each other approvingly.

**ALSTAN**

*(cont'd)*

I will be choosing a few of you to take and spread our message of love and peace...

A few chuckles

**ALSTAN**

*(cont'd)*

And obedience...

More chuckles.

**ALSTAN**

*(cont'd)*

And devotion to the one who watches to others, so that they may benefit from knowing the message, and the wisdom of the messenger. And we will!

The men cheer.

Xena and Gabrielle exchange looks. Xena frowns.

**GABRIELLE**

*(whispering)*

Interesting way of putting that.

**XENA**

Mm.

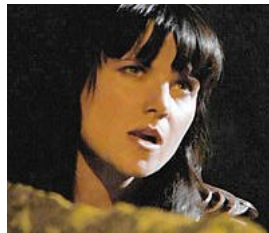
**ALSTAN**

The key of course, is to maintain  
our holy bond of brotherhood,  
and our code of trust.

**XENA**

*(whispering)*

And not let anyone catch  
on to their scam.



**ALSTAN**

And we must remember our pledge  
to keep that trust against any  
threats from unbelievers, right?

The men cheer and stamp. They raise a thick cloud of dust, which wafts up to the rafters. Both Xena and Gabrielle have to let go with one hand and clamp their noses and mouths, trying frantically not to sneeze.

**MEN**

Death to unbelievers! All praise  
the message, and the watchers!

Gabrielle starts to lose her grip on the rafters.



Xena makes a grab for her, and they both begin to slide towards the ground.

**FADE OUT.**



## ACT THREE

FADE IN:

### INT. PETRONIKUS TEMPLE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Gabrielle slips off the rafter. She grabs on to a piece of wood, but it breaks off in her hands and she heads for the ground two stories below

**XENA**

Ga....



Xena throws herself off the rafters.

Abruptly, Gabrielle's flight is arrested as she is caught by the leg and the scruff of her neck and held dangling in mid air.

Xena has her legs wrapped around a roof support, and is holding Gabrielle up over the heads of the men below.



**GABRIELLE**

*(hissing)*

Xena!

**XENA**

Sh!

The men finish clapping, and the room quiets.

**ALSTAN**

All right men, let's get this place  
ready for what I hope will be very  
substantial additions to our stock.

Alstan turns to go. Xena tightens her grip on Gabrielle and looks up as a bit of the roof support cracks free and lands on her head.

**MAN**

Sir, will you be speaking the  
watcher's words tomorrow night?

**ALSTAN**

I will. I have received a new  
scroll of messages. Tomorrow  
you will hear them.

The men nod.

Another piece of wood falls and bounces off Xena's shoulder. Xena swiftly snatches it out of mid air with her teeth so it doesn't fall on Alstan's head.

Gabrielle remains absolutely still, trying not to swing. Her eyes are tightly shut.

**MAN**

I know we have our mission here,  
but I love hearing the words, sir. I do.

Alstan claps the man on the shoulder.

**ALSTAN**

Well, that's nice, my son.  
Now get to work.

Alstan starts to leave, then he pauses, looking down at the ground. There are bits of wood there. He looks at the wood, then looks around.

Xena gives Gabrielle a tiny shake and Gabrielle opens her eyes. She sees Alstan directly below her, looking at the debris.

Just shy of looking up, Alstan shrugs and leaves instead, followed by the other men. They take their time, each one walking under where Gabrielle is hanging.

Finally, they are gone, and the door slams shut behind them. After a second, Xena spits the piece of wood out of her mouth and it goes bouncing off.

**GABRIELLE**  
(*whispering*)  
Son of a bacchae.

**XENA**  
Couple of other words come to mind.  
(*grunting*)  
Listen, there's no....

**GABRIELLE**  
Just drop me.



Xena looks down.

**XENA**  
That's a hard looking floor.

Gabrielle looks around and sees few options.

**GABRIELLE**  
Well, you could just drop  
me on my head.

**XENA**  
Hang on... just go with me.

Gabrielle grimaces. Xena heaves herself upward, then releases Gabrielle's leg. Gabrielle tumbles in the air, and extends her hands up to meet Xena's as she falls. They lock wrists, and now Gabrielle is dangling in a much better position.

**GABRIELLE**  
Okay.

**XENA**  
Go.

Xena releases her grip, Gabrielle releases hers. Gabrielle lands hard, but keeps her balance and waits as Xena lets go of the roofing and somersaults in mid air to land next to her.

Footsteps approach again, and voices get louder outside the door. Xena and Gabrielle slip to either side of the door and flatten themselves against the wall. Xena draws her sword. Gabrielle draws a sai.

The door latch starts to work. The door starts to open.

They hear a shout from farther off, and the door slams shut and the footsteps recede.

Xena and Gabrielle relax. Gabrielle flexes her leg and winces, then sheathes her sai.

Xena puts her sword away and starts examining the room.

**GABRIELLE**

Guess there isn't much doubt  
about these guys, huh?

Xena lifts a piece of parchment and holds it up towards the light. After a moment, she tosses it to Gabrielle.

**XENA**

Not much.



Xena looks around, then puts her hands on her hips. Her expression is somewhere between disgusted and profoundly disturbed.

**GABRIELLE**

So, what do we do? Just chase  
them off? There's a lot  
of them, Xena, but....

**XENA**

But there's two of us, yeah.

Xena looks around again.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

We chase them off, they'll just  
be back. Besides, there's  
something bigger behind this.

Gabrielle drops the parchment on the box.

**GABRIELLE**

So we have to go to the source.

Xena nods.

**XENA**

Now we just have to make  
them take us to it.

Xena goes to the wall and climbs up on some boxes. She extends a hand down to Gabrielle.

**GABRIELLE**

The door's just not good enough, huh?



Gabrielle climbs up on the boxes and takes Xena's hand as they climb up into the ceiling and disappear.

**FADE TO:**

**INT PETRONIKUS INN - MORNING**

The innkeeper is busy baking bread. It is just after dawn, and the sun is shining in the window.

Gabrielle enters from the back, appearing freshly scrubbed and wide awake. She whistled softly as she crosses to the kitchen area.

**GABRIELLE**

Morning!

The innkeeper seems surprised to see her.

**INNKEEPER**

Oh! Good morning! I didn't see  
you and your friend come back  
last night so I thought....

**GABRIELLE**

We came in the back door.

The innkeeper looks puzzled.

**INNKEEPER**

But we don't have a back door.

**GABRIELLE**

Sure you do. Now.

*(pausing)*

What's that you're  
making, raisin bread?



The innkeeper looks around her table. It is covered in loaves, at least two dozen of them.

**INNKEEPER**

Yes, I have to start early. It takes time.

**GABRIELLE**

*(smiling)*

Must be a popular choice here.

**INNKEEPER**

*(frowning)*

Well, not really, but it holds very well.  
It's for the glory of the one who watches.  
The brothers take it for their works.

Gabrielle crosses her arms and studies the loaves.

**GABRIELLE**

But they pay you for them, right?

**INNKEEPER**

Oh, no, no, of course not.  
It's my gift to them.

Gabrielle picks up a loaf and studies it.

**GABRIELLE**

But they sell it, don't they?

**INNKEEPER**

Well... Yes.

**GABRIELLE**

So.... They get paid for your work.  
What do you get out of it?

The innkeeper seems quite disturbed. She goes back to baking her bread, turning her back on Gabrielle. Gabrielle filches a raisin from a loaf and nibbles it.

**CUT TO:**

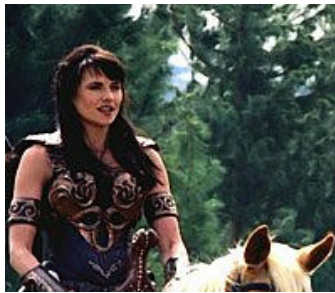
**EXT. PETRONIKUS HOMESTEAD - MORNING**

Xena rides Argo II along a dirt path. On either side of her are fields of grain and other growing things being harvested. On the side of the path is a big wagon, with a number of town men working around it.

Xena slows as she approaches them, and the men look up from their work.

**XENA**

Morning.



One of the men approaches her.

**TOWNSMAN**

That's a beautiful mare.

Fortunately for Gabrielle, the way to Xena's heart is not through praising her horse, but it never hurts.

**XENA**

Thanks. Looks like you've  
got a nice crop there.

The men look at their work, then at the wagon.

**TOWNSMAN**

Yes, it is. We've been grateful  
that our prayers were answered.

Xena gets off Argo II and goes to the wagon. She lifts a bit of the harvested grain.

**XENA**

You prayed for this?

The men all gather round Xena, more than slightly intrigued by her appearance.

**TOWNSMAN**

We've had hard times since the old gods left us. This season, the brothers came and told us the message of the one who watches. It gave us hope.

Xena flinches slightly at the word.

**SECOND TOWNSMAN**

Since they've been here, the harvests have increased. Life is better.

**XENA**

You don't think that might be a coincidence?



The men all frown.

**TOWNSMAN**

How could it be?

**XENA**

*(shrugging)*

Weather's been good. I've seen great harvests from the coast all the way here.

*(pausing)*

Where's all this going? You have a big storehouse? Probably sell what you don't need and make a profit.

The men murmur to each other.

**SECOND TOWNSMAN**

Oh no. This is for the one who watches.  
Our tribute for the good harvest.

Xena steps back, looks at the wagon, looks at the men, looks back at the wagon, and assumes a very skeptical expression.



**XENA**

Uh huh. Okay. Gotta go.

Xena leaps back on Argo II, and gives the wagon one more look, shaking her head. The men's attention is glued on her and she is aware of that. Xena waves, and rides off, still shaking her head. The men watch her go, then they gather around the wagon, voices rising in argument in very short order.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. PETRONIKUS INN - LATE AFTERNOON**

Gabrielle is sitting outside the inn on the grass, writing on a scroll. She is leaning against a tree, but is watching the square with her peripheral vision.

Heriet exits from her house, and starts heading for the path to the temple. She spots Gabrielle sitting in the grass and pauses, watching her.

**GABRIELLE**

And Xena killed the bad giant,  
saving the village from destruction.

Heriet hears the words and wanders closer.

**HERIET**

What are you doing?

**GABRIELLE**

Writing down a story about  
something that happened to us.

Heriet comes over and sits down next to Gabrielle.

**HERIET**

My father says storytelling is evil.

Gabrielle looks up.

**GABRIELLE**

Why?



**HERIET**

It takes time from work, and it spreads  
lies. He says the only stories we should  
be hearing are from the one who watches.

Gabrielle puts her quill down and blows on her parchment to dry it.

**GABRIELLE**

Do you really believe that?

Heriet shrugs.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

What makes the stories from  
your watcher any truer than mine?

**HERIET**

*(outraged)*

They are the word of god!

Gabrielle doesn't appear intimidated, naturally.

**GABRIELLE**

Well, I've learned the hard way that  
the word of a god and the word of  
one of us is about equally trustworthy.

Heriet gets up and backs away.

**HERIET**

You speak nothing but worthless  
lies. My father is right.

Heriet storms off, leaving Gabrielle sitting in the grass. Gabrielle rolls up her scroll, and  
taps it against the side of her neck as she ponders.

Just before disappearing down the path to the temple, Heriet stops, and looks back  
uncertainly.

Gabrielle smiles, and salutes her with the scroll. Heriet frowns, and hurries off.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. PETRONIKUS INN - BACK ROOM - EVENING**

Xena is sprawled on the room's small, somewhat low bed. Gabrielle is packing the last of  
their belongings into a carry bag.

**GABRIELLE**

You think this is going to work?

Xena has an apple balanced on her stomach. She bounces it up and down a few times idly.

**XENA**

Hard to say. We planted some seeds. Let's see what we harvest.



Gabrielle walks over and sits down next to her. She removes the apple and takes a bite of it, then hands it back.

**GABRIELLE**

Bags are ready. You want to take them outside, and I'll meet you near the temple?

Xena takes a bite of the apple.

**XENA**

You ready for this?

**GABRIELLE**

*(sighing)*

As I'll ever be. C'mon.



Xena hoist the bags up, and turns to jump out the window. Gabrielle hops out after her, and they disappear into the darkness.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. PETRONIKUS TEMPLE - NIGHT**

The temple courtyard is full of townsfolk. A platform has been set up outside the doors, hastily decorated with ribbons and swatches of cloth. A piece of board with the crowned sun sigil is propped in front of the platform. Torches stand to either side, lighting the area.

The door to the temple opens and a dozen tunic wearing men emerge. They take up positions on either side of the platform and stand waiting.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. PETRONIKUS INN SURROUNDING TREES - NIGHT - SAME TIME**

Xena and Gabrielle stand behind a tree, watching the crowd. Xena straightens out Gabrielle's coat and flicks her bangs a little more evenly. Gabrielle gives her the kind of look often given mothers trying to clean off dirt with a thumb-full of spit.

Seeing this, Xena leans over and kisses Gabrielle on the lips.

Gabrielle is much happier with this approach, and apparently forgives Xena her fussing.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. PETRONIKUS TEMPLE - NIGHT**

Alstan walks out of the temple and goes to the platform. The crowd all bows respectfully, and he holds his hands up as his men all cheer.

**ALSTAN**

The peace of the watcher be with you,  
my friends. You have learned your  
lessons well, and we have prospered.  
Thanks be to the one who watches over us.

**CROWD**

So it will be.

**ALSTAN**

The message of the watcher tells us to  
take care of each other, to obey those  
who know the watcher's word, and to  
give to the watcher all but what is  
necessary for one's body.

**ALSTAN'S MEN**

*(together)*

Obey the watcher!

**ALSTAN**

This has given us peace, and a good  
harvest. What more can we ask?

*(waiting)*

We can ask nothing. But the watcher  
has sent us a new message, and we  
must listen and obey this new  
message, so our bounty can continue.

The crowd murmurs.

**ALSTAN'S MEN**

*(together)*

All heed the message and the messenger!

**ALSTAN**

We must do more to bring the message to others! It is not enough to know it ourselves, we must shout it from every corner, so that our neighbors, and their neighbors will hear it and listen to its wisdom! That is the path to true enlightenment.

**MAN IN CROWD**

But.... We've done everything asked of us.  
When can we attend to living our lives?



Alstan points at him.

**ALSTAN**

It is those such as you who threaten our message! See! Among us, participating in our bounty, there is doubt! This angers the watcher!

The crowd whispers uneasily. They move away from the man.

**ALSTAN**

*(cont'd)*

You will only know peace through obeying the watcher's word!

Gabrielle steps out from behind the trees and moves to stand opposite Alstan.

**GABRIELLE**

Obeying someone else has never brought anyone peace.

The crowd reacts in shock. Alstan is also shocked.

**ALSTAN**

Who are you? How dare you come in here in this place of holiness and blaspheme!

**GABRIELLE**

My name is Gabrielle. I've traveled the world, and I know more about gods than you can ever imagine.

*(pointing)*

Blasphemy depends on who's doing the talking.



Alstan's men stir angrily.

**ALSTAN**

Stranger, you have no place here.  
Leave, before you anger the  
watcher. You cannot feel the love  
of the watcher's message.

**GABRIELLE**

My place is wherever ordinary  
people's fears are being used  
to take advantage of them.

**ALSTAN**

*(angrily)*

You do not hear the message!

The crowd starts to cluster around Gabrielle. Alstan's men close in around him.

**GABRIELLE**

*(loudly)*

The message is - give me everything  
you've got so I can sell it and make  
a profit. Why not show them  
what's in your temple?

**ALSTAN**

You are an enemy of the watcher!  
Men! Brothers, sisters... Heed the  
message and defend the  
messenger! Take up your stones!

Gabrielle turns her back on them, and faces the crowd.

**GABRIELLE**

Am I an enemy? Think about what  
you're being asked! To obey without  
question? To give up your hard  
earned profits? To make these men  
rich with your efforts? Is that  
the message you hear?

**ALSTAN**

Defend the messenger! Stone her!

The crowd picks up stones from the ground, shifting angrily as Alstan's men rush to grab sticks from a nearby pile.

Gabrielle is caught between the two of them.

**FADE OUT.**

## ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

### EXT. PETRONIKUS TEMPLE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Gabrielle holds her hands up.

**GABRIELLE**

You can throw them.  
But I'll throw them back.

*(pausing)*

Think! What would a  
god need with grain?

**ALSTAN**

Yes! Think! But think of the  
peace the message of the  
watcher has brought to us  
all. The message of love,  
and of brotherhood....

Gabrielle turns again to face him.

**GABRIELLE**

And of thievery?



**ALSTAN**

My brothers, stop her tongue. The  
watcher commands me to ask it. Now!

CUT TO:

### EXT. PETRONIKUS INN SURROUNDING TREES

Xena gets ready to leap out.



**XENA**

Duck, baby. Duck.



**CUT TO:**

**EXT. PETRONIKUS TEMPLE - NIGHT**

The men rush Gabrielle. Gabrielle dives out of the way, as rocks start to fly.

But the rocks are not aimed at Gabrielle. They strike the men in tunics instead. The crowd lets out a yell.

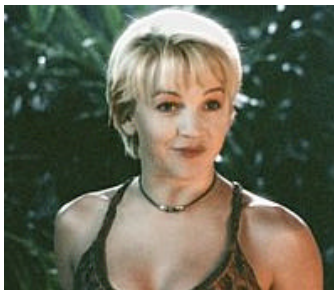
**CROWD**

Ahh!!!

The men in tunics react, attacking the crowd. Gabrielle, caught between them, picks up a stick and whacks one of the brothers with it.

**GABRIELLE**

Feeling the love?



**ALSTAN**

In the name of the watcher,  
I order you to disperse!

Xena leaps over most of the crowd and lands next to Gabrielle. She grabs one of the men attacking and swings him around, smashing him into the platform. The crowned sun sigil goes flying off into the bushes.

The crowd is not much use, but they throw sticks and rocks, half afraid, half excited as the brothers start to fall back before Xena and Gabrielle's attack.

**ALSTAN**

*(cont'd)*

Hold them, my brothers!  
The holy word is behind you!

**GABRIELLE**

Watch out!

The innkeeper is struggling in the grasp of two of the brothers. She screams in terror. Gabrielle ducks under one of the brother's arms and punches him in the guts. He keels over. Gabrielle whirls and takes the second man out with a roundhouse kick to the side of the head. The innkeeper stumbles away, half hysterical.

**ALSTAN**

Take them! Take them!

**XENA**

Take this!

Xena grabs the edge of the platform and heaves it over. Alstan goes tumbling off and falls to the ground.

Two of the brothers take hold of Alstan and bolt for the temple doors. The rest fall back, fending off the rocks from the now emboldened crowd.

**GABRIELLE**

Run! Run like the cowards you are.  
Wherever you spread your false  
words, we'll find you and stop you!

The men rush into the temple and slam the door shut. A heavy bolt is heard being thrown.

Xena draws her sword and lets it fly. It buries itself a foot deep in the wooden door and a faint scream is heard through it.

**XENA**

And don't you forget it.

It grows quiet in the courtyard. The crowd seems unsure of what to do now that the fight is over. They also seem a little doubtful of what they did.

**GABRIELLE**

Thanks for not stoning me.

The innkeeper edges closer. Her dress is ripped, and she is scratched from her close call with the two men.

**INNKEEPER**

What have we done?

**MAN**

What if he was right and the  
watcher hates us now?

A nervous whisper starts up.

**XENA**

I'm not sure what kind of message  
he was giving you, but I know a  
bunch of con men when I see  
them, and I just saw them.



**INNKEEPER**

It didn't start out that way! When they  
came, they talked about how empty  
our lives had been since the gods  
left us, and how we should join  
together and love each other....

**SECOND MAN**

It sounded good.

**INNKEEPER**

It did... but then after a while they  
started asking for more and more and....

The crowd mutters, and nods.

**SECOND MAN**

If you said no, the brothers would  
come to you and talk you into it.

Xena nods. She has seen it all too many times before.

**XENA**

They took advantage of you.

**INNKEEPER**

You must think us fools.

**GABRIELLE**

No. Wanting to believe in something  
isn't foolish. We all want that.

The crowd looks uneasily at the temple.

**SECOND MAN**

Well, now what? They'll come out  
of there soon enough, and then  
we'll be in big trouble.

Xena walks over near the door and stands in the torchlight.

**XENA**

No you won't. We'll put a guard on this  
door tonight, so no one gets out, right?

The crowd seems willing and interested in following this new leader among them.

**SECOND MAN**

Okay, then....

**XENA**

Then tomorrow, me and Gabrielle will  
go in there and clean the place out.

**INNKEEPER**

Why would you do that, for us?  
We don't even know you.

Xena looks at Gabrielle, who smiles.

**GABRIELLE**

It's just what we do.



The crowd shifts. Three or four big men emerge, and head for the door. They all have  
somewhat sturdy looking sticks in their hands, and they plant themselves on either side of  
the doorway to watch.

**XENA**

That's it. You men stay there, and if  
you hear anyone trying to open  
that door, you start yelling.

The men nod. Xena claps Gabrielle on the back, and they start to head off back down the  
path towards the town center.

**CUT TO:**

## EXT. PETRONIKUS TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

As the crowd moves through the square, Alstan's wife and his daughter Heriet hide behind a tree, looking upset and terrified.

Coming last, Gabrielle spots them as they try to escape towards the temple. Her eyes meet Heriet's.

There is nothing but anger and hatred in the girl's eyes. Gabrielle turns and continues walking.



CUT TO:

## EXT. PETRONIKUS TEMPLE - REAR - NIGHT

It is dark. The moon is behind the trees. The town is mostly silent, except for the torches kept burning at the front of the temple, along with the sound of men talking nearby.

In the back wall of the temple, a panel very slowly starts to open.

After a few seconds, one of the brother's heads pokes out, and he looks around carefully. Seeing no one, he exits the back of the building, followed by a few of the others.

They stop and press themselves against the wall of the building and listen.

Nothing disturbs the silence. One man nods. A second makes a hand signal in the opening in the back of the temple. More men emerge, along with Alstan.

They all have backpacks on their backs, stuffed full. After a few more moments of listening, they start off through the trees after closing the panel in the back of the temple.

CUT TO:

## EXT. OVERLOOK OUTSIDE PETRONOKUS - NIGHT

Alstan and his men walk along the ridge. Behind them, several other figures stumble... it is Alstan's wife and daughter and two other women who followed them from the town.

**ALSTAN**  
(angrily)  
Heathens.

**BROTHER**

Sir, it wasn't the people.  
It was those... those women.

**ALSTAN**

I know.

**BROTHER**

Did you hear what they said?  
They're going to other places....

**ALSTAN**

I heard. That is why we're going right to  
the holy place. The guard of the watcher  
will know what to do, and must be warned.

He pauses and glances back.

**ALSTAN**

*(cont'd)*

Then we will go back there  
and re-teach them the message.

**BROTHER**

What about those women?

**ALSTAN**

*(smiling grimly)*

They will be taken care of. The word  
of the messenger will not be denied.

The small group walks on down the path.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. OVERLOOK OUTSIDE PETRONOKUS - NIGHT**

Xena and Gabrielle crouch on a ridge over the path. They watch Alstan and his people  
walk past them.

**GABRIELLE**

There they go.



**XENA**

With any luck, right back to  
wherever this thing started.

Xena and Gabrielle get up and follow the group, walking along the ridge over the path just out of sight.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. HEDELON CITY - DAY - ONE WEEK LATER**

Hedelon City stands at the end of a stone lined road. It is large, and has thick stone walls. The crowned sun sigil is painted in several prominent places, and many people walking in and out of the city also wear the sigil on their robes.

Alstan and his people enter the gates. They are greeted by the men standing nearby with waves and warm shouts.

**GUARD**

Alstan! Brother! We didn't expect  
you before another moon!

**ALSTAN**

Ah, my friend. I need council!  
There has been a challenge to  
the message, and I've come  
for wisdom in defeating it.

Several men gather around him. Unnoticed, Xena and Gabrielle pause in the shadow of the walls to listen. They look around in disbelief at the size of the city, and the number of people.

**GABRIELLE**

Xena, this is a lot bigger  
than I imagined.

**XENA**

Me too. Hard to believe  
something like this grew so  
fast.... Right under our noses.

The guard puts his arm around Alstan's shoulders.

**GUARD**

Trouble? Hard to believe. The  
word has gone out over the land,  
and many have come here  
to celebrate it. Look around!

Alstan turns and looks. The city seems full of pilgrims.

**ALSTAN**

A sight for sore eyes. But no matter,  
it's only a minor setback. Come. Let's  
go to the temple, so I can hear again  
the message and restore myself.

The travel party heads off down a wide avenue. As they pass a statue, they turn and bow respectfully to it, then continue on. Xena and Gabrielle start after them.

**GABRIELLE**

We need to find out who's behind this,  
Xena. We can't take on a whole city. And  
these people really sound like they.... Hey!

Xena has stopped short in her tracks. Gabrielle plows into her and bounces off, grabbing hold of Xena's arm to steady herself.

**XENA**

*(grimly)*

We just found out.



Gabrielle turns and finds herself staring at the statue.

It is Eve.

To be continued....

**FADE OUT.**

**DISCLAIMER**

No Benedictine Monks were harmed in the making of this motion  
picture, mostly due to the fact they hadn't been invented yet.