

## Xena: Warrior Princess - Subtext Virtual Season 7



**Production #V705 - For Want of an Herb**

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## TEASER

FADE IN:

### EXT. FOREST GLEN. MORNING

The sun shines down on a well-prepared camp deep in the forest. ARGO grazes on a large patch of meadow grass and ignores the two women behind her. GABRIELLE is standing against a tree, blindfolded, and grinning widely.



**XENA**

*(Off Stage)*

Are you ready?

**GABRIELLE**

Oh yes, I'm ready.

**XENA**

*(O.S.)*

Are you sure?

**GABRIELLE**

Of course I'm sure! C'mon, Xena! It's not as if we haven't done this before.

**XENA**

*(O.S.)*

True, but it's been awhile.

**GABRIELLE**

Well, you know what they say. Once you've done it, you can never get enough.

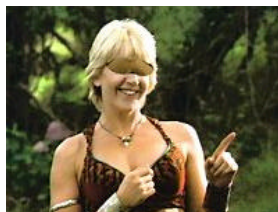
**XENA**

*(teasing)*

All right, if you're very, very sure.

**GABRIELLE**

Xena, you know what I want!  
Just do it already!



Xena smirks and draws back on the bow she's holding. Two arrows have been expertly notched, and with a smooth pull, she releases them both. One veers to the left, and Gabrielle catches it easily. The second veers to the right. Gabrielle reaches up to catch it, but she clenches her fist too soon, and curses as the edge of the arrowhead scrapes along her palm and sticks into the tree behind her. Hissing, she rips off her blindfold and stares down at her hand. A thin stripe of blood stares back at her.

**GABRIELLE**

Ow!

Xena puts down her bow and walks up to Gabrielle, grasping her injured palm and turning it up, toward the sun. A small scrape is the extent of the damage. Releasing Gabrielle's hand, Xena goes to their supplies and brings back a clean cloth and some water, with which she tends to the scrape.

**XENA**

You're still favoring this hand.  
You need to focus.



**GABRIELLE**

Easy for you to say. You were probably  
born with an arrow in each hand.  
(beat)  
Hey! That stings!

**XENA**

(smirks)  
Baby.

**GABRIELLE**

And you say \*I\* have  
hands like a sailor.  
(beat)  
So, what's the verdict?

**XENA**

Oh, I think you'll live.

**GABRIELLE**

Remind me to work on that  
bedside manner of yours.

Xena laughs and returns to their gear to stow her supplies. Straightening suddenly, she lifts her head and scents the air.

**GABRIELLE**

What is it?

**XENA**

Smoke. If I'm right, it's coming from that village we passed on our way here. Let's go.

They quickly load their gear on Argo and head toward the smell of smoke.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. VILLAGE - DAY**

A medium sized village is completely engulfed in flames. Off to one side, a MAN stands, staring into the conflagration. His clothes are ripped and dirty with sweat and grime.

As Argo charges in, Gabrielle hops off her back and runs to the man, grabbing his shoulder.

**GABRIELLE**

What happened here?

*(beat)*

Hello?



When the man doesn't answer, she uses her grip on his shoulder to turn him to face her. His face is wet with tears, and his expression tells a tale of misery and loss.

**GABRIELLE**

What happened here?

The man clutches Gabrielle with desperate strength.

**MAN**

They're all dead. I tried to help.  
I really did. You have to believe me!

**GABRIELLE**

I believe you. Can you tell  
me what happened?

Xena, on Argo, tries to enter the village, but the fire is burning too strong, and keeps pushing her back with its smoke and heat. Argo dances away from the flames, rearing and snorting, and shaking her head. Realizing that no one inside could possibly be alive, she comes to Gabrielle's side, and stares at the man as his body shakes with sobs.

**MAN**

They were dying. And I--I didn't  
know what to do! I tried, you see,  
but it wasn't...wasn't enough. And  
now they're dead. All of them.  
My wife. My children. Everyone.

The man releases Gabrielle and stares at the both of them, eyes wide with terror.

**MAN**

*(cont'd)*

And if you don't leave now,  
you'll be dead too!

Keening his grief, the man clutches his head and collapses to his knees.

Gabrielle stares at Xena, worry in her eyes. Xena stares back, her expression unreadable.



**FADE OUT.**

**END OF TEASER**

## ACT ONE

FADE IN:

### EXT. VILLAGE – DAY - RESUME

Gabrielle's quiet compassion has managed to get the man back on his feet and calmed somewhat. A calm that is almost immediately undone when Xena approaches again and begins a terse questioning.

**XENA**

Did you start this fire?



The man wrings his hands and looks pleadingly at them both, particularly Gabrielle, in whom he senses a potential ally, of sorts.

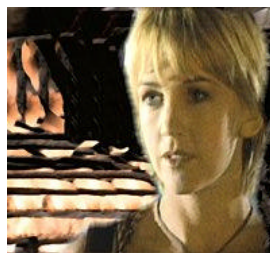
**MAN**

It was the only way. The only thing  
I could do. To help. Don't you  
understand? It was the only way!

**GABRIELLE**

*(over Xena)*

We'd like to understand, and we'd  
like to help. Can you please just  
tell us what happened here?



The man looks down at what remains of his boots.

**MAN**

I was a merchant. Traveled all  
around Greece, selling things.

**GABRIELLE**

Go on.

**MAN**

A month ago, maybe less, I was in a town just north of here, doing business, when a woman came in begging for help.

He laughs, but it's a bitter sound.

**MAN**

*(cont'd)*

I thought...we all thought she was just a sick old woman, you know? The kind everyone ignores. But I couldn't ignore her. None of us could. She was...screaming...gods she was screaming and she wouldn't shut up. And she said that there was a...sickness killing everyone it touched, and that it was gonna kill us too.

He laughs again.

**MAN**

*(cont'd)*

She said it was the curse of the gods. None of us believed her. Not then. But I do now.

Seeing Xena's patience is about strained to its limit, Gabrielle gently prods the man along.



**GABRIELLE**

How did this lead to the fire?

**MAN**

Another...another man came in. A big man...covered with these huge, festering sores all over his face. He was screaming for help and---

**XENA**

Describe these sores.  
What did they look like?

The man looks questioningly at Xena.

**MAN**

Like sores. Open ones, weeping yellow fluid. They stank to Mount Olympus.

Gabrielle can feel Xena stiffen behind her, and turns her head to look at her partner.

**XENA**

His eyes and tongue. Were they red and oozing?

**MAN**

Yes, they were. On the man and the woman.

**GABRIELLE**

Xena? What is it?

**XENA**

Plague. He's describing symptoms of the plague.



Gabrielle pales as the realization sinks in.

**GABRIELLE**

By the gods.

**XENA**

*(to MAN)*

So you burned the village to stop it from spreading.

**MAN**

It's already spread, far beyond here. I did this to honor my kinsmen. It was the only way. I couldn't think of anything else to do. You have to believe me!

**XENA**

*(to Gabrielle)*

There are herbs that can cure this.

**MAN**

No, not any more. They're all gone. I searched everywhere for even one bundle. There was nothing.



**XENA**

*(to Gabrielle)*

I know where we can get more.

It's then that Xena notices that Gabrielle has wandered off. She turns to see her partner standing several yards away, looking to the west, a pensive expression on her face.

**XENA**

*(to MAN)*

Stay here.

She strides over to her partner and stops, following Gabrielle's westward gaze.

**GABRIELLE**

*(softly)*

The Amazons. Xena, they're not more than two days away from here. They could already be sick. Or dying.



**XENA**

*(doubtfully)*

They're pretty isolated, Gabrielle. And they don't allow strangers to just drop by unannounced.

**GABRIELLE**

*(slightly exasperated)*

They *\*are\** known to leave the village sometimes, Xena. Any number of them could have passed through here on their way back from a trip into town.

**XENA**

*(gently)*

We don't know that any did.

**GABRIELLE**

We don't know that any didn't, either.

Xena is quiet for a moment, then deliberately voices Gabrielle's thoughts.

**XENA**

We could go there. Check up on them.

**GABRIELLE**

And if they're already sick?

**XENA**

The herbs are the only  
cure I know of, Gabrielle.

**GABRIELLE**

Do you think the Amazons have any?

**XENA**

I don't know. It's doubtful, though.



**GABRIELLE**

But you *\*do\** know where  
to get more of them, right?

**XENA**

Yes, but it's several days  
travel. In the opposite direction.

Letting out a soft sigh, Gabrielle turns back toward the man who is watching his entire life burn  
before his eyes.

**GABRIELLE**

*(softly, to self)*

This... this affects more  
than just the Amazons.

She turns back to Xena, expression resolute.

**GABRIELLE**

Xena, we need to help these people.

*(beat)*

And just trust that the  
Amazons are all right.

*(beat)*

I just wish we could  
warn them somehow.



**XENA**

*(thoughtfully)*

There may be a way. C'mon.

The two companions return to the man who continues to watch his village burn.

**GABRIELLE**

Xena knows where we can get more herbs. Why don't you come with us?

**MAN**

It's too late for me.

Lifting his shirt, he bares the red rash spreading rapidly over his chest and belly. Looking at them both, he gives a brief nod, then starts into the village.

Gabrielle grabs hold of his shirt, halting his progress.

**GABRIELLE**

Wait! Where are you going?

**MAN**

Home. I'm going home.

**GABRIELLE**

But...

A warm hand on her shoulder halts her words. Turning her head, she looks at Xena, whose eyes are filled with compassion. Their communication is wordless, and after a moment, Gabrielle sighs and lowers her head. She releases the man from her grip.



The man smiles at them both gratefully.

**MAN**

Bless you. Bless you both.

Xena and Gabrielle watch in silent tribute as the man walks slowly into the flaming village and disappears into the burning remains of what once was his home.

**DISSOLVE TO:**

**EXT. SHALLOW STREAM - DAY**

Xena and Gabrielle, having ridden from the village, stop by a small, shallow stream somewhat off the main trail. It's a beautiful spot, one that Gabrielle would fall in love with, in other circumstances. These, however, aren't those circumstances, and she stands by, bewildered, as Xena dismounts and gently slaps Argo in the direction of the water.

**XENA**

Take your clothes off.



**GABRIELLE**

*(shocked)*

Excuse me?

**XENA**

You heard me.

**GABRIELLE**

I heard you. I'm just not sure I understood you.



Xena begins to unbuckle her own armor.

**XENA**

C'mon, Gabrielle. Please.

Gabrielle looks around, then back at her partner.

**GABRIELLE**

Xena? The mission?

Sliding her leathers off of her body, Xena rolls her eyes.

**XENA**

Could you just do as I ask? Please?

**GABRIELLE**

Xena, it's not as if I'm not interested in the possibilities here, but---

*(beat)*

Can you at least tell me why now? Why...here?

**XENA**

Because I'm asking you to.  
(beat, off Gabrielle's indignant stare)  
The plague is spread through physical contact.  
We need to wash ourselves off completely  
to keep from becoming infected.

Gabrielle immediately begins stripping. She drops her skirt and straightens just in time to catch a bundle, containing cloths and soap, hurtled by Xena as her partner passes by on her way to the water.

**GABRIELLE**

\*Now\* she tells me! Gods!



**CUT TO:**

**EXT. PORT TOWN - EVENING**

Xena and Gabrielle have ridden hard through the day and have arrived at a once thriving port town. The spread of the plague has decimated it. People lay dead and dying in the streets, and the stench is horrific. Few ships are in the harbor, and most of those are foundering in their moorings.

Only one seems to have any activity aboard, and it is to this one that Xena heads.

The ship, if it can properly be called such, is in the center of a panic maelstrom. Full of noisy livestock, its stench floats above even the death smell of the town below it. Men and women, desperate to escape the plague, run for the gangplank, only to be beaten back by the crew with ropes, stout wooden poles, and lengths of chain. Screams of pain and the high pitched sounds of begging can be easily heard.

Xena weaves Argo through the crowd of dead and dying and stops the horse with her forelegs on the gangplank of the beleaguered ship.

**XENA**

Where are you headed?



**CAPTAIN**

None of your business, woman!

**XENA**

I'm making it my business.  
(beat)  
You'll be taking on a few more passengers.

**CAPTAIN**

Like Hades I will. The only human cargo  
here is my crew, and it's gonna stay that  
way. Now get that beast off my gangplank  
or I'll run the both of you through.

Shouting her battle cry, Xena flips off of Argo's back and lands in front of the angered Captain, her own sword dimpling the skin of his throat.

**XENA**

Think so, huh?  
(beat)

Now, are you gonna be a good  
boy and let us on or am I gonna  
have to take over this ship and  
leave you to the mercy of the  
plague and those people  
you've been beating?



The Captain swallows heavily against the sword at his throat, and finally nods.

**CAPTAIN**

W---welcome aboard.

**XENA**

Smart move.

Sheathing her sword, Xena grabs Argo's reins and leads her onto the ship, Gabrielle still aboard. The captain looks on and slowly regains some of his bravado.

**CAPTAIN**

Store that beast below.  
I don't want it fouling up my deck.

Dismounting, Gabrielle glances at the filthy deck planks, then over to the Captain, who bares what few teeth he has at her.

Smirking, Gabrielle turns and picks her way carefully over the waste-fouled deck, following Xena and Argo into the hold.

**DISSOLVE TO:**

## INT. SHIP'S CABIN - NIGHT

The cabin is tiny; little more than a closet with a threadbare hammock swinging in the center.

Gabrielle is lying in the hammock, looking rather the worse for wear from a combination of the stench and the rolling seas.



Xena approaches the hammock with a tin cup filled with herbs and water.

### GABRIELLE

Oh, no. Last time I drank one of your potions, I got knocked out and you got yourself sold into a harem. I'll take my chances with the seasickness, thanks.

Xena grins and gently strokes Gabrielle's sweaty bangs from her forehead.

### XENA

There aren't any harems around here.

### GABRIELLE

*(wan smile)*

Knowing you, you'll find one.  
The only traveling harem ship  
on the seas, and off you'll go.



### XENA

I'll be right here when  
you wake up. Promise.

Gabrielle makes a great show of examining Xena's face for clues to her sincerity, then nods.

### GABRIELLE

Well, all right, as long as you promise.

### XENA

Cross my heart.

Gabrielle reaches for the cup and downs the herbs, making a face before she hands it back over. Lethargy sweeps over her almost instantly, and she watches with heavy-lidded eyes as Xena replaces the cup with their gear. She then crosses back over, slips into the hammock, and gathers Gabrielle close against her.



**GABRIELLE**

Mm. If this is the reward I get, remind me to take those herbs more often.

Xena presses a kiss into Gabrielle's hair, and tucks the golden head beneath her chin.

**XENA**

Sleep now. You'll feel better in the morning.



Things are quiet for a bit as Xena falls into her own thoughts and Gabrielle battles sleep's strong pull.

**GABRIELLE**

Xena?

**XENA**

Yes?

**GABRIELLE**

I'm sorry I said you have hands like a sailor.

*(drugged giggle)*

Your hands are \*much\* better than any old sailor's.

Xena laughs softly, rolling her eyes.



**XENA**

And how many "old sailors"  
have you known?



**GABRIELLE**

*(giggles again)*

Wouldn't you like to know?

Xena shakes her head and kisses her partner's head again.

**XENA**

Goodnight, Gabrielle.

**GABRIELLE**

*(dreamy sigh)*

G'night, Xena.

**DISSOLVE TO:**

**EXT. SHIP'S DECK - DAY**

Xena and Gabrielle stand side by side at the ship's rail, watching as land moves slowly into view. They have been traveling southward for several days and are both more than ready to leave the stinking confines of the ship.

Though Xena's potion has worked its customary miracles, Gabrielle wishes for nothing but to be standing on dry land once more.

As they watch the shoreline come closer, Gabrielle spots a large ship sailing toward them.

**GABRIELLE**

Xena?

**XENA**

I see it.

**GABRIELLE**

Do you think they're pirates?



**XENA**

Stupid ones, maybe. No one loots a livestock ship. There's very little profit in it.

**GABRIELLE**

Who, then?

**XENA**

I'm sure we'll find out soon enough.

Both watch as the ship draws closer, and it becomes readily apparent that their guests are not pirates, but rather officials of some sort.

It becomes further apparent, listening to the two captains argue, that the livestock ship, being from Greece, will not be allowed entry into the harbor.

Cursing colorfully, the captain orders his ship turned around.

**GABRIELLE**

What do we do now?

**XENA**

Be right back.

Gabrielle looks on as Xena approaches the Captain and slings a friendly arm over his beefy shoulders, guiding him toward the wheel.

Several moments later, she returns to Gabrielle's side, a smug grin on her face.

**GABRIELLE**

Do I really want to know?

**XENA**

*(shrugging)*

Gave him an alternate port to sail into.

**GABRIELLE**

Oh, you did, did you?

**XENA**

Yup. I used to come here pretty often, in the old days.

**GABRIELLE**

Old days. As in ten...wait, make that thirty five winters ago, when you were a...

**XENA**

Pirate, yes.

*(pause)*

Had some wild times there, as I recall.

**GABRIELLE**

Oh. Goody.

**XENA**

Aw, c'mon, Gabrielle. It  
won't be that bad. You'll see.



**FADE OUT.**

**END OF ACT ONE**

## ACT TWO

FADE IN:

### EXT. PORT TOWN - DAY

The town is a true ruffian's den, populated by unsavory characters from many countries. They are all intent on eking out a dishonest living by cheating any travelers unlucky enough to pass through out of whatever valuables they might possess.

Though there aren't more than twenty buildings in all, Gabrielle counts at least ten taverns, each with names more colorful, and in the case of several, more anatomically impossible, than the last.

She steps out of the way as a patron flies through the doors of one such tavern and lands, head first, in a sodden, smelly pile of...something.

GABRIELLE

Xena?



XENA

Mm?

GABRIELLE

It's that bad.

Grinning, Xena steps around three men fist fighting over a woman who saw attractive a decade ago, and clean, a decade before that.

XENA

I just need to get Argo stabled  
and pick up some information  
and we're on our way.



GABRIELLE

You never did get around to telling  
me why we chose the scenic route.  
Why wasn't our ship allowed to  
sail into the official port?

**XENA**

Because it came from Greece.  
Apparently, a bunch of idiots are  
sailing in and stealing as many  
herbs as they can get their  
grubby little hands on.

**GABRIELLE**

To sell at a huge profit, of course.

**XENA**

Of course.

**GABRIELLE**

That's disgusting. People are  
dying, and they're getting  
rich off the suffering.



**XENA**

That's about the size of it.

Xena spies the STABLES ahead and leads Argo in that direction, with Gabrielle following.

The STABLE MASTER spies them and steps outside, wiping his hands on his filthy pants and grinning from ear to ear.

**STABLE MASTER**

Beautiful beast you got there.

**XENA**

She's not for sale.

**STABLE MASTER**

No, don't suppose so.  
You lookin' to board her?

Xena looks deliberately at the sign, then back at the stable master, who flushes.



**STABLE MASTER**

*(cont'd)*

I'll take that as a yes.

*(beat)*

You Greeks?

**GABRIELLE**

We are.

**STABLE MASTER**

Fifty dinars a day, feed extra. You want grooming and exercise, that'll cost ya.

**GABRIELLE**

Fifty---That's robbery!

**STABLE MASTER**

Only stable around. Take it or leave it.

**GABRIELLE**

But---



**STABLE MASTER**

Listen, lady, either put up or shut up. I got business to attend---

His last words are cut off by a sharp jab to the neck, and he finds himself suddenly on his knees, unable to move.

Gabrielle shakes her head at Xena, then steps in, lowering her face to the stable master's level.

**GABRIELLE**

A piece of advice, my friend. It's never wise to piss off someone wearing that much weaponry.

*(beat)*

You're just lucky you caught her in a good mood.



Xena smirks.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

Here's the deal. I think that two dinars a day is very fair, feed included. And because you seem like such a nice man, I'll throw in a dinar a day for grooming and exercise. Sound good to you?

**STABLE MASTER**

Ver---very good, yes.

**GABRIELLE**

*(grins)*

See? I knew we could come to an understanding.

Without waiting for Xena, Gabrielle takes the pinch off, then helps the man to his feet, steadying him until he can stand on his own.

Releasing the man, Gabrielle reaches into her pouch and presents him with a neat stack of dinars.

**GABRIELLE**

It's been a pleasure doing business with you.  
Argo shouldn't give you any trouble at all.  
And remember, she loves apples.

**STABLE MASTER**

Apples.

**GABRIELLE**

Lots of them. Right Xena?

**XENA**

*(dryly)*

Right.

Gabrielle turns to leave, then turns back.

**GABRIELLE**

Oh yes, we need a canoe.  
Know where we can find one?

**STABLE MASTER**

You---you can use mine!

**GABRIELLE**

*(sweetly)*

Thank you so much. You're very kind, you know.

Xena just shakes her head as man blushes down to his toes. Gabrielle smiles, charmingly, and pats his arm in thanks. Then she collects Xena with a nod, and walks off, leaving the stable master to wonder exactly what just happened to him.

**GABRIELLE**

*(to Xena)*

Well, I think that went well, don't you?

**XENA**

I'm impressed.

**GABRIELLE**

*(grins)*

You should be.

Anything else I can do for you?

Xena raises a saucy eyebrow.

**XENA**

Ask me again tonight.



Gabrielle laughs, and they walk toward the river arm in arm.

**DISSOLVE TO:**

### **EXT. RIVER - EARLY EVENING**

Bordered on both sides by thick jungle vegetation, the river is clear, broad, and, for the most part, placid. Life is in great abundance all around, as evidenced by the screeches of large birds, and the occasional low, rumbling growl of a hunting animal hidden deep within the thick, green growth.

The dugout canoe Xena and Gabrielle have been given is a bit worn, but serviceable, and they glide through the water with an ease born of their long partnership. Gabrielle sits at the bow, Xena at the stern, and their gear is placed neatly between them.



**GABRIELLE**

There aren't, by chance, any cannibals with basting brushes hanging around here, right?

Xena chuckles.



**XENA**

Nope.

**GABRIELLE**

No beleaguered Athenian outposts  
just waiting for the Warrior  
Princess to come to the rescue?

**XENA**

None of those, either.

**GABRIELLE**

I'm just making sure. You know  
how it with us and canoes.

Gabrielle continues on in this vein for several moments, and gradually notices that the canoe seems harder to maneuver.

She turns her head and sees her partner, paddle on her lap, calmly feeding out fishing line into the clear water.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

A little help here?

**XENA**

I am helping. I'm getting dinner. Besides,  
you're doing just fine on your own.

**GABRIELLE**

Oh, is *\*that\** how it works now? I do all  
the work, and you get to have all the fun?



Hiding her mischievous grin, Gabrielle looks forward once again and resumes paddling.

**XENA**

Hey! Fishing is work.

Gabrielle laughs.

**GABRIELLE**

Oh no, Xena. For me, fishing  
is work. For *\*you\**, it's fun.  
*(beat)*

Besides. I wouldn't call what  
you're doing fishing, technically.

**XENA**

Oh? And what would  
you call it? Technically.

**GABRIELLE**

Dragging a hook through the water. A hook  
which, incidentally, wouldn't be going anywhere  
unless \*someone\* was paddling the canoe.

Good warrior that she is, Xena knows when she has been outmaneuvered, and, with a silent  
chuckle, ties off the end of her line to a loose strut on the canoe, and begins paddling.

**DISSOLVE TO:**

**EXT. JUNGLE - NIGHT**

A slow burning fire casts a meager light on an overturned canoe banked on the river. Closer to the  
fire, Xena sits with her back against a downed log, sharpening her sword.

Gabrielle is sitting nearby, on their furs, an untended scroll in her lap.

Feeling Gabrielle's eyes on her, Xena looks up. Their gazes lock, and both smile.

**XENA**

*(softly)*  
What is it?

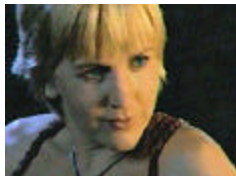


**GABRIELLE**

You...This...  
*(beat)*

I guess I never realized how much  
listening to you sharpen your  
sword had become a part of me.

*(beat)*  
Silly, huh?



**XENA**

No. Not silly.

Laying her sword on the ground, Xena moves to the furs and gathers Gabrielle into a warm, tender  
embrace, tucking the blonde head under her chin.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

When you...sent me away, I wandered  
through this sort of...limbo, with the  
thoughts of those I'd hurt for company.  
And I remember wishing to hear,  
just once, the sound of your quill  
scribbling on your scrolls.

Xena utters a somewhat rueful laugh.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

I suppose it took dying...again...  
to show me that the peace I  
sought was here all along.

Gabrielle squeezes Xena tightly for a long moment, then pulls slowly away, wiping a tear from her face, and smiling.

**GABRIELLE**

Just remember that lesson, ok?



**XENA**

I will. Promise.

**GABRIELLE**

Good.

*(beat)*

And speaking of remembering...  
*(beat, off Xena's raised eyebrow)*  
"Anything else I can do for you?"

Xena's eyes glint as understanding dawns, and a slow, sexy smile, curves her lips.

**XENA**

Oh, I think I can come up with something.



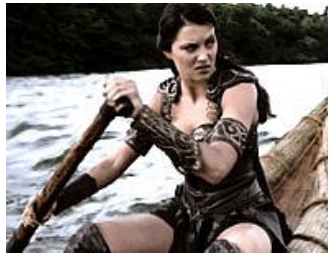
**FADE OUT.**

## EXT. RIVER - DAY

The sky above is blue and cloudless as the two women slice quietly through the river, working in perfect tandem. Gabrielle smiles as she looks around at the abundant, vibrant beauty of the tropical jungle, content to breathe in the peace of the day.

**XENA**

Up ahead, there'll be a bend in the river.  
Once we get there, start looking for  
a clearing to the right.



**GABRIELLE**

Aye, aye, Cap'n.

Slowly, the wide, slow bend comes into view. As Gabrielle examines it, she hears a sound very much like thunder, but when she looks up, the sky is completely clear.

The sound rolls again, and this time, the canoe rises, then drops.

Startled, Gabrielle turns her head. Xena meets her gaze, her expression concerned.

**XENA**

I hope that's not what I think it is.

Xena's eyes roam the bank for a suitable place to beach when she notices Gabrielle's eyes widen and her jaw drop. She turns her head in time to see a huge wall of dirty, roiling water bearing directly down upon them.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

Hang on!



**FADE OUT.**

**END OF ACT TWO**

## ACT THREE

FADE IN:

### EXT. RIVER - DAY - RESUME

The water catches up to them in seconds, and it takes all of their combined strength and skill to keep the canoe upright and pointed forward. They're lifted high atop the cresting wave, and Gabrielle watches with horror as the bend in the river comes ever closer. She sees that the flood is ignoring the bend and is crashing through the jungle. She realizes that if they continue on that route, they will be smashed to bits against the trees and rocks making up what was once a deeply carved bank.



Xena can feel the wave's power slackening just slightly. At the last possible second, she jams her paddle into the water, and with every ounce of her strength, tilts the craft to the right. Another current catches it, and it is swept along the bend, a hair's breadth from tipping completely over.

They rocket around the wide bend as if on a bobsled, then shoot straight down the center of the raging river like a cork shot from a bottle.

The frothing waters continue to churn beneath the canoe, which is buffeted on both sides by debris, jostling them fore and aft.

**XENA**

*(shouting)*

There's rapids up ahead!  
Watch out for rocks!

**GABRIELLE**

*(shouting)*

All right!

Over the water's roar, Gabrielle hears a sound that resembles a human scream. When the sound comes again, and she becomes certain that someone is screaming for help.



CUT TO:

### EXT. RIVERBANK - DAY

A woman and her three children stand on the bank of the flooding river. Their canoe has been smashed to bits against the jagged rocks, and their belongings lay strewn over the bank. The mother is screaming and pulling at her hair. The three children stare into the flood, expressions terrified.

A bright flash of cloth is seen in the river. It disappears beneath the churning waters, then reappears, wrapped around the body of the woman's fourth child, caught helplessly in the flood's vicious currents.

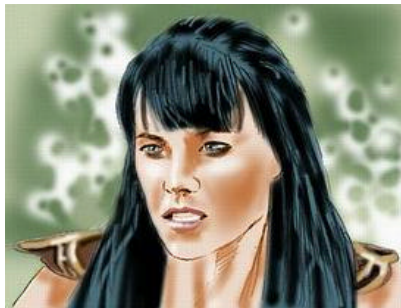
CUT TO:

### EXT. RIVER - DAY

Gabrielle catches a glimpse of the young child struggling in the water, and without thought, drops her paddle and dives into the river. She swims strongly for the boy even as she fights the strong currents threatening to dash her against the rocks.



**XENA**  
GABRIELLE!!!



Swearing under her breath, Xena struggles to control the suddenly unbalanced canoe. She just manages to right it when a trunk of an uprooted tree slams into it, spinning it out of control. She stops the spin, only to have another tree hit the craft, pushing it inexorably toward the rock-strewn bank.

**XENA**  
I...have...had...ENOUGH!

Allowing the river to take the canoe, she readies herself, and leaps from the boat just as it strikes the rocks, shattering on impact.



She hits the water with great force, and struggles to the surface quickly, wide eyes sweeping the area for signs of her partner.

**XENA**  
GABRIELLE!!!



**CUT TO:**

**EXT. RIVER - DAY - GABRIELLE'S POV**

Gabrielle is being severely buffeted by the flood, but sheer determination keeps her fighting. She's moved closer to the struggling child, but loses sight of him as the rapid current pulls him under yet again.

**GABRIELLE**  
Not this time.

The boy struggles to the surface, choking on the water he's swallowed, and thrashing his arms in complete panic.

Gabrielle sees her chance and pushes off a nearby rock, grabbing hold of his colorful shirt and hugging him tight against her body.

**GABRIELLE**  
*(triumphantly)*  
Gotcha!



The boy croaks out a breathless scream, and in his panic, beats against Gabrielle's restraining arms.

**GABRIELLE**

It's ok. I've got you. It's ok.

**BOY**

Mama! Mama!!

Adjusting the child so that her right arm is left free, she begins swimming for the bank with what's left of her rapidly depleting strength.

Her leg slams hard against a submerged, jagged rock, and instantly goes numb. This slows her momentum, and allows a strong current of flood water to whisk her downstream with frightening swiftness.

Her eyes widen as she sees that she is headed directly for a pair of boulders half again her size, and she twists her body so that it is between the boy and the rocks, then squeezes her eyes shut and waits for the inevitable.

**GABRIELLE**

*(sotto voce)*

Ohhh, this is gonna hurt.

**CUT TO:**

#### **EXT. RIVER - DAY - XENA'S POV**

The pride on Xena's face as she watches her partner rescue the drowning boy turns quickly to horror as Gabrielle smashes against the rocks and goes limp.



The sound out of her mouth is nothing so much as a guttural roar, and she powers forward, ignoring the slap and the sting of onrushing debris that buffets her from every angle.

Coming up for air, she spies a thick vine, hanging low over the water, and races for it, grabbing it with one hand, and allowing its strength to pull her from the rampaging water.

With the vine still in her sure grasp, she jumps from the bank and swings toward the rocks where Gabrielle and the child are trapped, their faces thankfully above the rising tide.

At the apex of the swing, she reaches down and plucks the boy from her partner's limp arms even as her legs hook beneath Gabrielle's armpits and haul her bodily out of the rushing water.



The boy comes awake with a start, and screams almost directly into Xena's sensitive ear. He throws his arms tightly around her neck, nearly choking her, his eyes wide and shiny as newly minted coins.

Xena settles the child on her hip, and when his legs instinctively clamp around her waist, she releases her grip on him and hauls Gabrielle into her now free arm by the back of her top.

**DISSOLVE TO:**

**EXT. RIVERBANK - DAY**

As the vine swings back, Xena releases her grip and lands lightly on the ground. She immediately goes to her knees and lays Gabrielle out on the wet ground, keen eyes assessing for injuries.

**XENA**

You're gonna have to let go now, kid.

The sound of her voice causes the boy to tighten his grasp, and Xena gently, but firmly, pulls him away, setting him on the ground beside her.

**XENA**

You're gonna be all right, but you  
need to stay right there. Your  
mother should be coming soon.  
*(beat)*  
I hope.

Pushing the child from her thoughts, Xena stares down at her partner. Long fingers stroke blonde hair away from a damp brow.

**XENA**

Gabrielle. Hey...Gabrielle,  
can you hear me?



Receiving no response, Xena pulls back within herself, and carefully examines Gabrielle's visible injuries.

Gabrielle's left leg is cut from knee to calf and bleeding sluggishly. The joint is swollen and beginning to bruise.

Dots of crimson mark her left side, mapping her skin's impact with the rough stone, and her rib cage looks battered and bruised.

**XENA**

Gabrielle...sweetheart... this is gonna  
hurt a little, but I have to---

As Xena presses down lightly on her soulmate's ribs, Gabrielle moans and turns her head, but doesn't regain consciousness.



**XENA**

I know that hurt. I'm sorry.  
I needed to check.  
*(beat)*  
They're banged up, but not broken.  
I know you can't appreciate that now,  
but believe me, you will.



Reaching out, she grasps some large leaves and presses them against the cut on Gabrielle's leg, internally damning herself for having left their gear behind.

Sounds of running footsteps and heavy breathing come from behind her. An instant later, the young boy runs into the arms of his sobbing mother.

The noise of the reunion fades into the background as Xena carefully feels along Gabrielle's skull and grimaces when her fingers brush along the edge of a small, egg-shaped lump just behind her left ear.

A shadow falls over Gabrielle, and Xena looks up to see the boy's mother cradling him in her arms.

**MOTHER**

Thank you. You saved his life.

**XENA**

No, Gabrielle did.

**MOTHER**

Will she---?

**XENA**

*(forcefully)*  
She'll be fine.

Another shadow falls, and it's the woman's eldest son, a tall, thin teen. He steps forward and places Xena and Gabrielle's gear on the ground next to Xena. The bags are mostly dry, but the furs are soaked through.

**XENA**

Thanks.



A second boy moves forward and lays several neatly folded and brightly patterned furs on the ground beside the gear, smiles shyly at Xena, and runs back to hide behind his mother's skirts.

**MOTHER**

For warmth.

**XENA**

No. Thank you, but---

**MOTHER**

You will need them. The sun will set soon,  
and she must be kept warm. For healing.

*(beat)*

Please. My son would be dead if not for the both  
of you. Please, accept this. It is all that I can give.

**XENA**

We don't need---

**MOTHER**

Yes. You do.

After a moment, Xena nods her thanks, and the woman smiles, triumphant. Her smile fades as one of the boys tugs at her dress.

**MOTHER**

*(cont'd)*

We must go. We have far to travel  
and my husband is waiting.

**XENA**

Thank you for your kindness.

**MOTHER**

Thank \*you\*...for my son.

**CUT TO:**

## EXT. JUNGLE CLEARING - NIGHT

Gabrielle is lying on a soft nest of furs close to the fire. Her wounds have been cleaned and dressed. Her leg is splinted, and her injured ribs are wrapped in strips of clean cloth.

Though the fire's heat radiates through the clearing, and she's covered with thick furs, Gabrielle shivers, caught in the grip of a mild fever.



Banking the fire so that it will burn through the night, Xena strips to bare skin, lifts the furs, and slips beneath, curling around Gabrielle and lending her warmth.

Though her eyes close, she remains awake and alert for any change in Gabrielle's condition.

**DISSOLVE TO:**

## EXT. JUNGLE CLEARING - PRE-DAWN

Gabrielle twitches in the grasp of a fevered nightmare.

Sensing Gabrielle's distress, Xena raises up on one elbow and lays her hand on her partner's forehead, frowning at the heat radiating from her skin.

Gabrielle moans softly, and Xena pulls back, peering intently at her lover's face. Gabrielle's eyes flutter open, and she blinks, trying to focus.

**XENA**  
*(softly, smiles)*  
Hey.



**GABRIELLE**  
Xena?

**XENA**  
Yeah, it's me.  
*(beat)*  
How are you feeling?

**GABRIELLE**  
*(frowning)*  
Like Argo ran over me.

Xena laughs softly.

**XENA**

That good huh?

**GABRIELLE**

What happened?

**XENA**

What's the last thing you remember?

Gabrielle's eyes grow distant as she tries to concentrate.

**GABRIELLE**

We were on...the river. A flood.

*(beat)*

The boy! Is he---?

She struggles to sit up, but Xena restrains her, and she collapses back against the furs, breathless with the pain and vertigo she feels.

**XENA**

Relax. It's ok. He's fine.

**GABRIELLE**

*(smiles in relief)*

You saved him.

**XENA**

No. You did. I just helped clean up a little.

**GABRIELLE**

I did? But I...

**XENA**

Got hurt, yes. But you still saved his life.



**GABRIELLE**

And you saved mine.

Xena grins, and strokes Gabrielle's cheek.

**XENA**

That's my job, remember?

Gabrielle laughs, then winces and cradles her ribs.

**GABRIELLE**

Gods!

Reaching to the side, Xena grasps a cup filled with herbs and water. Gently lifting Gabrielle's head, she places the cup to her soulmate's lips.

**XENA**

Drink. It should help with the pain.

Gabrielle drinks the bitter mixture, making a face as she does so.

**GABRIELLE**

Thanks.

Xena nods, and replaces the cup back on the ground next to her.

**GABRIELLE**

Xena?

**XENA**

Yes?

**GABRIELLE**

Did you get the herbs?  
The ones we came here for?

**XENA**

No, not yet.

**GABRIELLE**

But...

**XENA**

The herbs will wait.

**GABRIELLE**

*(a little heatedly)*

The people who need them won't.

**XENA**

They'll have to. I'm not leaving you,  
Gabrielle. Not here. Not now. Not ever.

**GABRIELLE**

Xena, this is important.

**XENA**

\*YOU\* are important.



**GABRIELLE**

And the Amazons?

**XENA**

What about them?

**GABRIELLE**

Xena, you promised Ephiny  
that you wouldn't let the  
Amazons die out.

**XENA**

And I'll do the best I can to  
keep that promise, Gabrielle.

*(beat)*

But not at the price you're  
asking me to pay.

Xena's expression is closed, and Gabrielle knows the argument is fruitless, but she steels herself to battle on when a huge yawn interrupts her plans. Her eyelids grow heavy and finally close as the relentless pull of the drug finally takes her under into a deep, healing sleep.

**XENA**

*(whispers)*  
I'm sorry.



**FADE OUT.**

**END OF ACT THREE**

## ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

### EXT. JUNGLE CLEARING - EARLY AFTERNOON

Gabrielle awakens, feeling very sore, but remarkably clear-headed. She squints against the sunlight peering through the trees, and turns her head to confirm her suspicions that she is alone on the bedroll.

She senses, however, that Xena is somewhere close by.

That hypothesis is confirmed when Xena walks into the clearing, sweaty and dirt-streaked. She smiles when she notices that Gabrielle is awake, and approaches their bedroll.

**XENA**

Hey.

**GABRIELLE**

*(grinning)*

Hey yourself.



**XENA**

How ya feeling?

**GABRIELLE**

Like a whole herd of Argos ran over me.

**XENA**

That good, huh?

Gabrielle laughs softly, careful not to jar her severely bruised ribs. She watches with interest as Xena grabs a piece of cloth and mops the sweat and dirt from her face and arms.

**GABRIELLE**

So...what are you doing?

**XENA**

Compromising.

**GABRIELLE**

Compromising?

**XENA**

*(smugly)*

Yup.



**GABRIELLE**

Ok, I'll bite. What are you compromising?

Tossing the cloth atop the rest of their gear, Xena crosses the slight distance between them and eases herself down onto the furs.

**XENA**

The answer to last night's little disagreement.

**GABRIELLE**

Last night---

*(beat)*

Oh. Yeah. The herbs, right?

**XENA**

Mm Hm.

**GABRIELLE**

*(softly)*

When are you leaving?

**XENA**

\*We're\* leaving just as soon as I check you over and make sure you're up to traveling.



**GABRIELLE**

Uh...Xena, I don't think I can walk.

**XENA**

Who said anything about walking?

**GABRIELLE**

Is the canoe---

**XENA**

Smashed to bits.

**GABRIELLE**

Then how?

**XENA**

You'll find out after I look you over.

Gabrielle gives in to the inevitable and lays back against the furs, trying not to react as Xena gently probes her injuries.

Noticing the concerned look on her partner's face, Gabrielle raises up on her elbows and meets Xena's stare straight on.

**GABRIELLE**

I'm fine.

**XENA**

You're a lot of things, Gabrielle, but 'fine' isn't one of them. At least, not right now.

**GABRIELLE**

*(steadily)*

I can travel.

*(beat, as she looks down at  
her splinted and swollen leg)*

As long as we don't have to walk too far.



The clearing is silent, but charged as the two communicate without words. After a moment, Xena sighs, and nods. Coming to her feet, she looks down at her partner.

**XENA**

Stay here.

Gabrielle watches fondly as Xena retrieves some of their gear and walks toward the river and out of sight.

**GABRIELLE**

*(drolly)*

And I was so looking forward  
to running to the Marathon.

**DISSOLVE TO:**

**EXT. RIVER - LATE AFTERNOON**

Xena and Gabrielle are traveling down the river in a RAFT Xena has built from stout tree limbs and limber vines. The river, though still high and muddy from the flood, is much calmer.

Gabrielle reclines on a nest of thick furs in the center of the good-sized raft while Xena stands at the rear, propelling the craft by means of a long, straight pole.

**GABRIELLE**  
*(enthusiastically)*  
Now *\*this\** is traveling!



**XENA**  
*(smirks)*  
Glad you approve.

**GABRIELLE**  
Oh yeah.

**XENA**  
Well, don't get too used to  
it. We're almost there.

**GABRIELLE**  
I'll enjoy it while it lasts then.  
*(beat)*  
All I need is a scantily clad deck hand  
to attend to my every need.

**XENA**  
Your deck hand is captaining  
the ship at the moment.



Gabrielle grins and looks up.

**GABRIELLE**  
And I've got a great view of it too.

Xena rolls her eyes affectionately as she continues to pole down the river.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. JUNGLE. EARLY EVENING.**

Xena is walking silently through the jungle, a carry-sack over one shoulder, and Gabrielle in her arms. Gabrielle's pain has returned with a vengeance during the jostling walk, and she is white-faced with it, biting back moans with each step Xena takes.



**XENA**  
(murmurs)  
Not much further now.

Gabrielle tries not to gasp as Xena steps carefully over a large, downed tree, and the pain flares through her chest and leg as her body is jostled with Xena's every movement.

**GABRIELLE**  
I'm all right. Really, I--

**XENA**  
Shh. Save your strength.

Gabrielle feels Xena stiffen and watches as her eyes narrow and her head lifts; a wild animal scenting the wind.

**GABRIELLE**  
(whispers)  
What is it?

Xena carefully lowers Gabrielle to the ground and crouches beside her.

**XENA**  
Stay right here. Don't make  
a sound. I'll be back.

**GABRIELLE**  
But---

Gabrielle's protest falls on deaf ears as Xena comes to her feet, holds a finger to her lips, and disappears into the thick jungle like a wraith.

**GABRIELLE**  
(whispers)  
Gods!

**CUT TO:**

## EXT. JUNGLE CLEARING - EARLY EVENING - XENA'S POV

Xena glides through the thick jungle and stops just behind a tree whose lush, leafy branches bow almost to the ground. Pulling a branch out of her way, she stares into a natural clearing where a dozen MEN quietly work harvesting a large cache of herbs. Her eyes narrow.

The men are obviously more than garden-variety thugs. Their armor is clean; their weapons well cared for. They work as a team without argument or complaint.

She recognizes them as mercenaries regardless and, drawing her sword, steps away from her cover and into the open.



**XENA**  
Evening, boys.

The sound of weapons being drawn fills the clearing. The LEADER, a clean-cut, well groomed and rather handsome man straightens and takes a step forward.

**LEADER**  
Xena!

**XENA**  
(*smirks*)  
You've heard of me.  
(*beat*)  
I'm impressed.

**LEADER**  
Only a fool hasn't heard of the Warrior Princess  
who doesn't know enough to stay dead.

Xena shrugs, and her smirk changes into a coy grin.

**XENA**  
Well, since you're obviously no fool, then I'm  
sure you know what I'm here for. So, are you  
going to walk away with your lives, or am  
I gonna have to take those too?



The leader laughs.

**LEADER**

Oh, I know why you're here all right.  
(beat)  
Who do you think caused that  
rather fortuitous flood?

Xena bares her teeth in a snarl, and the leader laughs again.

**LEADER**

These herbs are mine, Xena. I'm sure you  
understand why I really can't share them.  
(beat)  
Though I'd like to. I really would.

He looks around the clearing.

**LEADER**

(cont'd)  
Speaking of floods, you seem  
to be missing...something.  
(beat)  
Where's your pretty little shadow?

**XENA**

That's my business.



**LEADER**

Yes, I suppose it is.  
(beat)  
About that choice you gave me...

He nods to his men.

**LEADER**

(cont'd)  
GET HER!

Four men rush Xena while the other four wait their turn, weapons at the ready.

Xena quickly locks blades with the first man to approach her and kicks numbers two and three away. With her free hand, she rearranges number four's dental work for him with a hard punch to the mouth.

Then she disengages her sword, steps back, and swings it in a wild circle over her head, causing the men to retreat a step and eye her warily.

**CUT TO:**

### EXT. JUNGLE - EVENING - GABRIELLE'S POV

Gabrielle can easily hear the sounds of fighting and, grimacing, she tries to stand, only to fall back, gasping in pain.

#### GABRIELLE

All right, Gabrielle, nobody said  
this was going to be easy.

*(beat)*

A stick. I need a stick.



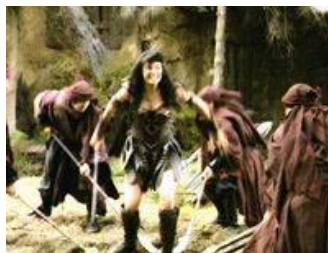
In the rapidly waning light, her eyes dart around the jungle floor, finally alighting on a long, straight branch about the size of her old staff.

Gritting her teeth against the pain, she rolls to her uninjured side and begins to drag herself across the scattered debris toward her goal.

**CUT TO:**

### EXT. JUNGLE CLEARING - EVENING - XENA'S POV

Six men surround Xena, taking turns feinting and then withdrawing.



Shouting her battle cry, she back flips from the center of the circle and lands behind two men. Jumping again, she kicks both of them in the back and sends them flying into their comrades.

Four men fall in a tangled heap. Four more rush in, hacking and slashing in controlled pandemonium.

Xena knocks the first out cold with the pommel of her sword, then twirls it and plunges the blade into the guts of the man behind her.

The men to the left and right go for her unprotected belly, and she drops her sword and grabs their heads, knocking them together and letting them drop, unconscious, to the ground.

She retrieves her sword and twirls it, grinning fiercely.

**XENA**

Next?



**CUT TO:**

**EXT. JUNGLE - EVENING - GABRIELLE'S POV**

Head spinning and bright darts of agony lancing through her body, Gabrielle manages to grab the branch and holds it tightly as she wills the pain away.

**GABRIELLE**

Now comes the hard part, trying to stand.

*(beat)*

I can do this. I've been standing since I was a kid. Nothing to it, right? Right.

She takes in several deep, slow breaths and releases them through pursed lips. Then, with a nod, she positions the stick butt down into the soft dirt. With a soft grunt of effort, she pulls herself slowly onto her uninjured leg.

The world around her spins for a moment, then steadies as she bites down hard on the inside of her lip. She wipes sweaty palms on the fabric of her skirt, then grips the crutch tightly in her right hand, elbow bracing her injured ribs.

**GABRIELLE**

Hope you don't mind company, Xena.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. JUNGLE CLEARING - EVENING - XENA'S POV**

Though the clearing is strewn with bleeding bodies, six men still stand. They are excellent, experienced fighters, and though winded, look as if they could battle for days without dropping.

**LEADER**

Looks like dying has caused you to lose a step or two, Xena.

**XENA**

Think so, huh?

Two more men fall quickly, silently, beneath Xena's flashing sword, and lie still on the jungle floor. The leader gives a mock bow, then pulls his own sword.

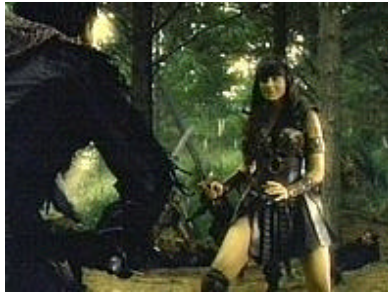


**LEADER**

Let's see how good you  
are against a real warrior.

**XENA**

Find me one and I'll let you know.



Laughing, the leader lunges forward, followed by his remaining men.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. JUNGLE CLEARING - EVENING - GABRIELLE'S POV**

Gabrielle reaches the clearing. Her body is obscured by the leafy branches hanging almost to the ground, and a slight smile crosses her face as she watches her partner easily, almost playfully, handle the men facing off against her.

As she watches, however, she notices a flicker of movement in the periphery of her vision.

A MAN, blood streaming from his nose and mouth, stands beneath the canopy of a large tree, a short bow in his hands. The arrow is notched and ready and he's looking for an opportunity to fire. Gabrielle sees, with prophetic clarity, what is going to happen before it does, and as Xena flips away from the circling thugs, Gabrielle moves into the clearing.

Events proceed as if in slow motion.

Xena lands lightly and immediately engages the men. One man falls quickly to a broad slash across the chest, and the second follows from a kick that sends him crashing into a broad tree trunk. Number three is head butted into oblivion.

She immediately engages the group's leader. A quick strike sends the sword flying from his hand, and an uppercut launches him into the air.

At that exact moment, the archer fires at Xena's unprotected back.

Gabrielle drops her crutch and leaps forward off of her uninjured leg, stretching her body to its longest and reaching out with her left hand, fingers desperately seeking.

Sensing the arrow, Xena turns. Her eyes widen in shock as she watches her partner catch the arrow just inches before it would have pierced Xena's heart.



Xena instinctively catches Gabrielle as she falls. Dropping her sword, she unhooks her chakram with her free hand and buries it in the archer's belly. The archer drops his bow and falls dead to the ground.

Gabrielle's eyes flutter open, and she lifts the arrow still clenched in her hand.

**GABRIELLE**

*(pained smile)*

Who needs focus when  
you have motivation?

Xena gathers Gabrielle into her embrace and rocks her slowly in profound gratitude.

**END OF ACT FOUR**

TAG

FADE OUT.

EXT. DAY - GRECIAN SEAPORT - DAY

Xena and Gabrielle smile at the enthusiastically waving merchant as he pulls away with his cart and team of mismatched horses. A cloud of dust follows in his wake.

XENA

Well, that's the last of the herbs.

GABRIELLE

Thank the gods for that. If one more adoring merchant tried to kiss me, I was going to have to give my sais a workout.



Xena chuckles and puts a careful arm around her partner's shoulders.

XENA

Ah, the price of being a hero.

Gabrielle scowls and adjusts the crutch she's still using to help her walk. The crutch can double as a serviceable staff, and she feels a warm sense of familiarity just holding it.

GABRIELLE

I didn't see \*you\* getting kissed.



XENA

I'm not the kissing type.

GABRIELLE

*(smirks)*

I'll remember that tonight.

Xena looks down at her in mock horror, then gathers Argo's reins in her fist and begins walking toward the seaport's exit.

**XENA**

Shall we go see to your Amazons?



**GABRIELLE**

Let's.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. RUTTED PATH.**

Xena and Gabrielle chuckle as they leave the busy seaport and step onto a path between two large huts, stopping as they turn the corner and almost crash headlong into someone coming in the opposite direction.

Both Xena and Gabrielle react as they recognize Varia, whom they last left Queen of the Amazons. Varia is dressed in non-descript leathers, and seems as surprised to see them as they are to see her.

**XENA**

Varia!

**GABRIELLE**

Talk about surprises...  
you're far from home.

Varia seems a bit impatient as she walks past Xena and Gabrielle.

**VARIA**

Yeah, well--life's a funny  
thing, you know?



**XENA**

We've noticed.

**GABRIELLE**

How are things with the tribe?

Varia starts to edge past them.

**VARIA**

Listen, I'd love to catch up with you  
and all, but I'm late for a meeting.

**GABRIELLE**

Wait...we were just  
on our way to see...

**VARIA**

Great, great. I'll meet you  
back at the village, ok?

Xena is not pleased.

**XENA**

Varia, wait. The plague...

**VARIA**

Yeah, we know all about it.  
Our healers are ready for it---bye!

Varia disappears into the crowd, leaving Xena and Gabrielle standing in the middle of the crowd.

**GABRIELLE**

When you were teaching her how to be  
an Amazon Queen, you never got around  
to the part about social graces, did you?

**XENA**

Wasn't in the handbook you left me.

**GABRIELLE**

Uh huh. Guess we have something  
to work on when we get there.

Shaking their heads, Xena and Gabrielle resume their slow trek out of the busy seaport and on  
toward the Amazon village.



**FADE OUT.**

**DISCLAIMER**

Gabrielle's staff made its long overdue reappearance during the  
making of this motion picture. However, her sais are very jealous.