

## Xena: Warrior Princess - Subtext Virtual Season 8



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## TEASER

FADE IN:

### EXT. HILL - MID-MORNING

XENA and GABRIELLE are walking up a long, slow hill. Argo plods along behind them, looking more pack mule than warhorse. They're all covered in mud. It's on their clothes, on their skin, in their hair. Even Argo's coat is spotted with giant blotches of it.

**GABRIELLE**

*(sotto voce)*

What I wouldn't give for a nice,  
hot bath right about now.

**XENA**

So you've been saying  
for the past hour.



**GABRIELLE**

And I'll keep on saying it until  
one conjures itself up.

*(beat)*

C'mon, Xena. Look at us.  
We look like a couple of mud  
wrestling rejects from  
Aphrodite's Pleasure Palace!

They continue walking.

As they come to the top of the hill, Gabrielle's eyes light up, and a smile wreaths her face.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

Xena, look! My prayers  
have been answered!

Spread beneath them is a small, immaculate, well-ordered TOWN. All manner of TOWNSFOLK, dressed in shades of brown and black, walk with stately precision to and fro, intent on whatever task is at hand. The scene is quiet, and seems very peaceful.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

Oh, I can feel that hot bath now.

She begins to trot down the hill, only to be pulled to a stop by Xena's hand on the back of her top. She pulls free and spins on her partner, eyes flashing.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

What?

Xena's expression becomes serious.

**XENA**

There's another town an hour's walk away. Let's aim for that one.

**GABRIELLE**

Are you kidding me?? Xena, I refuse to walk another step until I'm clean. I've got mud in places no mud should ever be!



**XENA**

Gabrielle, this town.... It's.... just...not right for us.

**GABRIELLE**

Not right?

Gabrielle turns and looks back down upon the peaceful scene.

**GABRIELLE**

What's not right about it? I mean... okay, those people could use a few fashion tips, but otherwise, it looks clean, and peaceful.... And look! There's the Inn! I bet they've got tubs the size of a Roman bath in there!

Xena sighs.

**XENA**

Have you ever heard of Virtua?

**GABRIELLE**

Who's she?

**XENA**

It's not a she. It's an it.

Xena gestures to the town.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

THAT... is Virtua.

**GABRIELLE**

Okay, so it's got a funny name....

**XENA**

Gabrielle, they worship the Virtues here.

*(beat, somewhat ruefully)*

To the letter.

Understanding dawns in Gabrielle's eyes.

**GABRIELLE**

Hmm.

**XENA**

Yeah. It's like that town where Tara got arrested for dancing. Only here, not only can't you dance, you can't laugh, you can't sing, you can't....

Xena's list is cut off just in time by two fingers pressed firmly across her lips.

**GABRIELLE**

*(dryly)*

I think I get the picture.

*(beat)*

Xena, I just want a bath. We don't have to stay there. I'm sure we can both do "virtuous" for an hour.

She looks down at herself.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

Or two.

Xena remains silent as she tries to disguise a scratch to her mud covered posterior with a stretch. Gabrielle catches it and smirks.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

C'mon, Xena, I know you want to be clean as much as I do. I mean, you've got a lot more on than I do, and I bet underneath those leathers, you're hot... itchy... sweaty...

She makes a mock sniff of her partner, then backs off.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

...stinky....

Xena rolls her eyes, then grins.



**XENA**

All right. But no more than an hour.

**GABRIELLE**

Yes!

As Gabrielle resumes running down the hill, Xena lifts her arm and sniffs.

**XENA**

*(sotto voce)*

Or two.

**DISSOLVE TO:**

**EXT. TOWN - DAY**

Xena and Gabrielle are walking through the town, Argo in tow. They respond to the stares of the townspeople with polite nods.

**GABRIELLE**

*(softly)*

Wow. I've never been in a silent town before.

She looks on as a large family passes silently by.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

Even the children are quiet.

As they continue to walk deeper into the town, the first human voice is heard. It is that of a BLIND BEGGAR, dressed in brown rags and huddled on the corner of one of the buildings.

**BEGGAR**

Alms for the poor!

Alms for the poor!

Gabrielle stops, and considers. Her natural compassion demands that she help the man, but her purse is thin, and she's unsure how many dinars it will take to get a bath. She looks up at a nudge from Xena.

**GABRIELLE**

*(softly)*

What?

Instead of answering, Xena lifts an eyebrow, looks at the beggar, then around the town, then at Gabrielle.

Gabrielle's expression lightens.

**GABRIELLE**

Oh! I get it. Charity, right?



Xena grins.

Gabrielle reaches into her pouch and pulls out a dinar. Walking forward, she places it in a crude wooden bowl at the beggar's feet.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

Here you are, sir. Enough for a good meal, and a room besides.

**BEGGAR**

Oh, thank you, good woman!

You are virtuous indeed.

Grinning, Gabrielle straightens.

The beggar leans forward and sniffs.

**BEGGAR**

Are you a pig farmer?

Xena snorts as Gabrielle reddens in embarrassment and takes a step back. She quickly gathers herself. Now that she has given almost half of their money to the beggar, the thoughts of a steaming bath in a cozy inn fly out the proverbial window. She sighs.

**GABRIELLE**

Can you tell me where  
your public baths are?

**BEGGAR**

Surely. Straight up this path and  
to your left, good woman. Best  
baths in Virtua. You can't miss them.

*(beat)*

Of course, you'll have to  
leave your pigs outside.

Xena snorts again. Gabrielle shoots her a look.



**GABRIELLE**

I'll... be sure to do that, sir.  
Thank you for your kindness.

**BEGGAR**

And thank **you**, good woman.  
May the Virtues bless you and yours.

**GABRIELLE**

And may they bless you as well.

Collecting Xena with a look, Gabrielle heads in the direction indicated, only to detour off to the right as something catches her eye.

It is a GARDEN the likes of which even she, in her many travels, has never seen. Flowers of every imaginable hue bloom in a riot of color nearly as far as the eye can see. The entrance to the garden is protected by an ornate ARCH. FRESCOES of the VIRTUES decorate the arch, adding even more beauty and color. Gabrielle is entranced.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

By the gods, Xena, have you ever  
seen anything more beautiful?

Without thought, she steps under the arch in order to more closely examine the garden.

Before she can go another step, she is suddenly surrounded by a group of black-clad  
GUARDS carrying long SPEARS. She is grabbed by the arms and pulled back through  
the arch.

Her face an angry mask, Xena jumps forward.

**XENA**

What's going on here?

**GUARD CAPTAIN**

This...woman...was caught  
trespassing in the Sacred Garden.

**XENA**

So?

**GUARD CAPTAIN**

It is a crime of the highest order.  
If she is found guilty, the penalty  
*(beat)*  
is death.



**FADE OUT.**

**END OF TEASER**



## ACT ONE

FADE IN:

### EXT. TOWN - DAY

Xena, Gabrielle and the guards still stand, facing one another. Xena's stunned expression resolves to one of anger.

**GABRIELLE**

*(speaking quickly)*

This is ridiculous! How am  
I supposed to obey a law that  
I don't even know exists?

**VOICE**

*(off camera)*

Ignorance of the law is no excuse.

*(beat)*

Gabrielle.

Xena whirls, and sees a FIGURE in a BLACK, HOODED ROBE casually walking closer. There is almost a swagger to his walk, and Xena's eyes narrow. She recognizes the voice and the walk, but hasn't yet put a name to the figure.

The man removes his hood, smirking.

**XENA**

*(snarling)*

Janos.

**JANOS**

You remember me, Xena.  
I'm touched.



Xena reaches for her sword, intent on "touching" him in a far less pleasant way.

Janos' smirk broadens, as if expecting this exact development.

**GABRIELLE**

*(softly)*

Xena....

A beat, and Xena relaxes, releasing her grip on her sword.

The smirk fades from Janos' face.

**XENA**

What are you doing here, Janos?  
Decided to set another trap for me?



Janos' eyes widen in innocence. It's a look neither Xena nor Gabrielle particularly believes.

**JANOS**

Xena, I might be good enough to get  
your chakram from you in broad  
daylight, but even I'm not an Oracle.  
If I could have figured out a way to  
trap you here, I wouldn't have gone all  
the way to Potedeia, now would I?

Neither Gabrielle nor Xena quite believe him, but there doesn't seem to be any way to argue the point, so they allow it to stand. For now.

Janos' smile blooms, pleased that he's won the first round.

**JANOS**

*(to guards)*

Take her to the cells.  
I'll join you shortly.

Gabrielle struggles just a bit with her captors.

**GABRIELLE**

Wait! Just wait.

Janos turns slowly, and looks at her.

**JANOS**

Yes?

**GABRIELLE**

Can you at least tell us  
why you're doing this?

Janos cocks his head, the expression in his eyes wondering if she's lost a marble or two.

**JANOS**

*(slowly)*

You've committed a crime, Gabrielle.  
You must be tried and, if found guilty, pay  
the price for your misdeeds. Surely you  
understand the concept of justice, don't you?

*(beat)*

But then again, living with Xena  
all these years, maybe you don't.

Xena growls.

Janos laughs, completely unfazed.

**JANOS**

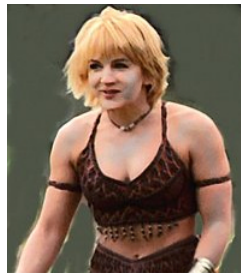
Take her.

Xena makes a move to stop them, but Gabrielle settles her with a look. Xena growls again, but instead follows the little group as it heads to the JAIL.

**GABRIELLE**

*(to the guards)*

You guys don't think I could  
get a bath, do you?



**CUT TO:**

**INT. PRISON CELL - DAY**

As prison cells go, Gabrielle's isn't all that unpleasant. Warm and dry, it is extremely clean, well lit, and of adequate size. There is a single cot lying against the far wall.

Gabrielle, having charmed her guards, sits on the cot clean and fresh, while a still-dirty and very angry Warrior Princess paces outside of the stout bars.

**GABRIELLE**

*(smiling slightly)*

You're gonna wear a hole right through  
to Tartarus if you keep on doing that.

**XENA**

Good. Then I'll toss Janos down into it and let Lucy deal with him.



Gabrielle chuckles softly.

**GABRIELLE**

Knowing 'Lucy's' fondness for you, he'd probably just toss him right back up again.

Xena's response is cut short by Janos' arrival. She levels him a look. He responds with a grin.

**JANOS**

Hello again, Gabrielle. I trust you're being well looked after?

**GABRIELLE**

Aside from being locked up against my will, yes.

**JANOS**

If the trial goes well for you, that will soon change.

**GABRIELLE**

What about this trial?

*(beat)*

Who will be the judge? You? Seems like you've already found me guilty.



Janos laughs.

**JANOS**

Me? Oh no, Gabrielle. I'm merely the Lawgiver. The judges are the Virtues themselves, you see.

**GABRIELLE**

The Virtues?

Janos affects a look of shock.

**JANOS**

Surely you know who  
the Virtues are, Gabrielle.

**GABRIELLE**

Yes, I do, but....

**JANOS**

They are our Patrons. Much  
like Athena was to Athens  
before Xena took it upon herself  
to rid the world of Her presence.

Xena responds to the jibe with a cold stare.

**JANOS**

*(cont'd)*

And unlike the Fates....

He gives Gabrielle a pointed look, which she returns.

**JANOS**

*(cont'd)*

...the Virtues are very much alive  
and involved with their worshippers.

**GABRIELLE**

Ok, so what? You just... pray to them  
and they pop in and judge me, or what?

Janos laughs.

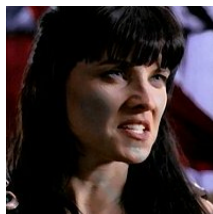
**JANOS**

It's... a bit more complicated  
than that, Gabrielle.

**XENA**

*(growling)*

Get to the point, Janos.



Ignoring Xena, Janos continues speaking to Gabrielle.

**JANOS**

Our laws have been given to us from the Virtues themselves, and when you break one of those laws, you offend the Virtues.

The trial is a... test of sorts, contrived by the Virtue whose law you broke.

*(beat)*

For example, if you had ignored that beggar instead of giving alms to him, you would have broken the law of Charity, and she would have given you a test to prove either your guilt or your innocence.

**GABRIELLE**

Okay, I can understand that.

**XENA**

*(heavily sarcastic)*

Then I suppose Being Clean and Walking Through A Garden is one of the Virtues we haven't heard about yet.

**JANOS**

*(to Xena)*

Actually, no. The Sacred Garden belongs to all of the Virtues.

He smiles. It's not an entirely pleasant expression.

**JANOS**

*(cont'd, still to Xena)*

You've managed to offend them all. Which means, of course, that several Virtues will be chosen and you will need to pass each and every test to succeed.

Gabrielle rises from the bed and walks to the barred door.

**GABRIELLE**

Excuse me.

Janos turns to Gabrielle

**JANOS**

Yes?

**GABRIELLE**

I'm the one who committed the 'crime' here.

**JANOS**

This is true. However, my position as Lawgiver, gives me a certain...leeway in setting up the particulars of the trial.

He smiles again.

**GABRIELLE**

*(angrily)*

Then this **was** a trap all along!



**JANOS**

No, to be honest, Gabrielle, it wasn't. You **did** break the law. And it is up to me to see that it is rectified.

**GABRIELLE**

Fine! I'll be happy to go through with your trial. Xena doesn't have anything to do with this. I broke the law, not her.

**JANOS**

True again, Gabrielle. But it isn't always the ones who break the law that the Virtues choose to test.

*(beat)*

Perhaps a year ago, a young woman was found refusing to give alms to a girl who was begging for her sick family. By all rights, she should have been tried. However, when it was discovered that the young woman was a half-step away from being a beggar herself because of a drunkard husband, and that further if she had come home without the money in her purse, her husband would have beaten her horribly, the decision was made to try the husband instead.

**GABRIELLE**

*(through gritted teeth)*

Xena is not a drunkard or an abuser.

**JANOS**

My decision is made, Gabrielle. The trial will commence in one hour's time.

Janos walks away, leaving two women to stare after him.

Gabrielle finally turns to Xena.

**GABRIELLE**

Let's get out of here, Xena. There's no one around. We could be gone before anyone realizes we're missing.



**XENA**

*(thoughtfully)*

I think we should stay.

**GABRIELLE**

*(wide-eyed)*

What?

**XENA**

You heard me.

**GABRIELLE**

Of course I heard you. I'm just not sure I believe what I heard.

*(beat)*

Xena, no matter what Janos says this is a set-up, pure and simple. He's mad that you beat his almighty trap and he'll do anything to get back at you for that.

**XENA**

Yes, I know, but....

She sighs.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

Gabrielle, I took something from Janos. Maybe this is my chance to give something back.



**GABRIELLE**

*(testily)*

He already has your chakram, Xena.

**XENA**

Something more than that, Gabrielle.

*(beat)*

Gabrielle, if we run, look at what  
we're running away from.

*(beat)*

Virtue. If we leave now, then everything he's  
believed his whole life about me will be true.

**GABRIELLE**

It **won't** be true, Xena!

**XENA**

In **his** mind, it will be.

*(beat)*

You once told me that the only way to end  
the cycle of violence and hatred is through  
love. Maybe if I can prove to him that I'm  
sorry for the things I've done, and that I  
really **have** changed, maybe it will  
give him a sense of peace.

*(beat)*

Isn't that breaking the cycle?

Gabrielle sighs, clearly unhappy that she's been caught by her own words, but equally  
unable to argue against them.

Xena smiles sadly and reaches up, grasping Gabrielle's hands through the bars, and  
squeezing them gently.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

Gabrielle, I think it's best if we stay, but we're  
in this together. If you really want to leave,  
say so, and I'll get you out of here, okay?



Gabrielle nods slowly, looking down at her feet. After a moment, she looks back up at  
Xena.

**GABRIELLE**

*(slowly)*

I believe in you.

*(beat)*

And...I believe that maybe you'll  
find some peace from this, too.

Xena gives her a slight smile and another squeeze of Gabrielle's hands.

**XENA**

Maybe.

Both turn as they hear footsteps coming down the corridor. Janos enters, looking surprised and, perhaps, a little disappointed as well. He is accompanied by several guards.

**JANOS**

You're still here?

Xena smirks.

**XENA**

Can't get rid of us that easily.

A slight look of unease flits across Janos' features before he assumes a businesslike mask.

**JANOS**

Then I suppose you're ready?

**XENA**

For anything.



Janos nods, and one of the guards opens the door to Gabrielle's cell.

The group walks from the jail toward a small, dark building in the exact center of town.

**CUT TO:**

## **INT. TEMPLE OF THE VIRTUES - EVENING**

The TEMPLE is a small, dark, hexagonal building. Seven of the internal walls have carvings in bas relief of each of the seven Virtues, while the eighth is a bas relief carving of supplicants praising the Virtues.

The room is lit with torches in sconces that cast a flickering light throughout the somber interior.

Janos and Gabrielle sit side by side in simple wooden chairs at the head of the room opposite the only exit. One guard stands beside that exit, spear by his side. The rest wait outside.

In the exact center of the room, a simple, rough-hewn wooden table sits, and upon that table is Xena clad only in her shift. Her leathers, armor and weapons are gone.



Off to one corner of the table, a LARGE MIRROR stands, reflecting the image of the entire room with supernatural clarity.

A HOODED PRIEST, his face hidden by a thick COWL, stands next to Xena, a CHALICE in his hands.

**JANOS**

The tests you will be given, Xena, will be drawn from the depths of your own mind. You are, of course, aware of the dreamscape?

**XENA**

I am.

**JANOS**

You will be allowed to use no force, no weapons, no violence. If you do, you will automatically fail and Gabrielle will be found guilty. Do you understand?

**XENA**

I do.

**JANOS**

Your friend cannot help you, Xena. In this you are on your own.

**XENA**

I understand.

**JANOS**

Good. Then let's begin.

At a nod from Janos, the Priest lifts the chalice to Xena's lips.

**GABRIELLE**

Wait!!

Gabrielle moves to stand, only to be restrained by Janos' hand to her arm.

**GABRIELLE**

*(to Janos)*

What is he giving her?

Janos smiles.

**JANOS**

If I wanted Xena dead, I could have done that at any time before this.

**GABRIELLE**

You could have **tried**.



Janos nods, conceding the point.

**JANOS**

It's a sleeping draught, nothing more.

Gabrielle doesn't look convinced.

Janos sighs, close to being exasperated.

**JANOS**

*(cont'd)*

Do you really think that Xena would swallow poison deliberately and allow herself to die just to prove a point?

**GABRIELLE**

*(deadly serious)*

You don't know her very well, do you?

Janos looks a bit discomfited at Gabrielle's response, then brushes it off with a wave of his hand.

**XENA**  
*(softly)*  
It's all right, Gabrielle.

Gabrielle turns to Xena, eyes pleading.

**GABRIELLE**  
Xena....

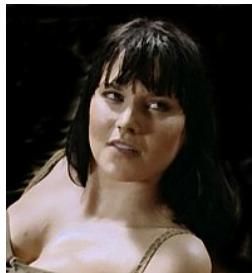
Xena smiles. It's a small, almost sad smile.

**XENA**  
It's all right.

Bending her head slightly, she allows the priest to tip the chalice, and swallows a healthy amount of the pungent liquid.

Then she turns back to Gabrielle.

**XENA**  
Just sleeping herbs, like he said.



Gabrielle relaxes slightly.

**XENA**  
*(cont'd, slightly slurred)*  
Love you, Gabrielle.

Gabrielle smiles, one tear trailing down her cheek.

**GABRIELLE**  
I love you, Xena.

Xena nods, then allows the priest to guide her down flat onto the table.

A moment later, she is deeply asleep.

**FADE OUT.**

**END OF ACT ONE**

## ACT TWO

FADE IN:

### INT. TEMPLE OF THE VIRTUES - DAY

Janos rises to his feet and faces the carving of one of the Virtues. She is standing, wearing flowing robes and a peaked cap. She holds a staff capped with a many-pointed star in one her right hand, an unfurled scroll in her left.

#### JANOS

Great Virtues, I beseech you to help us in this trial of guilt or innocence. Reach into her soul that we might know her FAITH!

DISSOLVE TO:

### EXT. XENA'S DREAMSCAPE - DAY

Xena comes slowly to, fighting the lingering nausea twisting in her guts. Though her eyes are tightly closed, she notices several things immediately. The first is that it is extremely hot. The second is that she can hear piteous moaning, screeching, and wailing all around her. And the third is that she is laying on a very narrow, very hard, and very hot surface that is threatening to boil the skin from her bones.

Eyes flashing open, she jumps to her feet, balancing precariously on a razor thin ledge jutting out from an impossibly tall cliff. Beneath her is a bottomless chasm from which the sounds of torment emerge.

#### XENA

Great. Tartarus again.  
**This** is original.



Staring across the yawning chasm, she can faintly make out another cliff facing the one she is on. There is no obvious way of going from one to the other, but she senses that her test, whatever it is, involves crossing the chasm at her feet.

Shaking her head and rolling her eyes, she begins to search for a means of crossing.

#### DISEMBODIED VOICE

Xena....

Xena looks up immediately, her eyes narrowing. The voice has come from the other cliff, but she can see no figure standing there.

**DISEMBODIED VOICE**

Xena....

**XENA**

Who is it? Who's there?

Directly opposite Xena's position, a ball of white light coalesces, then grows. It is so pure and so blinding that Xena must shield her eyes with her hand lest she be blinded.

The glare dims somewhat, and Xena lowers her arm. Her eyes widen.

There across from her is Gabrielle, glowing like the heart of a sun. She is wearing flowing garments of purest white. The fabric of the garments floats around her in a dance of unbelievable beauty. She smiles radiantly.



**XENA**

Gabrielle!

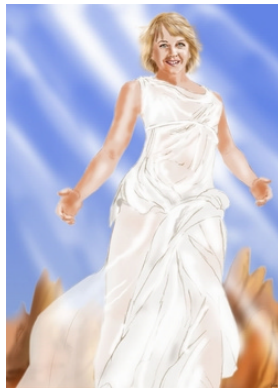
*(beat)*

How...? What are you doing here?

**GABRIELLE**

I live in your heart, Xena.

This is how your soul sees me.



Xena nods, swallowing back tears.

**CUT TO:**

## INT. TEMPLE OF THE VIRTUES - EVENING

Gabrielle leans forward in her chair, watching everything going on in Xena's dreamscape through the mirror by the table. Tears sparkle in her eyes. Her expression is an interesting combination of awe, love, and a strange heartsickness.

**GABRIELLE**

Is that true? Is that really  
how she sees me?



Janos shifts uncomfortably in his chair.

**JANOS**

Yes.

**GABRIELLE**

After all I've... after all we've  
been through... still?

Janos shifts again.

**JANOS**

Still, yes.

**GABRIELLE**

*(whispering)*  
By the gods.

**DISSOLVE TO:**

## EXT. XENA'S DREAMSCAPE - DAY

**XENA**

Why are you here?

**GABRIELLE**

This is a test of Faith, Xena.

**XENA**

Faith? Faith in what? In who?

**GABRIELLE**

In yourself, Xena.



**XENA**

*(quizzically)*

In myself? I already have faith in myself.



**GABRIELLE**

In your abilities, yes. But do you have faith in your heart? Do you have faith in yourself as a good person? A faith that is as unbreakable as the mountain you are standing on?

Xena hesitates, knowing that this is part of the test she must pass.

**XENA**

*(sotto voce)*

Speak in haste, repent in leisure.

She looks down into the chasm.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

I'll be having a lot of leisure time down there.

She takes a deep breath, then lets it out slowly.

**XENA**

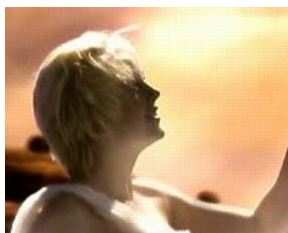
*(cont'd)*

How will I know that I have this faith? How can I be sure?

Gabrielle smiles.

**GABRIELLE**

Come over to me.



Xena's eyes narrow.

**XENA**

How?

**GABRIELLE**

Your faith in yourself will guide your steps.  
Believe in yourself and come over to me.

Gabrielle holds her arms out, as if in supplication.

Xena hesitates a moment longer, then, gathering up her will, she relaxes, closes her eyes, and takes a step into the chasm.

Her eyes shoot open as some invisible power holds her foot, feeling as firm and as steady as the cliff face which most of her body still rests against.

She shoots a look over at Gabrielle, who beams a radiant smile.

Xena clears her throat and, with as much courage as she's ever displayed on any battlefield, she takes another step, leaving the safety of the ledge behind.

The invisible bridge continues to hold steadily.

Just then, a gust of wind rises up from the pit, bringing with a sulfurous stench. Xena wavers a bit, then stands steady.

Following the stench, wispy, translucent SOULS pour up from the pit, flying so close to Xena that she wavers again, trying to avoid them. She moves, and dodges, and ducks, all the while keeping her precarious perch atop the bottomless chasm.

As the souls pass by, she begins to recognize in them the faces of those she's killed. Their mouths are gaping maws frozen in silent screams. Their eyes and cheeks bear bloody tracks from fingernails renting insubstantial flesh in torment and pain. Her name is uttered over and over again as the souls pour up and over and around her.

**SOUL #1**

Xena....

**SOUL #2**

Xena... why....

**SOUL #3**

Xena... why did you kill us?

**SOUL #4**

Why did you hurt us?

**SOULS**

Why? Xena. Why? Xena. Why?

Xena barely resists clamping her hands over her ears. Her own face is a grimace of pain and torment.

**XENA**

I'm not that person anymore!



**SOULS**

Xena....

**XENA**

I'm sorry!

**SOULS**

Xena....

**XENA**

I'm sorry I hurt you!

**SOULS**

Xena....

**XENA**

I'm sorry I killed you!

**SOULS**

Xena....

As Xena feels the guilt of her actions, the invisible bridge begins to waver. She can feel it cracking beneath her feet. She throws her arms out to steady herself as her body rocks wildly to and fro.

**XENA**

It's in my mind. None of this is real.  
None of you are real!

Gabrielle's voice is heard easily over the wailing of the souls.

**GABRIELLE**

Yes, Xena, they are real. They are the  
ghosts of your conscience, pulling you  
down with them. Forgive yourself, Xena.  
Forgive yourself and let it go.  
Let it all go. Have faith.

**XENA**

*(to herself)*  
You're in my mind too.

**GABRIELLE**

Yes, I am. You already the answers  
you need inside you. What you do  
with them will prove your Faith.



Xena continues to sway violently as the bridge becomes more unstable beneath the weight of her conscience.

**XENA**

*(to herself)*

Faith. I must have faith.  
I must have faith.

Standing up straight, she wills herself to be steady, trying her best to will the bridge beneath her to become stronger. Going back is not an option. Either she goes forward, or she fails.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. TEMPLE OF THE VIRTUES - EVENING**

Gabrielle is sitting so far forward in her chair, it's a wonder she doesn't topple out of it onto the floor. Her hands are tightly clamped over the arms, and her short nails dig divots into the aged wood. Her face is pale, her eyes large and intent on the image in front of her.

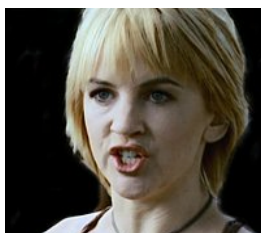
In marked contrast, Janos is relaxed, and grinning for all he is worth, obviously enjoying himself immensely.

**JANOS**

Her first test and she's failing already.  
*(beat, turning to Gabrielle)*  
Now do you believe me?

**GABRIELLE**

She won't fail.



**JANOS**

How can you say that? She's about  
to fall right into that chasm!

**GABRIELLE**

She won't fail.

Janos' smile fades a bit, and he sits back, slowly returning his attention to the mirror.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. XENA'S DREAMSCAPE - DAY**

Xena's eyes change. The resolution can easily be seen in them. She turns and faces forward again, her body strong and steady.

**XENA**

I...

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

Am...

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

NOT...

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

That...

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

Person...

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

ANYMORE!



She takes a step forward and the souls explode into brilliant light that bathes her as the bridge once again becomes steady beneath her feet.

She takes several more steps, resolute, and the invisible bridge continues to unfurl before her feet, steady and strong.

Halfway across, a large body blocks her way.

Xena stops again and rolls her eyes.

**XENA**

Figures. Do you ever give up?

**ARES**

Hardly, my dear. I'm not exactly the giving up type.

**XENA**

Get outta my way, Ares.  
This doesn't concern you.

**ARES**

*(laughing)*

You wound me, Xena. Everything about you concerns me.

His dark eyes rake over her with lascivious intent.

Xena rolls her eyes again. She makes a shooing gesture with her hand.

**XENA**

G'wan now. Play your little games some other time.

**ARES**

Sorry, but...no can do, I'm afraid.  
See, I have a vested interest here.  
Your loss is my gain, so to speak.

Reaching to his vest, Ares pulls out a GOLDEN APPLE. Smirking, he tosses it in his hand.

**XENA**

*(suspiciously)*

Where'd you get that?

Ares shrugs.

**ARES**

*(offhandedly)*

Odin and I... we talk.

Ares laughs.

**ARES**

*(cont'd)*

He seems to have this obsession  
with you, if you can believe that.

Xena gives him a mocking smile that doesn't quite reach her eyes.

**ARES**

*(cont'd)*

He owed me a favor. I rustled him up a  
couple of new Valkyries to replace the  
ones you shamed into quitting, and  
in return, he gave me this.

*(beat)*

It's yours if you just say the word.

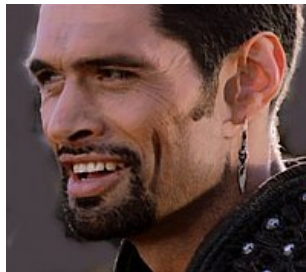
**XENA**

And what word is that?

Ares grins.

**ARES**

Oh, I could think of plenty, but I'll settle  
for the old tried and true 'please'.



**XENA**

Why would I want to do that?

**ARES**

Immortality, Xena. Think about it. You'd  
never grow old. Never be sick. Never  
'accidentally' die on your girlfriend again.

*(beat)*

I could move you up to Olympus. We  
could have a few kicks. It'd be  
like old times. Whaddya say?

**XENA**

Forget it, Ares. Now move it  
before I kick you off this bridge.

**ARES**

Uh uh uh. Ixnay on the  
violence thing, remember?

**XENA**

I'll improvise.

Ares gives a mock shudder.

Sighing, Xena strides forward.

Ares disappears, only to rematerialize behind her. He grabs her arm and whirls her around to face him.

**ARES**

You owe me, Xena!!

**XENA**

For what?!?!?

**ARES**

*(getting red-faced)*

I trained you! Before me you were a nothing  
little wannabe warlord. I trained you to become  
the best of the best! The world trembled at your feet!

**XENA**

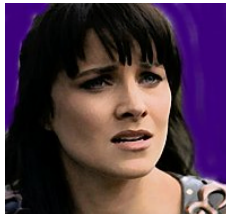
I'm not that person anymore, Ares.

**ARES**

I saved your life! I gave up my godhood  
for you!! I let you murder my entire  
family to save that little brat of yours!

**XENA**

And I thanked you for that, Ares. You'll always  
have my gratitude for the sacrifice you made.  
But that debt is paid. I gave you back  
your godhood. I can't do anything more.



**ARES**

Sure you can. Take the apple.  
It's good. You won't regret it.



**XENA**

I'll regret it more than you  
could ever imagine.

*(beat)*

Goodbye, Ares.

**ARES**

*(thundering)*

DON'T YOU TURN YOUR BACK ON ME!!!

Xena continues to walk forward, unafraid.

**ARES**

NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!

As Xena continues across the chasm, the air seems to coalesce and shimmer. A FORM takes shape, standing several feet away, seeming to hover in thin air. Xena's eyes widen.

**XENA**

Solon?

Tears spring to her eyes and a tremulous smile curves her lips.

**XENA**

Solon? How did you...?

She takes a step forward. The figure hovers back an equal distance, face expressionless. Xena stops. She reaches out, but is unable to touch the figure of her son.

**XENA**

Solon? What's wrong?  
Is there something...?

The air coalesces again, and a second figure forms, floating close by the first.

**XENA**

Mother?



Cyrene slides an arm around Solon's narrow shoulders. They look at one another, then back at Xena. Their expressions are neither welcoming nor foreboding, but rather, intent. Upon her.

**XENA**

Mother, please. What is it?  
What's wrong?

She takes another step. The figures float back, as if repelled by her very essence.

A third figure forms from the very air, and the tears trapped in Xena's eyes spill over onto her cheeks.

**XENA**

Lyceus? Is that you?  
(beat)  
But how? Why?  
(beat)  
Mother? Solon?

She reaches out again, fingers almost trembling as she strains to touch the members of her family, dead so very long ago.

Beneath her feet, the bridge again begins to tremble, and she sways with it, though the figures remain still, unfazed by the turmoil in Xena's soul.

**XENA**

Please.

She steps forward. Her arms flail as her tread meets only open air. She steps back and tries to steady herself on the rapidly crumbling bridge.

**XENA**

It's my guilt, isn't it? My guilt  
pushes you away from me.



The figures don't answer, but Xena knows that she's right.

A roll of thunder peals through the chasm, shaking the already unsteady bridge.

**XENA**

I thought I'd come to terms with it.  
With your deaths. But it seems I haven't.

She savagely wipes the tears from her eyes and cheeks.

Thunder rolls again, almost dumping her from the bridge. Her hair whips back as gusts of wind batter her from all angles.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

I love you all... so very much.  
And I would have given anything  
to keep you safe. Even my life.

*(beat)*

And I know you know that.

The wind dies slightly.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

And I know, in my heart, that  
you've forgiven me.

*(beat)*

And that to go on, I have to  
forgive myself for not being  
there when you needed me.

The figures look on silently.

Xena closes her eyes and breathes deep of the humid, sultry air. Her head lowers, then rises as she lets go the guilt that has festered deep in her soul. Her eyes open again, blazing with new purpose.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

Mother, Lyceus, Solon, please.

*(beat)*

Let me hold you one last time.

And with another act of great courage, she crosses the distance between them, arms flung open wide to the heavens.

The four meet in an explosion of light.

**VOICE**

It is done.

The world around them explodes in a flash of blinding white that then draws in upon itself into a single point of blackness.

**CUT TO:**

## **INT. TEMPLE OF THE VIRTUES - EVENING**

Gabrielle slumps back in the wooden chair, breathing hard as a trail of tears run a course down her cheeks.

On the table, Xena breathes slowly and evenly, still deeply asleep.

Brushing the tears from her face, Gabrielle rises, only to be stopped again by a hand to her wrist. Janos shakes his head slowly. His face is pale and drawn.

**GABRIELLE**

But I need....

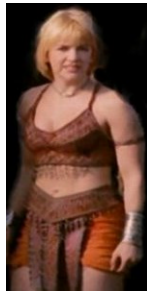
**JANOS**

*(softly)*

You can't help her, Gabrielle.

**GABRIELLE**

But....



**JANOS**

Sit.

Gabrielle clenches her jaw, but complies.

**GABRIELLE**

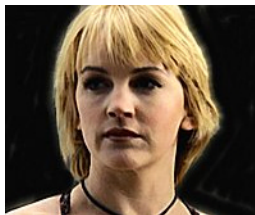
What now?

**JANOS**

We wait until the Virtues are  
ready for the next test.

**GABRIELLE**

Fine.



Leaning her head back against the chair, Gabrielle closes her eyes, deliberately shutting Janos out. She forms an image of Xena in her mind and smiles to herself as those blue eyes lock onto hers.

**CUT TO:**

## INT. XENA'S DREAMSCAPE PASSAGE. RESTING AREA - NIGHT

A strange sense of dislocation overcomes her, and when she next opens her eyes, she is with Xena in a dimly lit passage. They are lying embraced on a damp, warm floor.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

Xena?

Xena opens her eyes. They seem to glow with a joy rarely seen.

**XENA**

I saw them, Gabrielle.

**GABRIELLE**

Who?

**XENA**

Mother. Lyceus. Solon.

*(beat)*

In the Fields. I saw them.

I held them. It was....

Xena's voice trails off as a single tear of joy spills over.

**GABRIELLE**

Oh, Xena....

They embrace more tightly. Gabrielle strokes Xena's hair softly, rhythmically.

**XENA**

*(voice muffled)*

Thank you.

**GABRIELLE**

Thank **me**? For what?

**XENA**

For giving me this chance.

Gabrielle chuckles softly.

**GABRIELLE**

It's not as if I meant to, Xena.

Xena pulls slightly away, and smiles.

**XENA**

Maybe not, but thank you anyway.

**GABRIELLE**

You're welcome. I think. The person you should be thanking, though, is yourself. The faith you had in yourself made it all possible, you know.

**XENA**

Maybe....

Gabrielle grins and hugs Xena again.

**GABRIELLE**

How do you feel?

Xena's eyelids droop.

**XENA**

Tired.

**GABRIELLE**

Rest now. I'll be here.



**CUT TO:**

**INT. TEMPLE OF THE VIRTUES - EVENING**

Gabrielle is shaken from her reverie by movement beside her.

**GABRIELLE**

Wha-? What is it?

**JANOS**

The Virtues. The next test is about to begin.

Gabrielle turns to look at Xena.

**GABRIELLE**

*(whispering)*

Good luck.

**FADE OUT.**

**END OF ACT TWO**

## ACT THREE

FADE IN:

### INT. TEMPLE OF THE VIRTUES - EVENING

Gabrielle is shaken from her reverie by movement beside her.

**GABRIELLE**

Wha-? What is it?

**JANOS**

The Virtues. The next test  
is about to begin.

Gabrielle turns to look at Xena.

**GABRIELLE**

*(whispering)*

Good luck.

CUT TO:

### EXT. XENA'S DREAMSCAPE - MORNING

The sky is brilliant with sunlight as Xena awakens. She finds herself beside a large, well-kept HOUSE sitting on the outskirts of a thriving VILLAGE. The house itself is large and sturdy, with a newly thatched roof and a wide porch that wraps around three of its four sides. Two ROCKING CHAIRS sit to the left of the wide door, and a SHAWL hanging over the back of the one furthest away.

Xena moves her gaze from the house to the town. From what she can see, it appears peaceful, content, and colorful. No angry voices break the tranquility she can sense all around her.

The high-pitched laughter of children shatters her reverie, and she looks up as four youngsters linked by their hands, run by her and into the house.

More laughter rises up in the house and drawn by her natural curiosity, Xena silently treads the two steps up onto the porch. She stands in the shadows of the overhanging roof as she peers around the corner and in through the door.

The room is alive with children of all ages who laugh and run about in the large, bright space. The crowd parts for a moment and Xena freezes, unaware that her jaw has dropped slightly open.



Before her, in a well-padded and well-worn chair, sits Gabrielle. Older by far than Gabrielle truly is, her hair is a brilliant, snowy white and hangs long and loose about her shoulders. Her face is mapped with a lifetime of laughter, and her eyes, from what Xena can see of them, are still the brilliant green gemstones of her youth. Her body is thinner, yet unbowed by age, and she is still the most beautiful vision Xena has ever seen.

A young child of no more than two sits curled up on her lap, his head resting against her chest, thumb tucked securely in his mouth. Gabrielle rocks the child gently as her laughing eyes dart around, watching the other children's antics as they play.

Those eyes meet Xena's directly for a split second before moving away without recognition. Xena feels a brief stab of sadness before realization hits.

**XENA**  
(*whispering*)  
She can't see me.  
Great. I'm a ghost.  
(*beat*)  
Again.



Sighing, Xena steps out from the shadows and stands directly in front of the door. The children begin to settle as Gabrielle brings a scroll down from the table at her side. They form a knot at her feet, eyes shining with anticipation as they look up at her.

Xena can't help the smile that comes to her lips, but it fades quickly as a long shadow falls across the assembled group. The shadow moves as a man, tall though slightly stooped with age, walks into the large room. Seemingly as old as Gabrielle, he looks slightly familiar, but Xena cannot immediately place him. Then the man trips over something on the floor, and his identity becomes immediately clear.

**XENA**  
Virgil.

Her eyes narrow as a feeling she can easily identify as jealousy flows through her. That feeling grows stronger as she watches Gabrielle greet him with a beaming grin and tilting her cheek to him to be kissed, which he does soundly.

**XENA**  
(*sighing*)  
Oh, Gabrielle....  
I had so hoped....



Her eyes widen.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

Hope. That's what this is about.

My hope. For you.

*(beat)*

For us.

Xena watches silently as Virgil moves away to gather up several children who clamor for his attention. He is easy with them, smiling and laughing, and it is very clear to Xena that they care for him deeply. As does Gabrielle.

Xena sighs again and almost turns away as Virgil steps over to the chair at Gabrielle's side and eases himself into it. He takes Gabrielle's hand into his own and clasps it gently before releasing it.

Something, however, keeps her feet rooted where they are, and she continues to look on as Virgil and Gabrielle, both bards of note, settle in to make a group of children happy.

Despite herself, Xena smiles as the sound of Gabrielle's voice, essentially unchanged even after obvious years have passed, weaves its customary spell over the youngsters. Though the words are softly spoken for the benefit of young, and in one case, napping ears, the lilt of Gabrielle's voice is as soothing as ever to Xena's oft-troubled soul.

Xena studies Gabrielle carefully as she talks. The years have been very kind to her. She glows with peace and contentment, and a joy that Xena sometimes feared would be gone forever shows brilliantly in her eyes.

Xena looks over at Virgil, whose grin is so reminiscent of his father's, and a flash of pain erupts in her again.

**XENA**

It should have been me.

*(beat)*

It should **be** me.

The story ends, and the children cheer and clamor for more. Xena takes a last, long look at Gabrielle, as if storing the vision in her heart. She takes a step away, then stops.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

No.



She hovers, caught between leaving and staying.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

No. If this is about hope, then  
it's about **my** hope. Not just  
for Gabrielle, but for me as well.

She sighs, then turns back.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

I won't leave it like this.

*(beat)*

I can't. We belong together, and  
I believe that with all my heart.



Taking in a breath, she crosses back to the threshold, and then takes a step inside.

Gabrielle looks up from the children, drawn as always by a soul-bound connection between them. Her smile outshines the sun in its radiance.

**GABRIELLE**

Xena!!

Virgil looks up, meets Xena's eyes, and grins. The grin carries with it a blush, and he shrugs guiltily as he rises from the chair at Gabrielle's side and steps away quickly.

**VIRGIL**

*(mouthing)*

Sorry.

Surprised by Gabrielle's exclamation, the children turn. Then beaming themselves, they jump to their feet and surround Xena, holding onto her legs and waist, greeting her with an exuberance only children possess.

And suddenly, she knows them all, from the youngest (her great-grandchild by Eve) to the oldest (one of Virgil's). As she bends down to hug them all, a strand of silver hair—her own, she realizes—briefly obscures her vision. She can feel every joint by its ache, every scar by the tension in her skin, every wound ever received in battle, and she realizes that she has never been happier in her life.

She had been concerned that in stepping through the doorway she would change the future. Instead, she realizes that she's been a part of this picture all along.



She straightens as she feels Gabrielle's presence at her side, and opens her arms wide for the love of her life. They embrace tightly, lovingly, completely.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

Welcome home, Xena.

Welcome home.

A brilliant light flashes, and the scene dissolves into a million shards before disappearing to blackness.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. TEMPLE OF THE VIRTUES - EVENING**

Gabrielle smiles as the vision in the mirror fragments into nothingness.

**GABRIELLE**

I'll do everything in my power to  
make that dream into a reality, Xena.



Janos grunts and rises from his chair. It's obvious the trial is not going as he expected it to. Stalking across the room, he mutters something inaudible to the priest, then returns to Gabrielle, scowling.

Gabrielle smirks.

**JANOS**

This is far from over, Gabrielle.

**GABRIELLE**

As far as I'm concerned, Janos,  
it was over before it started.

*(beat)*

Xena is an honorable woman.  
If you need a sham like this to  
prove it to yourself, fine. I don't.

Janos grunts and settles back into his chair.

**JANOS**

We'll see.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. XENA'S DREAMSCAPE - DAY**

Xena awakens in a blinding snowstorm. It is a winter wasteland as far as the eye can see. To the east is a large black cloud billows, seemingly impervious even to the icy winds. To the west, a lightening of the horizon promises some relief from the storm.

Xena is dressed in her leathers, boots, and a woolen cloak. Her armor and weapons are absent. The snow is halfway to her knees and rising. Scanning the wasteland in all directions, she finally turns west and begins to walk.

As she walks, she begins to pass what she discovers is a long, if somewhat scattered line of cold, bedraggled, and soot-covered people headed to the west, as she is.

An elderly, wizened man with a long ragged beard lifts a hand in a wave as his gaze crosses Xena's.

**MAN**

Warrior.

Xena nods.

The man squints at her through the falling snow, then nods to himself, satisfied.

**MAN**

*(cont'd)*

Didn't think you were one of them.

**XENA**

Them?



**MAN**

The thugs that burned down our village.  
(*beat*)

Bastards. We didn't have two dinars  
to rub together and they looted us  
anyway, then burned us down for sport.

The old man spits in the snow, then wipes his hand over his mouth.

**MAN**

(*cont'd*)

Only death back there now.  
Death ahead, too with this storm.

The old man sighs.

**MAN**

(*cont'd*)

Fare you well, Warrior.

Xena lifts a hand, and the man disappears into the strengthening storm.

**DISSOLVE TO:**

## **EXT. XENA'S DREAMSCAPE - DAY**

The storm has almost doubled in intensity. Xena continues to walk, bent into the swirling wind. Her head is deeply buried within the hood of her cloak.

She looks up as she hears a faint cry. A man, wife and two small children, are struggling along in the blizzard. They are dressed in soot-covered rags that do little to protect them from the bitter cold.

A child of no more than four is screaming as his distraught mother pulls him up out of the snow. His face is a ruddy red, while his hands and feet, bare of covering, are blanched an unnatural white.

The woman cuddles the child as best she can against her breast, but hungry and cold, he cannot be consoled.

Xena heads in the direction of the struggling family, and matches her steps to theirs.

When the mother sees her, she stops and brings her son up more tightly against her, as if raising a shield.

**MOTHER**

Who are you? What do you want?  
(*beat*)

We don't have anything! They took  
it all! Please, just leave us alone!

Xena eyes each in turn, taking in the gaunt, flaccid lines of their flesh and the blank, almost empty eyes that stare back at her.

Reaching up, she unclasps her cloak and swings it off of her shoulders, holding it out to the woman.

**XENA**

For your family.

The woman leans away, as if Xena has drawn a weapon, and screams. The young child in her arms echoes her scream, while his sister, a girl of no more than seven, ducks her head against her father's hip, her eyes closed tightly in fear.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

Take it. It's warm.



The woman and her husband continue to stare at her as if she were a demon birthed from the depths of Tartarus, and speaking a language they can't understand.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

G'wan. Take it.

After a long moment, the father steps forward, his posture that of a whipped dog crawling to his master, unsure if he will be beaten or praised. A shaking hand reaches out and snatches the cloak from Xena's fingers. The man backs quickly away, standing close to his wife and children. His eyes are sunken and round, dark and distrustful, even as he holds the cloak in a talon's grip. He is hugging it to his chest as if afraid she'll demand its return.

No words of thanks pass his lips.

Xena nods as if they had, and continues on her way.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. TEMPLE OF THE VIRTUES - NIGHT**

Gabrielle and Janos watch intently as the scene plays out before them. Neither speaks, so caught up are they in the drama as it unfolds in front of their eyes.

**CUT TO:**

## EXT. XENA'S DREAMSCAPE - DAY

The storm, though still blowing strongly, has abated somewhat. As if to make up for the difference, a bitter, numbing cold has descended to take its place. Xena walks quickly, keeping herself warm through the movement of her body. Snow's icy needles sting her face and body in fits and starts. Her eyes narrow as she spots a set of bloody tracks off to her left.

Breaking into a jog, she follows the tracks until they lead her to the person making them.

It is a man, so old as to be ancient. He is emaciated. His skin seems to hang on his bones only through force of will. His under tunic is the only clothing he wears, and has been reduced to rags by the storm. His feet are bare and bloody. At his side is a woman as ancient as he, wrapped only in his tattered and threadbare over tunic. Her eyes are completely blank, showing no spark of life within, and she only moves at his urging, like a puppet. It is obvious that if he were to let her go, she would stand in that one spot until she died.

Because of this, he limps along on frozen and bloody feet, moving only to keep them both alive.

Xena approaches, and the man turns to her, tears frozen on his wind-blown cheeks, a question in his eyes.

**XENA**

Your feet. You won't last  
much longer like this.



**OLD MAN**

What can I do? If I stop, we'll  
both die. She won't go on without  
me. I won't go on without her.

*(beat, whispering)*

She's all I have.

Xena looks at him closely. She can see the love and absolute devotion in his eyes. A devotion to this woman who is his wife. She recognizes that look, having seen it in her own eyes too many times to count, and she reaches a decision.

Bending down, she forces her cold-numbed fingers to untie frozen bootlaces.

**OLD MAN**

*(cont'd)*

What are you doing?

**XENA**

It's all right.

**OLD MAN**

But....

**XENA**

It's all right.

Both boots finally give up their hold on her feet, swollen with the wetness and bitter chill. She straightens, boots in hand.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

Here. I'll help you put them on.

**OLD MAN**

I can't....

**XENA**

Yes, you can. Lift your foot.

**OLD MAN**

But...

**XENA**

*(slowly, but forcefully)*

Lift your foot. Come on.



Releasing his wife's hand, the man lifts his foot and slides it, wincing, into the gaping maw of Xena's boot. She settles his foot inside, then quickly ties the laces as tightly as she is able. The second foot is covered just as quickly.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

You'll need to see a healer once  
you get where you're going,  
but these should do for now.

The old man stares down at his feet, fresh tears sliding slowly down his cheeks.



**OLD MAN**

I...I don't know how to thank you.

Xena gives a wan smile, trying to ignore the bright spikes of pain in her own bare feet.

**XENA**

I'm just glad I could help.

*(beat)*

Go on now. Good luck to you both.

Before the man can answer, Xena turns and begins running to the west and to the light brightening the horizon, once again.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. XENA'S DREAMSCAPE - NIGHT**

The storm has given up its hold on the land, and darkness has completely fallen in a hard, jeweled glitter of bright stars scattered in the velvet tapestry of the night sky. Xena continues her run. Her breath is leaving her lungs in jets of steam; her feet, cracked and numb, are laying a bloody trail even the most idiotic thug would have no trouble following. She is hungry, thirsty, and bordering on hypothermia. She runs as much to keep the pervasive tiredness away as she does to keep warm.

The night is silent, as only bitterly cold nights can be, but that silence is broken by the soft outcry of a young woman. Xena's senses pick up, and she changes direction, angling her steps toward the sound.

She stops before a mother and her newborn infant, huddled together in the snow. The woman is clad in tattered rags. The baby has a loin wrap on and nothing else. His skin is as white as the surrounding snow, and his lips are blue. The young woman looks up, her face a frozen tableau of fear and anguish.

Xena squats down beside them, ignoring the screaming bolts of agony shooting up from her nearly frozen joints.

**XENA**

What's wrong?



**WOMAN**

My...my baby.... I...I can't wake him up....  
he won't nurse.... he won't even cry....

Xena holds out her arms.

**XENA**

May I?

The woman looks at Xena, uncomprehending. Then with a soft, hopeless sigh, she hands her infant over.

Xena takes the child and holds him close. His skin is like marble, cold and stiff as he lies motionless in her arms. She lays a hand on his chest, but her own skin is too numb to tell if it rises and falls with his breathing. Holding his face up to her own, she turns her cheek and waits. A small, faint puff of air warms it, followed by another, and then another.

**WOMAN**

Is he...?

**XENA**

He's alive, but very cold.

The woman colors and looks away.

**WOMAN**

I've tried to keep him warm, but....

**XENA**

I know.

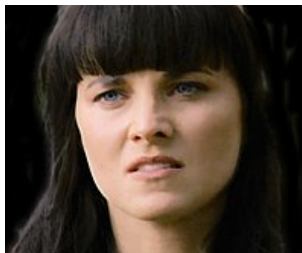
Xena cradles the infant to her chest, trying to share her own scant body warmth. The child stirs slightly, his eyes fluttering open before drifting closed again.

**WOMAN**

Why won't he wake up?

**XENA**

The cold. It makes him want to sleep.



**WOMAN**

Will he die?

Xena meets the woman's eyes. The truth is evident in them. The woman pales, and looks away again.

**WOMAN**

*(cont'd, whispering)*

Please... help....

Handing the infant back to his mother, Xena rises and reaches for the straps of her leather battledress. She slips them down off of her shoulders, then works the frozen laces with fumbling, frozen fingers. The laces come free, and she slides the leathers down her body until they puddle on the snow at her feet. Stepping out of the garment, she hefts it up by one strap and approaches the woman once again.

The woman looks on, confused, but willingly hands her child back to Xena.

Xena takes the child and tucks him into her leathers. She quickly and tightly laces the garment up until it fits snugly around his tiny body. She then grasps the hem of her shift and tears a long swatch from it. She wraps this swatch around the infant's head to form a crude hat to help keep whatever warmth he can gather inside his body.

She hands the baby back to his mother, her expression grim.

**XENA**

It's the best I can do. You'll need to walk through the night, as quickly as you can, and stop at the first house you come to. If he wakes, try to feed him. The milk should warm him inside.

The woman looks up at Xena, eyes shining with gratitude.

**WOMAN**

*(half sobbing)*

Thank you. Oh, bless you.  
You've saved his life.

Xena shakes her head.

**XENA**

He's not safe yet.

Xena helps the woman to her feet and steers her in the right direction.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

Go, now. Hurry.



**WOMAN**

Thank you. Bless you.  
I'll never forget this. Never.

Xena looks on as the woman breaks into a shambling, shuffling run, headed west. A moment later, she follows in her tattered shift and nothing else.

**CUT TO:**

### **EXT. XENA'S DREAMSCAPE - PRE-DAWN**

Xena has run the night through, but it's obvious she is at the end of her rope. Her entire body is frozen. Her feet continue to leave bloody trails. Her skin is slack on her face, her expression a frozen grimace. Her flesh is the color of the freshly fallen snow, and her lips and nails are a dusky blue. Her eyes are ringed by gray shadows, and her lids droop repeatedly as she fights against the seductive pull of hypothermic sleep.

She stumbles, rights herself, then stumbles again, falling into the snow. She pulls herself up, staggers a few more steps, then falls again.



This time, she doesn't get up. The world around her grays then goes black as her body finally gives up its valiant fight against sleep and the cold hand of death.

**CUT TO:**

### **INT. TEMPLE OF THE VIRTUES - PRE-DAWN**

As the image in the mirror fades, Gabrielle jumps up, only to be restrained once again by Janos. She swats him away as if he were nothing more than an annoying insect, and runs over to the table where Xena lies unmoving.

**GABRIELLE**

Xena!

*(beat)*

Xena, wake up!

Wake up, damn you!



Xena remains motionless. Reaching out, Gabrielle grabs hold of her shoulders, wincing at the icy coldness of her flesh, and shakes once, twice, a third time. Xena's limp body moves under the force like a rag doll.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

Wake up!!! Xena, please!  
Wake up!!

Releasing her unresponsive partner, Gabrielle turns to the silent priest, teeth bared in fury.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

Wake her up. NOW!!

The priest slowly shakes his head.

Gabrielle grabs the folds of his robe and jerks him forward so that they are standing bare inches from one another.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

I. Said. NOW!!!

*(beat)*

She's dying! Can't you see that?!?  
Are you blind?!?!?



Janos comes to his feet.

**JANOS**

Gabrielle.

Gabrielle turns without releasing her hold on the priest.

**GABRIELLE**

*(growling)*

You!

**JANOS**

Gabrielle, look.

Janos points to the mirror.

Gabrielle stops, then turns again, eyes scanning the mirror whose flat blackness is dissolving into a swirling gray. She releases the hapless priest and watches.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. XENA'S DREAMSCAPE - DAWN**

A young girl, no more than a toddler dressed in cast off rags, approaches a body in the snow and reaches down to an icy shoulder, poking it.

**GIRL**

Wake up.

When no response comes, she pokes again, harder.

**GIRL**

Wake up!

The girl's FATHER looks on, shaking his head.

**FATHER**

Leave her be, Larissa. She's dead.

A groan comes up from the "corpse" and Xena's eyes flutter open.

**XENA**

*(hoarsely)*

Not...dead...yet.

Larissa jumps, startled, then smiles. She holds out a tattered rag.

**LARISSA**

Take.

Summoning up the last of her energy, Xena shakes her head.

**XENA**

No. You... keep....

**LARISSA**

Take. Please?

Xena shakes her head again.

Larissa turns to her father, confused.

**FATHER**

*(sadly)*

Come away, Larissa. She won't take charity from the likes of us.

Hearing this, Xena struggles to lift her head. She fails, and collapses back into the snow.

**XENA**

No. Not... why.... You need....

Her eyes flutter closed again, her spirit and body drained.



Larissa's MOTHER walks to stand next to her husband.

**MOTHER**

I don't understand.  
She's given everything.

**FATHER**

No, not everything.  
*(beat)*  
She still has her pride. As long as she  
holds on to that, no one can help her.

The mother sighs.

**MOTHER**

So sad.

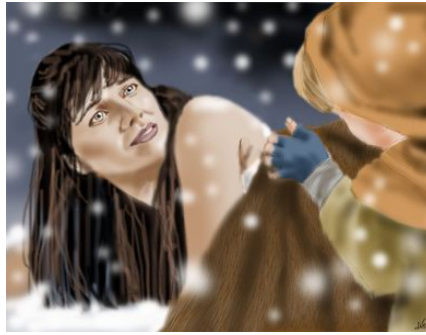
**FATHER**

*(shrugging)*  
It's the way of things.  
*(to Larissa)*  
Come away, child. We've still got a long  
way to walk before we make the village.

The child turns stubbornly away from her father, and pokes Xena once again, keeping at it until the warrior opens her eyes. She holds out the blanket.

**LARISSA**

Take. Please?



As Xena stares up into the dark, earnest eyes of the child, she realizes that sometimes, receiving can be just as precious a thing as giving. With the last of her strength, she reaches up and takes the offered blanket, pulling it down over her chest. The last thing she sees is Larissa's beaming smile.

**XENA**

Thank... you....



**VOICE**

*(off camera)*

She has shown the virtue of  
Charity, in giving and receiving.  
I am well pleased. It is done.

The scene breaks up in bright shards of light, which then swirl and disappear into a deep gray mist that deepens into a flat black.

**FADE OUT.**

**END OF ACT THREE**



## ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

### INT. TEMPLE OF THE VIRTUES - NIGHT

Janos paces in agitation the length and breadth of the temple. His face is brick red and the muscles in his jaws bunch and jump as he clenches his teeth almost to cracking.

Gabrielle continues to stand at Xena's side, tears slowly drying on her cheeks. She summons up a slight smirk as she watches Janos pace.

**GABRIELLE**

Things not going quite  
the way you planned?



Janos turns to her, teeth bared in a snarl.

**JANOS**

This isn't over yet.

**GABRIELLE**

Just say the word and it will be, Janos.

*(beat)*

We both know who's running the  
show here, and it isn't the Virtues.

**JANOS**

It's too late for that, Gabrielle.

*(beat)*

Much, much too late.

With a bit of a smile that is totally absent from his eyes, Janos stops his pacing and heads in the direction of the table where Xena lies. Gabrielle stiffens and immediately places her body between the table and Janos.

**GABRIELLE**

Janos. What are—

**JANOS**

Step aside, Gabrielle.  
I've no desire to hurt you.

**GABRIELLE**

That's not what I'm afraid of.

Janos' smile turns into a snarl as he lurches forward, removing a glittering knife from within the folds of his robe and slashing it through the air.

With an easy step forward, Gabrielle kicks the knife out of his hand, then follows the kick with a hard shove that sends Janos pin wheeling back the way he came. The knife arcs gracefully through the air, spinning until it lands, with a clatter, on the floor.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

Back off, Janos. Now.

**JANOS**

*(with sincere regret)*

I'm sorry, Gabrielle. I really am.

**GABRIELLE**

If you're really sorry, then  
stop what you're doing.



**JANOS**

I can't, Gabrielle. I wish I could.

Darting to the left, Janos retrieves his knife. Straightening, he fires the knife toward Gabrielle and slightly to her right. As Gabrielle reaches up to bat the knife away, Janos leaps for the table, magically producing a second knife from his robe.

Realizing she's very out of position, Gabrielle does the only thing she can. Spinning, she throws her body on top of Xena's, protecting her vulnerable soulmate as best she can.

**GABRIELLE**

Noooo!!!

His knife held high over his head, Janos begins the deadly plunge when he is frozen. A blinding white light shimmers for a long moment around his body before fully enveloping him.

When the light disappears, so does Janos.

A second later, a similar light surrounds Xena, and, with a soft 'pop', she too disappears. Without Xena's body to support her, Gabrielle falls to the table with a soft 'oof!'. Quickly, she gathers herself, and stands, spinning to face the still-silent priest.

**GABRIELLE**

Bring her back! Bring her back now!!



The priest shakes his cowled head slowly.

Gabrielle steps forward and grabs the thick woolen folds of his robe, pulling him toward her.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

Did you hear me? Bring her back!!

**CUT TO:**

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

Xena finds herself within a formless VOID. All around her, in panoramic view, she can see the last few moments of the 'fight' between Janos and Gabrielle. Gritting her teeth in anger, Xena thrusts out her hand, as if to stop the downward plunge of Janos' knife into Gabrielle's exposed back.

The scene before her ripples and waves, as if she'd touched a still pool of water.

A second later, Janos appears before her, his knife continuing its downward path even as he stumbles into the void.

Xena grabs his wrist and twists it hard. Janos screams and drops to his knees, holding his wounded wrist as the knife again goes spinning away.

Xena stands towering above him, muscles tensed, face florid with rage.

**XENA**

You miserable bastard. You couldn't accept that your little trick wasn't working and decided to take the easy route, hmm?



Before Janos can reply, a flash of light flares through the void in which they are both trapped. From the light, a towering figure emerges, dressed in blinding white robes and carrying a sword in one hand, a scroll in the other.

Janos sags fully to the floor, head bowed.

**JANOS**

*(muffled)*

Justice. Finally, you've come.

**JUSTICE**

I have come, Janos.

*(beat)*

But not for the reason you suspect.

Janos looks up, confusion plain in his eyes.

**JANOS**

Then...then why are we here?

**JUSTICE**

That is a question I should  
be asking **you**, Janos.

Janos continues to look confused.

**JUSTICE**

*(cont'd)*

You have used the powers we have  
granted you, and invoked us, to what end?

**JANOS**

*(passionately)*

For **justice!**

**JUSTICE**

I see no justice in a sham trial, Janos.  
Your own agenda is at work here, an  
agenda which does not personify  
Justice, but rather its opposite, Treachery.

**JANOS**

She murdered my family! My friends! Everyone  
I loved! I have the right to demand justice!!

**JUSTICE**

Even if I were, for the moment, willing to forgive the  
false pretenses of this trial, Janos, Xena passed  
every test you set up for her. Explain to me, then,  
where justice lies in attempting to take her life as she  
lies defenseless under a spell of your own making.

**JANOS**

It's no more than she deserves. No more than what she did to thousands of others.

**JUSTICE**

And do you call what she did 'justice'?

**JANOS**

No!

**JUSTICE**

Nor is it now.

Justice reaches out a long, tapered hand.

**JUSTICE**

*(cont'd)*

Rise, Janos.

**JANOS**

What? I—

**JUSTICE**

**Rise.**

Trembling and suddenly pale, Janos comes slowly to his feet. His eyes dart wildly about the void as if seeking an impossible escape.

**JUSTICE**

*(cont'd)*

Janos of Virtua, you have manipulated the Virtues to your own ends for your own pleasure. You have also desired harm to come to a defenseless woman. How do you plead?

Janos looks down at the floor. His shoulders shake, as if fighting tears...or giving in to them.

**JANOS**

*(with passion)*

Don't you understand?? I did it for them, not for myself! For those who couldn't seek justice on their own!!

**JUSTICE**

How do you plead?

**JANOS**

*(miserably)*

Guilty.

**JUSTICE**

So it is; so it shall be.

Justice raises both arms and waves them with snake-like fluidity. Xena starts as a brilliant light flashes between her own hands, materializing into a shining sword, easily twice as long as her own. She looks at the Virtue, a question in her eyes.

**JUSTICE**

*(cont'd)*

Xena, as the wronged party,  
it is your right, and your duty,  
to see justice done.

Justice gestures to Janos with a wide sweep of her hand, then steps back, out of the way.

Xena hefts the blade easily, eyeing the shimmering brilliance of the edge before turning to Justice.

**XENA**

You want me to what...

*(beat)*

Lop his head off while  
he's just standing there?



**JUSTICE**

It is the just penalty for the  
crimes he has committed.

*(beat)*

He has admitted his guilt.

*(beat)*

Justice needs to be done.

**XENA**

Sorry, but if that's your idea of  
justice, then you'll just have  
to do your own dirty work.

Xena tosses the sword onto the ground, where it shatters into a million fragments of light and disappears.

**JUSTICE**

*(enraged)*

What?!?

Xena looks up at the towering Virtue, completely unperturbed.

**XENA**

I don't slaughter defenseless men.

*(beat)*

Not anymore.

**JUSTICE**

You looked ready to do just  
that a very short time ago.

**XENA**

*(smirking)*

No, I wouldn't have killed him.

She turns, pinning Janos with a very significant look.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

Just made him **wish** I would.



Justice blinks.

**JUSTICE**

And there is a difference?

**XENA**

A minor one, but yes, there is.

Xena shifts slightly, and her eyes soften.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

There was a time, not so very long ago, when I stood  
where Janos stands now. My family...my brother...  
was dead at the hands of a madman and I became  
what I thought was the instrument of justice,  
wanting nothing more than to avenge his death.

*(beat, as she turns to face Janos directly)*

But the only thing vengeance does is make you  
thirst for more. It's not enough, Janos. It's never  
enough. I became what I hated most. The same  
as the man who had killed my brother for sport.

**JANOS**

*(sneering)*

You're nothing like me.

**XENA**

No, I was much worse than you'll ever be.

Janos blanches, then nods, accepting the truth of her words.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

But then I came against someone  
stronger than I was. And he held a  
sword of retribution at my throat.

*(beat)*

I would have welcomed it. Justice  
would have been done, and the  
world would have celebrated the feat.

Janos looks up, intrigued despite himself.

**JANOS**

What happened?

**XENA**

He went against what justice demanded  
and gave me a second chance.

Janos' eyes widen.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

He spared my life, and in the years since, I've tried my best to atone  
for my past misdeeds.

*(beat)*

I haven't always been as successful  
as I've liked, but I've come to learn  
a great many things about myself,  
and about the world around me.

*(beat)*

And one of the most important lessons  
I've learned is that to embrace the future,  
we must let go of the past. It will do  
nothing but drag us down with it if it can.





Janos sighs and lowers his head.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

Justice isn't served by your death, Janos.  
Justice is served by mercy, by granting  
you another chance to embrace your future  
instead of being imprisoned by your past.

**JANOS**

I'll never forgive you for what  
you did to my family, Xena.

**XENA**

I'm not asking for your forgiveness,  
Janos. That's something you'll  
either find, or not, within yourself.

Janos shakes his head slowly.

Xena turns to the Virtue.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

I won't do what you ask of me, Justice.  
If that means I've failed your test, so be it.

Justice smiles and the sword reforms and materializes in her hand.

**JUSTICE**

On the contrary, Xena. You have  
shown the true meaning of Justice.  
You truly are a virtuous woman.

Justice lifts her hands to the sky.

**JUSTICE**

It is done!

**CUT TO:**

## **INT. TEMPLE OF THE VIRTUES - EVENING**

Xena reappears in the temple, awakens immediately, and rolls from the table and onto her feet just in time to catch Gabrielle, who has launched herself into her arms. The two embrace tightly for a long moment until a soft popping sound signals the return of Janos.

Gabrielle stiffens and pulls out of Xena's comforting hug.

**GABRIELLE**

You son of a —



Xena gently grasps Gabrielle's arm and keeps her from moving forward. It's obvious Gabrielle hasn't been privy to the latest events.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

Let me go, Xena. He—

**XENA**

It's alright, Gabrielle.  
It's...taken care of.



Gabrielle turns to Xena.

**GABRIELLE**

Taken care of? How?

In answer, the hooded priest steps forward and removes his cowl. He is startlingly, almost inhumanly, handsome, and the youthful features of his rugged face contrast sharply with the ancient wisdom shining from his eyes.

**PRIEST**

I am Pleanthes, avatar of the Virtues.  
Xena has passed every test put to her,  
and I believe that Janos has learned  
a very valuable lesson in the process.

The trio turns to look at Janos, who nods, his eyes cast downward.

Pleanthes turns back to Xena.

**PLEANTHES**

It is within my power to grant any boon you ask of me, Xena. For exposing Janos' duplicity, the Virtues have granted a reward of your choosing.

Xena smiles slightly.

**XENA**

I doubt Temperance would be too pleased with that.

Pleantes chuckles.

**PLEANTHES**

Perhaps not, but the offer remains.

Her smile broadening, Xena turns to Gabrielle and gathers her close.

**XENA**

Tell them thanks, but no thanks. I have all the reward I'll ever need right here.



Gabrielle grins and, standing on tiptoe, places a kiss on Xena's cheek.

**PLEANTHES**

Very well. Then I shall grant a wish of your partner. Look in the mirror, Xena, and view how Gabrielle truly sees you in her soul.

A mirror forms, and an image forms in it. Instead of looking at it, Xena keeps her eyes on Gabrielle's face.

**XENA**

I don't need to see that.

Gabrielle reaches up and puts her hand on Xena's chin, gently forcing her head towards the mirror.

**GABRIELLE**

Yes you do. Fair's fair.

Xena's eyes drop, even though she lets Gabrielle turn her head. It is obvious she doesn't want to see the image in the mirror.

**GABRIELLE**  
(pokes Xena slightly)  
Hey.

Reluctantly, since she realizes she's not getting out of it, Xena lifts her eyes to the image in the mirror. Looking back at her she finds a larger than life image, a face full of courage and pride, eyes blazing with uncompromising, fierce will.



It stuns her. Then Xena watches as the image in the mirror shifts its eyes to one side, and the fierceness softens into love, just that quickly. Speechless, she looks at Gabrielle.

Gabrielle turns her gaze from the images and looks up.

**GABRIELLE**  
Everyone's life has to have a hero in it.  
(slightly shrugging then smiling)  
You'll always be mine.

Xena hugs her, as the image fades into nothing.

**FADE OUT.**

**END OF ACT FOUR**

TAG

FADE IN:

EXT. VIRTUA - DAY

Xena and Gabrielle stand at the edge of town—a town that somehow seems brighter and more cheerful than in previous days—saying their goodbyes to Pleanthes.

PLEANTHES

Thank you again, Xena, for all of your help. I was unaware of the depths into which Janos had slipped. It's quite possible that without your intervention, we might not have known until it was well too late.

XENA

I'm glad we could help.

GABRIELLE

Do you think he'll be okay?  
Eventually, I mean?



PLEANTHES

That is difficult to say, Gabrielle. Have no fear, though. The Virtues will keep a close eye on him.

GABRIELLE

Thank you, Pleanthes.

PLEANTHES

And thank **you**, Gabrielle. I hope you'll come back this way again and walk through our splendid gardens.  
*(beat, as he smiles)*  
You won't even have to bathe first.

Gabrielle laughs, clasps Xena's warm hand, and together the two turn toward the path leading out of town.

They go no more than two steps when a figure steps from behind a decorative column.

Gabrielle stiffens.

**XENA**  
(*evenly*)  
Janos.

Janos inclines his head.

**JANOS**  
Xena.  
(*beat*)  
I'm still not ready to forgive you for  
what you did to my family and to those  
I loved. I don't know if I ever will be.  
(*beat*)  
But I do owe you my thanks for showing  
me mercy when I showed you none.  
I don't know what will become of my life,  
but perhaps it will be better than it has been.

**XENA**  
It can only get better from here, Janos.  
Living for revenge is no life at all.  
(*beat*)  
I should know.



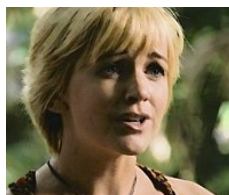
Janos looks at her closely, as if for the first time.

**JANOS**  
(*murmuring*)  
Yes, I believe you do.

After a moment, he removes something from within the folds of his robe.

**JANOS**  
I also wanted to return this to you.

**GABRIELLE**  
Xena! Your chakram!



Janos gestures with the weapon.

**JANOS**

Take it. It does me no good here,  
and perhaps without the reminder,  
I might be able to get on with  
whatever life I have left to lead.

**XENA**

Thank you.

As Xena reaches out for the chakram, she stiffens, sensing a familiar—and unwelcome—presence.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

Ares....

Ares materializes, a grin on his handsome face.

**ARES**

Just like old times, huh Xena?

His grin widens as he spies the chakram.

**ARES**

*(cont'd)*

I'll take this, if you don't mind.

He winks at Xena.



**ARES**

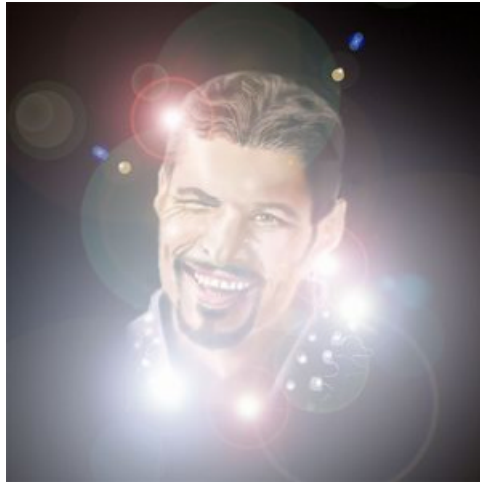
*(cont'd)*

Later.

Ares disappears, taking the chakram with him.

**XENA**  
**ARES!!!!**

**FADE OUT.**



**DISCLAIMER**

Xena's chakram was stolen for the second time in a row during the making of this motion picture, and boy is she pissed.