

## Xena: Warrior Princess - Subtext Virtual Season 8



Production #V809 - A Queen Thing

Virtual Airdate - January 29, 2003

**WRITTEN BY**

Melissa Good

**PRODUCED BY**

Carol Stephens

**DIRECTED BY**

Denise Byrd

**SCREENGRABS**

Judi Mair

**ARTWORK**

Lucia

**TITLE GRAPHIC**

MaryD

Xena: Warrior Princess is a trademark and copyright of MCA/Universal, StudiosUSA and Renaissance Pictures.  
This is a fan based not-for-profit work of fiction and is not intended to infringe upon their rights

## TEASER

FADE IN:

### EXT. A QUIET, ROCK LINED POOL DEEP IN THE FOREST - EVENING

The air is thick and hot, despite the fact that it is almost sundown. Insects buzz around, but the animals are lying low in the forest, waiting for nighttime to start moving around.

The pool is surrounded by trees, and thick underbrush. It is difficult to see, in fact, how Xena and Gabrielle have gotten to where they currently are.

Xena and Gabrielle sit in the pool, very much enjoying the cold water. Next to Xena is a dip in the rock, filled with water. A bottle sits inside it, and there are two cups on the ledge next to it.

Gabrielle extends her arms along the rock, letting her head rest back against it as well.

**GABRIELLE**

Boy, this feels great.



Xena is sunk almost up to her nose, only her blue eyes are visible. She turns her head and looks at Gabrielle with a quite serious expression, then very slowly raises up a little and squirts a mouthful of water at Gabrielle, hitting her in the face.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

Pah! Xena!

Gabrielle swipes her hand through the water and returns the favor, but Xena's head has already disappeared under the surface. After a moment, Xena pops up. Gabrielle has been waiting and splashes her. Xena reaches over and does something under the water that causes Gabrielle to squeak, and submerge.

Xena chuckles.

**XENA**

She never learns.

Gabrielle surfaces, and shakes the water out of her eyes. She is smiling, however, and seems to be enjoying the horseplay.

**GABRIELLE**

You never let me get the  
last swipe in, do you?

**XENA**

Never. Good leaders  
always get the last shot.

Gabrielle ducks under the water again and after a second, Xena's eyes nearly pop out of her head and she scrambles to grab Gabrielle, who slides out of the water and snickers at her expression.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

No fair!



**GABRIELLE**

All's fair in love and water fights,  
Xena. You taught me that.

Xena laughs, and shakes her head.

**XENA**

True. Remind me not to give  
you so many pointers next time.

Gabrielle finds a new spot to relax in... seated between Xena's legs and using her as a backrest. Xena reaches over and uncorks the bottle, pouring some of its contents into the two cups, then handing Gabrielle one.

**GABRIELLE**

Besides, leadership isn't always  
that simple, Xena. I should know.



**XENA**

*(chuckling)*

You make it complicated. It's a lot easier  
if you just tell people what to do, and  
when they don't listen, bash 'em.

Gabrielle takes a sip of her now chilled wine and sighs in contentment.

**GABRIELLE**

Sure, if you're *\*you\**.

She looks over shoulder at Xena.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

But I'm not you, and it's not that easy sometimes. You have to work with people, and get them to do what you want them to do willingly. Force isn't always the answer.

**XENA**

*(shaking head)*

Leadership by the masses isn't the way either, Gabrielle. Look at the Amazons... everything's a deal with them.

**GABRIELLE**

And? You don't mean to say Velaska was right, do you?

Xena takes a drink, giving herself a moment to consider.

**XENA**

No.

**GABRIELLE**

Damn right. No one has all the right answers. I always found that listening to people... getting their ideas was the best way to make a decision that everyone would be happy with.

**XENA**

Leaders aren't supposed to make people happy, Gabrielle. They're supposed to keep them alive. My way does it better.

Gabrielle gives Xena a look. Xena grins and shrugs. Gabrielle also shrugs, but she looks a little thoughtful.

**GABRIELLE**

Well, it's a moot point. The Amazons are across the sea, and I doubt I'll get the chance to put my theory to the test with anyone else any time soon.



Xena puts her arm around Gabrielle.

**XENA**

You could try it on me.

**GABRIELLE**

*(rolling eyes)*

Oh, yeah, right. The original  
'my-way-or-the-highway'  
Xena, Warrior Princess.

She elbows Xena in the ribs.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

Not in this lifetime.  
Maybe the next?

**XENA**

Chicken.

Xena tickles Gabrielle on the side. Gabrielle is caught in the midst of taking a sip of wine. She turns and ends up spitting the wine all over Xena as she laughs, and they both toss their cups and start wrestling in the water.

**GABRIELLE**

I'll chicken you....



The water becomes almost obscured by wild splashing and lots of fast moving limbs. Gabrielle is holding her own until Xena grabs hold of her and jumps half across the spring, ending up taking them both under the water.

It is quiet in the spring. A few bubbles erupt. The insects buzz. A frog croaks.

Xena and Gabrielle erupt from the water together and fall back, sending a huge wave splashing over the edges of the rocks with a significant roar.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

Chicken this, you....

Xena realizes they are not alone, and she claps her hand over Gabrielle's mouth as she treads water. Gabrielle looks around, only to find a dozen men and women standing around the spring watching them. They are dressed in plain, white garments. Xena removes her hand.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

*(under her breath)*

Oh... Gods... I hope  
they're not virgins again.

**XENA**

Hm... we could fix that,  
if you're....

Gabrielle puts her hand over Xena's mouth swiftly, and gives the watching men and women a smile.

**GABRIELLE**

Hi. Something we can do for you?

**XENA**

*(mumbling)*

Ya have to ask for trouble, don'cha?



One of the men steps forward. He is middle aged, and has a kindly face. He rubs his hands and looks at Xena and Gabrielle as though he has found a treasure before him. Given that they are naked, Gabrielle appears unsure if she should be outraged or flattered.

**MAN**

My name is Escobar. I am from  
the village of Delios, and my  
fellow citizens and I are on a quest.

Gabrielle brightens.

**GABRIELLE**

Oh, a quest? How interesting.  
What kind of....

**XENA**

*(interrupting)*

For what?

Escobar does not appear to be put off by Xena's gruff attitude. He positively beams at her.

**ESCOBAR**

We are on our yearly quest to find  
a stranger... a wise and noble  
stranger who will serve as  
our town's queen for a day.

Gabrielle's eyebrows shoot up, and she looks intrigued.

**XENA**

Good luck. Now if  
you'll excuse us....

**GABRIELLE**

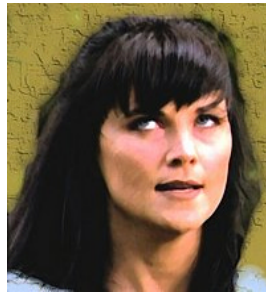
Xena, wait a minute....

**ESCOBAR**

Thank you, but our luck has  
been excellent! We have only  
been searching for a few days,  
and now our quest is at an end. We  
have found our perfect candidate.

**XENA**

Great. Scram.



Escobar takes out a scroll. It is much tattered, and he unrolls it carefully, studying its contents. One of the others also reads it over his shoulder, and nods in satisfaction.

**ESCOBAR**

Yes, it's all here. Eyes like  
stars, hair as dark as the night....

Xena can see where this is all going. She stands up in the pool, letting the water sheet off her body. She puts her hands on her hips.

**XENA**

Don't you even think about it.

Escobar and the rest look at her, look at the scroll, and smile. Escobar lets the scroll roll up again.

**ESCOBAR**

And beauty incomparable.  
Please, will you be our queen?

Gabrielle covers her mouth and starts to sink under the water, laughing hysterically at the expression on Xena's face.

**ESCOBAR**

*(cont'd)*

We would be greatly honored.

Xena looks at Gabrielle, who is submerged to her eyes. Ripples of water shake around her shoulders as she laughs.

**XENA**  
\*We\* are not amused.



**FADE OUT.**

**END OF TEASER**



## ACT ONE

FADE IN:

### EXT. FOREST CAMPSITE - NEAR SUNSET

Xena and Gabrielle sit near their fire, wrapped in the odd linen shifts they seem to use as towels, underwear, beachwear, and crucifixion gear. The villagers are sitting around the fire, on the other side.

**XENA**

Look. I'm flattered.  
(pausing)  
But there's no way....

Gabrielle takes Xena's hand in hers, and distracts her by squeezing it.

**GABRIELLE**

Xena....

**ESCOBAR**

It is only for a day. Please, won't you  
help us? This is a tradition of our  
village, going back many, many years.  
You would be only the latest of those  
who have given this one day to our cause.

**XENA**

I said....



**GABRIELLE**

Xena.

She looks at the villagers.

**GABRIELLE**

(cont'd)

Would you excuse  
us for a minute?

The villagers look at each other, then they get up and walk off into the thick forest, but not far enough to disappear. They watch the shadows nervously.

**GABRIELLE**

(cont'd)

Xena, listen.

Xena growls.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

Save it for someone who  
doesn't wash your underwear.

She smiles impishly at Xena's startled and bemused expression.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

Look, remember what we were  
talking about? Leadership?  
Here's a chance to see which  
one of us is right. You try your  
way, I'll try my way.... It'll be fun.

**XENA**

FUN?

**GABRIELLE**

Did you have something else  
planned for tomorrow?  
C'mon. It's only one day.

Xena sighs.

**XENA**

This whole thing's a setup, isn't  
it? How'd you manage it?

**GABRIELLE**

Setup? I haven't been out of  
your sight for a month! Get real!



**XENA**

I had to sleep sometime.

Gabrielle just laughs and shakes her head. Xena throws her hands up in defeat.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

Okay, fine. One day.  
How bad could it be?

Gabrielle motions the villagers over.

**GABRIELLE**

Guys, you got a queen.

The villagers look extremely pleased. They nod and smile and Escobar seems especially happy.

**ESCOBAR**

Excellent! Wonderful! Our village  
is just over the ridge. If you would  
be so kind as to follow us, I will  
bring you to the queen's residence.

Xena glances around at the campsite and shrugs, seemingly reconciled to the idea.

**XENA**

Gotta have a softer  
bed than this place.

Xena and Gabrielle start packing up their gear, as the villagers eagerly 'help.' One man goes to pick up Xena's sword. Xena boots his hand out of the way, then boots the man gently away from her stuff.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

Don't touch anything.  
You could get hurt.

Gabrielle twirls her sais and seats them into her boots. She is grinning.

**ESCOBAR**

Come, and I will have everything  
made ready, and prepare  
your gowns, and....

Xena looks over her shoulder and cocks and eyebrow at him.

**XENA**

What?



**GABRIELLE**

*(chortling softly)*

Oh, I'm gonna love  
this. I just know it.

Xena tosses her bag to her, and they start off. Xena is shaking her head. She is beginning to suspect she's been had.

**CUT TO:**

## EXT. TOWN SQUARE - EARLY EVENING

The town is a very good size one. There are cobble lined streets, and several of them are lined with well made houses. It is obvious this place is prosperous. The town square has a big hall on one side, a two story inn on a second, what appears to be a mercantile on the third, and on the fourth side is what in this place passes for a mansion. It has three stories, and is meticulously kept. The gates are polished, and the walk is lined with scrupulously trimmed hedging.

Townsfolk walk back and forth, most of them well dressed. They spot Escobar returning, and everyone stops to watch as the group troops into the square triumphantly with their prize. Xena and Gabrielle are in the center of them, and as Xena is spotted, a crowd starts to gather to point and stare.

Escobar goes to the center of the square, where there is a very large community well, and a bell set into a wooden structure over it. With a theatrical flourish, he picks up a wooden striker and tolls the bell three times.

**XENA**

*(under her breath)*

Wanna guess what that's for?



**GABRIELLE**

*(clearing throat)*

Hope it's the dinner bell.

Xena rests her arm on Gabrielle's shoulder and shakes her head. She appears amused.

**XENA**

Some things never change.

Escobar walks over and rejoins the group, then he leads them towards the large hall.

**CUT TO:**

## INT. TOWN HALL - EARLY EVENING

Xena and Gabrielle look around as they enter the hall. As in much of the rest of the town, it appears well built and well kept. There are seats for many people, and on one end is a raised platform. On top of the platform has been constructed what appears to be a judge's bench.

**ESCOBAR**

Welcome.

*(clearing throat)*

I should explain our traditions  
before we go further.

**XENA**

Great idea.

Xena takes a seat on one of the trestle tables and waves her hand at him to continue. Gabrielle wanders around the room examining the wall's painted decorations. She is also listening, however.

**ESCOBAR**

Well....

A man enters. He is dressed very richly, and has a gray beard and moustache. He crosses to where they are, and studies Xena briefly before making a slight bow in her direction.

**ESCOBAR**

*(cont'd)*

Malcos, I was just going to explain to our royal guest....

**MALCOS**

So I see.

Malcos flicks hand at Escobar.

**MALCOS**

*(cont'd)*

So you are the one he has found.  
What is your name, child?

Xena's eyes nearly come out of her head. She gets up and walks over to him, leaning over him until he backs up several steps.

**XENA**

The name's Xena, grandpa.



**MALCOS**

Xena. That's a very interesting name. Do you hale from these parts? It seems familiar, somehow.

Escobar interjects his body between them, and steers Xena back towards the trestle tables.

**ESCOBAR**

Malcos, there will be time later for you to speak with our guest.

Reluctantly, Malcos leaves. Gabrielle watches him go, then she turns and goes to sit next to Xena on the table.

**ESCOBAR**

*(cont'd)*

As I was saying.... It is our tradition that once every year, all the crimes and the troubles of our town are judged.

Gabrielle's jaw drops slightly. Xena appears surprised.

**GABRIELLE**

You mean... you have  
no law otherwise?

**ESCOBAR**

Yes. We used to have soldiers and a  
magistrate long ago, but they became  
too expensive, and the soldiers would  
often fight. We decided on this way,  
so that during the year there is peace,  
and all know they must bring their  
disagreements up to one place, at one time.

Xena and Gabrielle exchange glances.

**GABRIELLE**

Wow. There must be a  
lot to do that one day.



**ESCOBAR**

Not really.

He turns to Xena.

**ESCOBAR**

*(cont'd)*

You will have perhaps a score of  
cases to hear tomorrow. We are  
a peace loving, prosperous place.

**XENA**

A score? You sure you're  
not all just dead?

The men and women in white chuckle nervously.

**ESCOBAR**

It must seem strange to you, but it  
is true. We use tradition and ceremony  
to ensure harmony and justice.

Even Gabrielle appears dubious.

**GABRIELLE**

Sounds... perfect. But.... I mean, what if someone does something like.... Well, if they kill someone.

Escobar frowns.

**ESCOBAR**

We are not that kind of people.

Xena rolls her eyes. Gabrielle scratches her jaw.

**ESCOBAR**

*(cont'd)*

But if that were to happen, day after tomorrow, yes. That person would wait to be judged until the time of reckoning comes again.

*(pausing)*

So now that you understand our ways, come. I will take you to your place of honor.

Xena and Gabrielle look at each other, then they both shake their heads at the same time. Xena picks up her bag and slings it over her shoulder, and follows Escobar out. Gabrielle remains perched on the trestle table.

The remaining white clad women and men look back at her. They seem uncomfortable.

**GABRIELLE**

So.

She picks out one at random.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

What's your name?



The woman she is pointing at looks around, as though she has no idea who Gabrielle is speaking to, then she realizes it is her.

**WOMAN**

Oh. My name? It's Clarissae.

**GABRIELLE**

So.. what kind of problems are  
we looking at here, tomorrow?  
Street thieves? Stolen cows? What?

**MAN**

*(under breath)*  
We?

**CLARIESSAE**

Not... Really. It's more like....

**WOMAN**

Jothan's youngest son  
insulted the miller's daughter.

**MAN**

Yeah, and then there's  
the innkeeper....

**CLARIESSAE**

Oh yeah....

**WOMAN**

The miller accused her of  
charging too much for his bread.

**GABRIELLE**

Uh huh... What else?

The men and women gathered more closely around her, they are more animated now and less wary.

**MAN**

The mayor's dog bit  
my mother. She's suing.

**WOMAN**

Don't forget the witch.

Gabrielle starts.

**GABRIELLE**

Witch?





**CLARIESSAE**

Malcos is convinced she cursed his store. He's owns the big one across from here. It's needed a new roof, and the shelves all fell down....

Gabrielle holds her hands up.

**GABRIELLE**

Okay... I get it. Thanks. One of you want to take me wherever it is they took Xena?

**CLARIESSAE**

Um... Well.... You can't.

**GABRIELLE**

Excuse me?

The men and women look at each other.

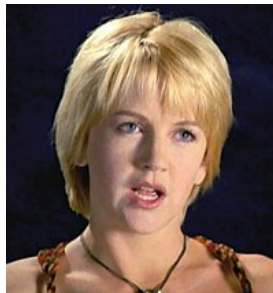
**MAN**

It's your friend who was chosen. No one sees the judge before the judging. It's the law.

Gabrielle hops off the table.

**GABRIELLE**

Hmm. That may be your law. Let me let you in on me and Xena's law.



**CLARIESSAE**

But....

**GABRIELLE**

Where Xena goes, I go. You don't get one of us and not the other. We come like a pair of boots.

**CLARIESSAE**

But....

**GABRIELLE**

Pair of shoes? Team of horses? Salt and pepper? A set of oars?

**MAN**

Uh... okay....

**GABRIELLE**

Two peas in a pod?  
Two ruts in the road?

**CLARIESSAE**

*(covering ears)*

OKAY! Okay... we'll take you over  
there. Just don't say I didn't warn  
you. It's against our laws, and....

**GABRIELLE**

And we can judge ourselves  
on that tomorrow, right?

The men and women look at each other in some confusion, but eventually troop out, leading  
Gabrielle out the door.

**FADE OUT.**

**END OF ACT ONE**

## ACT TWO

FADE IN:

### INT. ROYAL RESIDENCE - EVENING

The inside of the temporary queen's residence is large and airy. There is a rich carpet on the floor, and well made wooden furniture. A huge wardrobe stands against one wall. Against the other wall is a dressing table, full of silver and gold beauty accessories such as brushes and mirrors.

Above the dresser is a large, oval mirror, lined in gold trim.

A silver and crystal candelabra hangs from the roof, its candles already lit. Equally ornate candle sconces are on the wall, also lit.

In an alcove stands a canopied bed, with silk bedding and lace curtains.

Despite the splendor, there is an air of un-use about the room. It is as though it is a model, not meant to be really used by anyone or lived in. The silver and gold accessories appear as would props.

The door opens, and Escobar enters, with Xena behind him.

**ESCOBAR**

Here is your place to sleep.  
Isn't it wonderful?

Xena walks to the center of the room and turns in a circle. Dressed in her leathers and armor, Xena does not look like she fits in this room.

**XENA**

Nice. But what's  
all the frills for?



Escobar seems to understand her point.

**ESCOBAR**

Well, it's expected. If  
you are our queen, you  
must look like one.

**XENA**

*(dubiously)*  
All this for a day?

Escobar goes to the wardrobe and throws it open.

**ESCOBAR**

Our laws are as much about ceremony as they are about rules. Part of the tradition is the.... Um....

**XENA**

Pomp and ceremony.

**ESCOBAR**

I suppose. You must choose what you would wear tomorrow and put it on so you can be presented to the people tonight.

Escobar studies Xena, seeming to doubt himself for the first time.

**ESCOBAR**

*(cont'd)*

Please choose wisely.

Escobar leaves. Xena drops her sack on the carpet and wanders around the room, examining the draping on the bed and the silver brushes. Then she goes to the wardrobe and studies her choices.

**XENA**

Well, well.



Xena removes a few gowns. They are surprisingly sophisticated, and quite gorgeous. Xena examines them with a look of speculation.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

This could be fun after all.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. ROYAL RESIDENCE - NIGHT**

Gabrielle stands near the window of the grand room, looking out over the town. She is dressed in one of the fine gowns, in a deep shade of purple red. She is also draped in various bits of jewelry, and she has silver and colored enamel flowers threaded through her hair.

Xena enters the room and slams the door, storming across the room in a high state of annoyance. She is wearing a stunning dress in blue, has her hair piled high and laced with pearls, and is carrying a set of elbow length gloves.



**XENA**

Those little sons of bacchaes  
with their damn curling this  
and curling that....

Gabrielle turns to watch her. At the same moment, Xena sees Gabrielle, and they both stop and stare at each other.

**GABRIELLE**

*(blinking)*  
Wow.

Xena's freight train of indignation realizes it hasn't been invented yet and disappears in a flash. Xena's pace goes from irritated stomping to seductive swagger as she reacts to Gabrielle's admiration and crosses to her.

**XENA**

Ahh. Flattery will get you  
everywhere. So you like this, huh?



Gabrielle reaches up and touches one curl of dark hair that has escaped the confines of the silver tiara on Xena's head.



**GABRIELLE**

Yes, I do.

Xena steps to one side, then circles Gabrielle, examining her new outfit. She stops behind her, then grins and continues around again to face Gabrielle. Gabrielle remains still, though her eyes follow Xena as much as possible.

**XENA**

Likewise.

Xena touches the tiny flower garlands threaded through Gabrielle's hair. Then she takes Gabrielle's hand, and they twirl each other around, ending facing each other again, both hands clasped. Gabrielle looks up at Xena and smiles.

**GABRIELLE**

You are beautiful.

Xena is briefly silent, then smiles back.

**XENA**

First time you told me that,  
you were stoned off  
your mind on henbane.



**GABRIELLE**

*(chuckling warmly)*

Yeah, but I meant it.

Xena's expression is fond, yet slightly wistful as she remembers.

**XENA**

I know.

Gabrielle pulls Xena closer and they kiss. Time passes. Candles burn lower. A few stars come out.

The door bursts open, and Escobar enters, flanked by several others. They all stop short on seeing Xena and Gabrielle.

After a moment, Xena and Gabrielle finish what they're doing, and they look up at the intruders.

**WOMAN**

Oh. That kind of pair.

Xena frowns. Gabrielle smirks.

**GABRIELLE**

Were you expecting fruit?

**XENA**  
(under her breath)  
Fruit?

Escobar waves a hand at the woman to shush her.

**ESCOBAR**  
Never mind all that. The townsfolk  
have assembled in the hall.  
Xena, Gabrielle, are you ready?

**XENA**  
You have no idea how ready I am.



Gabrielle hastily muffles a laugh. They follow Escobar out of the room.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. TOWN HALL - NIGHT**

In the big hall, the entire town has apparently assembled. The room is very crowded - every seat is taken, and there are many people standing against the walls.

This is evidently an Occasion. The men and women are dressed in their best clothes, whatever those happen to be. Some of the people are very obviously well off. Others are less so, and most of those who are less so are standing against the walls.

Down the center of the room, a path has been cleared, and a thick carpet lain down. It leads up to the platform, and it has been lined with ceremonial flowers.

The two wide doors in the back open and Escobar enters. He waits for everyone to turn and look at him before he speaks.

**ESCOBAR**  
My fellow citizens, I present  
to you our queen for this  
year's Judging Day.

Xena and Gabrielle enter. The crowd falls silent as they walk up the carpet. Xena keeps her eyes forward, but Gabrielle looks around her, catching the eyes of various onlookers.

As Xena and Gabrielle walk forward, the crowd surges closer to them to get a better look.

**MAN**  
Welcome!

**WOMAN**  
Oh! How lovely!

Malcos is standing at the very front, in a place of obvious privilege. He edges forward, and steps on the carpet itself, blocking Xena's passage briefly.

**MALCOS**

Our town is grateful for your offer of service, Queen Xena.

Xena's face twitches at the sound of that.

**XENA**

Don't mention it.



**MALCOS**

I, myself, am looking forward to your judgments.

Gabrielle notices that several of the people near the rear of the room are trying to push their way forward. The more richly dressed townsfolk in the front shove them back, glaring at them.

**XENA**

Thanks.

Malcos steps back and Xena keeps walking.

Instead of following Xena up onto the platform, Gabrielle stops and stands near the edge of the step while Xena continues on. Escobar hurries to keep up with her.

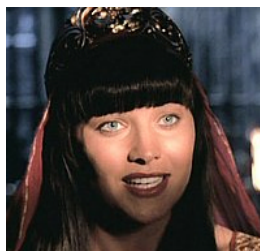
**ESCOBAR**

According to our custom, tomorrow everyone who has a complaint against his or her neighbor will bring it here, for Queen Xena to judge.

The crowd, at least the ones in the front applaud. Xena regards them with wary bemusement.

**XENA**

You might want to save that until you hear my decisions.





The crowd laughs, uncertainly.

**ESCOBAR**

*(hastily)*

I am sure whatever they are,  
will be a relief for all. Many  
have issues that have been  
awaiting decision all year.

**MAN IN FAR REAR**

Yes! It's about time.

The man's neighbors hush him. He is shoved back. Xena notices, and her eyebrows go up. Malcos steps forward to distract her.

**MALCOS**

To welcome you, Queen Xena,  
I have prepared a feast in your  
honor. Please join us!

Another round of applause. Escobar looks uncertainly at Malcos, but shrugs.

**ESCOBAR**

Many wish to see  
the queen, Malcos.

**MALCOS**

*(smoothly)*

Of course! All are welcome.

Escobar seems mollified by this. The crowd starts to stir around and a buzz of conversation arises.

**ESCOBAR**

Well, all right. We can continue  
over there... our guests must be  
hungry. Excellent suggestion, Malcos!  
Thank you for your hospitality!

**MALCOS**

*(bowing)*

It is my great pleasure. Queen Xena,  
will you come with me, please?

Malcos holds out his arm. Xena studies him up and down, then she exchanges a look with Gabrielle before she accepts the offer.

**XENA**

Sure. Sounds great.  
Gabrielle, why don't you....

**GABRIELLE**

Catch up with you later. Go on.

Malcos leads Xena out, smirking. The crowd starts to follow, the better dressed clustering around them as Escobar pushes to get in front himself. Gabrielle lets the crowd move past her, observing that the poorer dressed townsfolk stay behind.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

*(softly)*

Sooomethings smells fishy here.

*(looking around)*

And I doubt it's his banquet.



**CUT TO:**

**EXT. TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT**

The crowd moves across the square, splitting to avoid the well as they head towards Malco's residence. It is above his mercantile, and already the windows are lit with torches, and the sound of music can be heard.

**MALCOS**

I am sure our customs  
seem strange to you.

**XENA**

Waiting a year to get an answer  
on something? Yeah. Not my style.

**MALCOS**

No, I would have guessed that.

Xena looks at him. Malcos smiles, but does not continue.

**XENA**

Don't you find it... frustrating?

**ESCOBAR**

*(laughing)*

Oh, well. Not really....

**WOMAN**

Yes!

Everyone looks at her in horror.

**WOMAN**

*(cont'd)*

I'm not afraid to tell the truth! Yes,  
it's maddening! My quarrel with  
Amaina over the dress she made  
for me has gone the entire year!

**ESCOBAR**

Seetha....

**MAN**

It starts off well, Queen Xena. Don't  
let Seetha's impatience fool you.  
After the cleansing, life is kind  
and wonderful for many months.

**MALCOS**

Until cases start to pile up.

Xena nods.

**MAN**

And then as the time comes  
closer and closer, things get....

**ESCOBAR**

*(sighing)*

Frustrating.

**XENA**

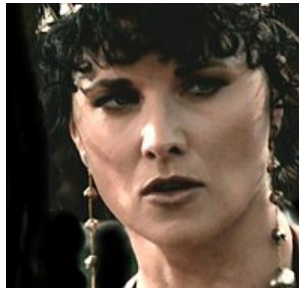
I see.

**MAN**

Until by this time of the year,  
all are at the edge of... of....

**XENA**

Homicide?



**MALCOS**

Certainly not! We are  
not a violent people!

The crowd murmurs agreement, seeming a bit embarrassed. They walk up the steps to Malco's hall, and as they reach it, the doors are flung open and they are greeted with bright light, music, and the smell of a banquet.

**XENA**

So, none of these  
cases are violent?

**MALCOS**

No no no.

**XENA**

No fights, no knock  
downs, no broken noses?

**ESCOBAR**

Absolutely not. We do not  
believe in using force to  
solve our problems.

Xena looks at Escobar, then she looks at Malcos.

**XENA**

Boy, did you pick  
the wrong queen.

Xena shakes her head, and walks inside, heading for the bar. Escobar and Malcos look at each other in shock.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. TOWN HALL - NIGHT - SAME TIME**

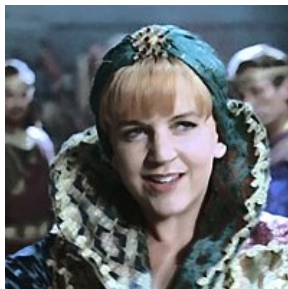
Gabrielle remains where she is, taking a seat on the edge of the platform. The poorer residents realize she is there, and they slowly start to gather around her, seeming a little suspicious.

**MAN**

Aren't you going to  
join your friend?

**GABRIELLE**

Eventually. I was just trying to  
figure out how this all works.



**WOMAN**

*(snorting)*

So you can laugh at us?

Gabrielle looks at her.

**GABRIELLE**

No... I mean, sure, the  
custom's a little odd, but....

**MAN**

Custom? Yeah, right. We were hoping  
maybe this year.... Escobar made so  
many promises when he was trying  
to become the chief seeker....

Gabrielle's ears perk up.

**GABRIELLE**

Okay. Then why don't  
you tell me about it?

**MAN**

*(suspiciously)*

Why should we? You're just one  
more in a long series of their pawns.

Gabrielle stands up and walks over to him. She is shorter than he is, but as she faces him,  
something changes slightly in her stance, and whatever that something is, makes the man back off  
a step.

**GABRIELLE**

*(forcefully)*

I'm no one's pawn.

*(pausing)*

If there's something going on here, and  
you want our help, then start talking.



There is fear in the room, and Gabrielle is aware of it.

**WOMAN**

Why should we trust you?  
We can't pay you anything.

**GABRIELLE**

Try me. What have you got to lose?

The small group looks at each other uncertainly. Gabrielle merely stands and waits. She folds her  
arms.

She raises her eyebrows.

She waits.

Finally, the men and women cluster around her, hiding her from view, and all start to talk at once.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. ROYAL RESIDENCE - VERY LATE NIGHT**

Gabrielle sits on the bed in a nightshirt, rubbing her toes. She looks up as the door slams open and Xena stalks in, looking like a lovely, if highly dangerous wild peacock. Xena kicks off her shoes and almost nails the wall with them, then impatiently takes off the gown, leaving her almost naked by the time she gets to the bed.

**GABRIELLE**

Hey.... Nice of you to  
bring me back dessert.

Xena stops, and cocks her head, looking at Gabrielle in puzzlement.

**XENA**

What?



Gabrielle looks her up and down, and smiles. Xena clucks her tongue and sits down next to Gabrielle, raking her fingers through her hair and releasing it to fall around her shoulders as she removes the tiara and twirls it around her finger.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

I've had more entertaining  
evenings mucking stables.  
Where did you disappear to?

**GABRIELLE**

I went to the real town, so I  
could talk to the real people there.

Xena regards her with wry surprise.

**XENA**

That bad, eh?

**GABRIELLE**

It's a crock, Xena. The whole thing's  
a farce. The only reason they do this  
is to legitimize the rich people taking  
everything from the poor ones, and  
not having to get in trouble for it.

Xena tosses the tiara and rings a candle with it. She leans on her hands and frowns.

**XENA**

How? The judge is supposed to be impartial.

**GABRIELLE**

Apparently they haven't found one that's impartial to dinars yet.

*(pausing)*

The poor folks can't prove it, but they say every time they try to bring up a case against the town leaders, they get ruled against.



**XENA**

Maybe they don't have a good case.

**GABRIELLE**

Maybe horses talk, and we just don't hear them.

Xena chuckles softly under her breath.

**XENA**

What's the point then, Gabrielle?  
Why don't the poor people just leave? Nothing's holding them here.

**GABRIELLE**

*(quietly)*

It's their home. It's not easy to just turn your back on that and walk away.

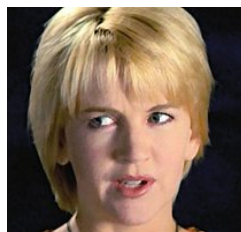
They both fall briefly silent. Then Xena gets up and exchanges her underthings for the nightshirt Gabrielle has left lying over the back of a chair.

**XENA**

Gonna be a long day tomorrow.

**GABRIELLE**

For them or us?



Xena returns to the bed and lies down on it, stretching out on her side and propping her head up on one hand.

**XENA**

Well, they're not gonna  
pay \*me\* off, Gabrielle.

Gabrielle lies down next to her, in the same posture.

**GABRIELLE**

This could get very complicated.  
*(smiling)*

But at least it won't be  
dangerous, for a change.

Xena reaches over and hooks the front of Gabrielle's shirt, pulling her closer.

**XENA**

Not for us, you mean.

They kiss, and Xena reaches up to release the curtains as they embrace. The curtains drop, obscuring them from view.

**CUT TO:**

## **EXT. ROYAL RESIDENCE - LATE NIGHT**

Two shadowy figures stand outside, watching the window above them. A very soft echo of Xena and Gabrielle's laughter drifts down to them.

**SHADOW 1**

This one could be trouble.

**SHADOW 2**

Damn that Escobar. I knew  
we shouldn't have picked him.

**SHADOW 1**

Let's meet with the rest.  
We have to have a plan.

The two shadowy figures skulk away.

**FADE OUT.**

**END OF ACT TWO**



## ACT THREE

FADE IN:

### INT. ROYAL RESIDENCE - MORNING

Xena is sitting next to the window at a small table, with what appears to be one of the sheets from the bed artfully wrapped around her body.

The curtains on the bed are still down. On the table before Xena is a silver pitcher and a pottery cup full of whatever is in the pitcher. There is also a platter of little biscuits, unidentifiable colorful tidbits she has carefully avoided eating, and what looks like the remains of a two thousand year old Greek version of a sticky bun.

There is a knock on the door. Xena looks up from her sticky bun, and licks her fingers neatly.

**XENA**

Yeah?

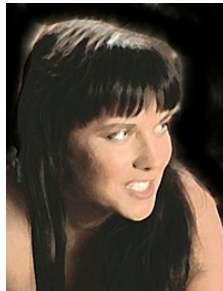
The door opens, and one of the men assigned to her as a servant enters.

**SERVANT**

Good morning, your majesty!

**XENA**

Keep your voice down,  
or it won't be.



**SERVANT**

*(whispering)*

Lord Malcos wishes to see you.

Xena takes a sip from the cup.

**XENA**

I get it. Everyone gets to  
play royal, is that it?

The man shrugs.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

All right. Send him in.

She waits for door to close.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

Bet I know what he wants.

The door opens again, and Malcos enters. He walks over to the table Xena is at, and bows, then realizes Xena is dressed in only a sheet and nearly completes the motion landing on his head.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

*(archly)*

Yees?

Malcos recovers.

**MALCOS**

Your majesty, I would like to  
take this opportunity to  
discuss my case with you.

**XENA**

Thought court didn't  
start until after lunch.

Malcos looks around.

**MALCOS**

Well, it doesn't. Ah....  
Where is your lovely consort?

**XENA**

Lovely co..oh.

She glances at the bed.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

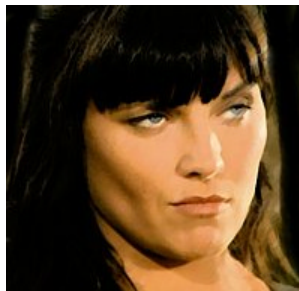
Sleeping.

**MALCOS**

Ah. Yes, it was a  
long day yesterday.

**XENA**

Longer night. Some reason  
this can't wait for the court?



Malcos clears his throat.

**MALCOS**

May I sit down?

Xena considers.

**XENA**

Sure.

Malcos takes a seat across the table from Xena.

**MALCOS**

You seem to be a  
woman of the world.

Xena's eyebrows hike up.

**MALCOS**

*(cont'd)*

I would like to propose a settlement  
for my case. One that would be  
advantageous to both of us.

**XENA**

To you and the other guy?

Malcos frowns.

**MALCOS**

To you and myself,  
your majesty.

Xena gets up and strolls around the room. It is a fifty-fifty chance whether or not the sheet will stay in place and Malcos starts edging forward to the front of his chair, clutching the arms as he is wondering about his luck today.

Xena turns and faces him. The front of her sheet falls off her shoulder. She catches it and tosses it back and he twitches in his seat.

**XENA**

You saying you want  
to cut a deal?



**MALCOS**

*(relieved)*

Yes. The way I see it....

Malcos gets up and also paces. They circle each other slowly.

**MALCOS**

*(cont'd)*

I seek a quick resolution  
to my problem....

**XENA**

You might want to  
move to another city.

**MALCOS**

*(obliviously)*

And you look like the kind of  
woman who would appreciate a  
sound financial transaction.  
My offer is five hundred dinars.

Xena puts her hands on her hips.

**XENA**

Five hundred dinars?

**MALCOS**

*(smiling)*

Think of all the lovely things you  
could buy your... friend....???

Xena walks over to him. She grabs him firmly by the collar, and turns him around. Then she walks him on his tip toes to the door, opens the door, shoves him through, and kicks him in the butt as he goes. He flies out. Xena slams the door shut. As she does so, her sheet falls to the floor.

**GABRIELLE**

*(sleepy)*

Ugly.

Xena turns around to face her. She thinks Gabrielle is talking about her. Gabrielle's head is sticking out from between the curtains.

**XENA**

Excuse ME?

**GABRIELLE**

*(clearing throat)*

I said things could get ugly.  
Can you believe that offer?

Xena snorts, and goes to the bed, sprawling on top of it next to Gabrielle.

**XENA**

Yeah. Do I look that cheap?

Gabrielle looks at her.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

Don't say it if you  
want to live, bard.



**GABRIELLE**

Well, he is the big shot merchant.  
I'm sure the rest of the people  
aren't like that, Xena.

There is a knock on the door. Xena and Gabrielle exchange looks. There is another knock, this time slightly different, and on the other door to the room. Gabrielle pulls her head back inside the curtains and shuts them. Xena crosses her arms. There are more knocks. Even more knocks follow. Xena gets up and stalks towards the door.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. ROYAL RESIDENCE - SMALL GARDEN OUTSIDE SLEEPING QUARTERS**

Xena is sitting in the garden. The garden is a lovely peaceful place, with chirping birds and winding ivy everywhere. In the center, there is a reflecting pool with small goldfish, and a bench, which Xena is seated on.

**XENA**

Son of a Bacchae.

A knock comes at the garden gate. Xena whirls and picks up a rock, cocking her arm back and waiting. The gate opens slowly, and she chucks the rock.

It is Gabrielle who is entering. Xena starts to yell a warning, but Gabrielle evades the rock easily, as though she knew where it was going to be, and lets it fly past her out the gate. A yell of pain is heard. Gabrielle closes the gate and enters.

**GABRIELLE**

Xena, these people  
are in real trouble.



**XENA**

They sure are going to be.

Gabrielle comes over and they both sit down on the bench.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

I've had every damn man,  
woman and child in this town  
trying to buy me off and  
it's not even lunchtime.

**GABRIELLE**

Tell me about it. I don't  
want to mention what I've  
been offered to influence  
you. I could retire on it.

Xena looks at Gabrielle, reacting to the last statement.

**XENA**

You considering it?

Gabrielle is highly insulted, thinking Xena is referring to the first statement.

**GABRIELLE**

What? Xena, I don't think I've  
gotten *\*that\** jaded even with  
hanging around you for this long.

Xena looks at Gabrielle in surprise.

**XENA**

What? Hades, Gabrielle,  
even I've thought about it.

Gabrielle opens her mouth to shoot back a zinger, then pauses.

**GABRIELLE**

Wait a minute. What  
are we talking about?

**XENA**

WHAT? What do you  
think we're talking about?



**GABRIELLE**

Taking bribes!

Xena appears perplexed, then she shakes her head and covers her eyes with one hand.

**XENA**

Never mind. Let's just go get  
this judging over with. I'm gonna  
tell every one of these rich  
bastards they lost, and have  
'em give their damn bribes  
to the guys they cheated.

Xena starts to get up. Gabrielle grabs her by the back of the dress and holds on. Xena stops.

**GABRIELLE**

Wait a minute.

Xena turns and does a hands-on-hips pose, particularly effective since she is dressed in a gown with a very full skirt.

**XENA**

What?

**GABRIELLE**

Xena, it's too easy.

**XENA**

Exactly.

**GABRIELLE**

No... I mean, yes. That will fix  
the problem this year, but  
what about next year?

**XENA**

We won't be here.

**GABRIELLE**

Xena.

Xena lets out an exasperated sigh, but she turns and sits down next to Gabrielle again.

**XENA**

Okay. You got  
a better idea?

Gabrielle leans back on her hands, and crosses her ankles. She looks around the garden.

**GABRIELLE**

You know, it's  
really pretty here.

Xena rolls her eyes.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

It's amazing how much effort these people put into this sham.



Xena grunts and shrugs her shoulders.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

We should find ways to solve the cases that make people change their thinking, Xena. Let's see if we can make a lasting difference to them.

**XENA**

Gabrielle, they're a pack of sniveling jackasses. They don't deserve to have us make a difference.

Gabrielle makes a face, conceding the point.

**GABRIELLE**

Well, no, but I'd feel better if we tried, at least.

**XENA**

It'd be faster if I just kicked their ass.



**GABRIELLE**

I know. It'd be faster if \*I\* kicked their asses. I'd like to walk a different path with this one.



Xena is quiet for a minute, as she thinks about Gabrielle's words.

**XENA**

(nodding)

All right. C'mon. Let's go  
hold court, consort.

Gabrielle gets up and joins her.

**GABRIELLE**

I thought court started  
after lunch?

**XENA**

It's my court, and I'll  
start it when I want to.

They leave the garden, slamming the gate shut behind them.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. INN - DAY**

Malcos is sitting at a table with two other men. It is the same men from the previous night.

**MALCOS**

I tell you, she'll ruin us. Ruin!

**SHADOW 1**

So what are you gonna do  
about it? Or are you all  
talk, like the rest of em?

**SHADOW 2**

It's your fortune, Malcos. If  
you lose that case, you lose  
it all. That kid'll take your  
store, your lands....

**MALCOS**

Shut up. Don't you  
think I know that?  
(*looking around*)  
Here.

He puts bag on table.

**MALCOS**

(*cont'd*)

I know I can trust you to  
take care of it for me.

Shadow 1 takes the bag and hefts it. He nods, and tosses it to Shadow 2.

**SHADOW 1**

Don't you worry. We'll take  
care of her, all right.

**MALCOS**

Both of them! No cheating me!

**SHADOW 2**

Yeah, yeah, that's what  
he meant. C'mon, let's go.

The two men leave. Malcos looks around at the almost empty inn, checking to see if they were overheard. The door opens, and Escobar enters.

**ESCOBAR**

There you are! Hurry and get  
ready. The court is starting!

**MALCOS**

What? It's too early!

**ESCOBAR**

Tell her Majesty that.

Escobar leaves, slamming the door behind him. Malcos gets up and runs after him, cursing.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. TOWN HALL - DAY**

Xena sits up on the judging platform in a large chair. Gabrielle sits next to her. In front of them, the townsfolk are rushing around trying to get the courtroom in order much earlier than they expected.

Two men come running in, with a railing. They put it up between the last bench in the room, and the door, sectioning the room in two.

**XENA**

*(under her breath)*

Wonder what that's for?

**GABRIELLE**

Maybe the people with cases sit,  
and everyone else stands?



Townsfolk begin to file in. As they reach the railing, Escobar either passes them inside the sit down, or points to a spot beyond the rail.

**XENA**

Yeah, maybe you're right.

Gabrielle turns her head and looks at Xena.

**GABRIELLE**

No, I'm not.

Xena is puzzled. She looks back at Gabrielle.

**XENA**

What?

**GABRIELLE**

Thinking of retiring.

Xena stares at Gabrielle, then remembers what she's talking about.

**XENA**

Ah. Yeah. Good.

*(nodding)*

Good.

**GABRIELLE**

Mm.

The room is filling up. The townsfolk shuffle into place, some bearing evidence of very hasty dress. They all look a bit disgruntled. One of the men near the front was one of the ones who had tried to buy off Xena and Gabrielle, and now he sits down in the front, in a frilly shirt, full of indignation.

**MAN**

Escobar, this is outrageous!

How can you change the  
tradition at such late notice!

Escobar grimaces, and glances up at Xena. Xena smiles charmingly at him. Behind the platform, two cloaked figures can be seen creeping up on the judges.

**ESCOBAR**

Now, now. A little change is always  
good for the soul, Essen. Besides,  
maybe we can get done early!

Essen snorts. Malcos enters and sweeps through the crowd, pushing others aside. Xena's eyes narrow, especially when he shoves a young child to the ground in his haste to get to the front.

**GABRIELLE**

Xena?

**XENA**

Yeah?

**GABRIELLE**

Remember that whole  
thing about ass kicking?

**XENA**  
(sighing)  
Yes.



**GABRIELLE**  
You know that old saying  
about an exception that  
proves the rule true?

Xena chuckles. Behind them, the cloaked figures get closer and closer. There is a lot of noise in the room, scraping benches and talking. No one seems to notice the two men crawling on the floor. They are hidden behind the judging bench.

**XENA**  
(loudly)  
All right. This is how this is gonna  
work, so listen close cause I don't  
want to say it more than once.

Gabrielle smiles, and pats Xena's hand.

**GABRIELLE**  
You have such a  
regal air sometimes.



The shadows creep closer.

**XENA**  
You...

She points at Escobar.

**XENA**  
(cont'd)  
Call up everyone with a  
complaint, and read  
what the gripe is.

**ESCOBAR**

But... but.... Your majesty, it is customary for the plaintiff and the defendant to come up and....

**XENA**

And explain why I should vote for them?

**ESCOBAR**

Yes.

**XENA**

Forget it. Start reading. Once you stop, I'll let you know what my choice is.

**ESCOBAR**

But.... Don't you want to hear their sides of it?

**XENA**

No.

**GABRIELLE**

*(softly)*  
Xena.

Xena looks at her. Gabrielle gives Xena a poke in the ribs.

**XENA**

Oh, all right. But they better keep it short.  
*(pausing)*  
I like short things.

Gabrielle grins and gives her another poke. Behind them, unseen by the crowd, the cloaked men rise up in their knees. They are holding a huge crossbow with two bolts in it together. Each bolt is pointed in a slightly different direction, obviously meant for Xena and Gabrielle.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

So let's get started.



The crowd is not happy. Or at least, half the crowd is not happy. The other half, the poor half most of whom are stuck behind the bar seem a little excited.

**MALCOS**

*(dourly)*

Yes, let's get started.

The men in the shadows cock their crossbow and raise it.

**FADE OUT.**

**END OF ACT THREE**

## ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

### INT. TOWN HALL - DAY

Escobar stands in front of Xena's judging throne, holding a scroll. He unrolls it, but it is lacking a scroll holder on either end, so it rolls back. He unrolls it, it rolls back.

**ESCOBAR**

The first case....

He unrolls the scroll. It rolls back.

**ESCOBAR**

*(cont'd)*

The first case today will be....

He unrolls the scroll, it rolls back. Xena looks around the room, apparently searching for something. Gabrielle digs in the pouch at her side, also looking.

**GABRIELLE**

Darn it, I thought I had....



The cloaked men fire their crossbows. Xena stands and catches them both out of mid air without twitching an eyebrow. She continues down the steps and grabs the scroll from Escobar.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

Oh yeah, those'll work.

Xena ties the scroll to the arrows, and hands it back to Escobar. She turns and goes back to her throne and sits down, arranging her skirts with a sharp motion.

Escobar stares at the arrows, then at Xena. Behind the platform, the two cloaked men crane their necks to see what happened. They look at each other in bewilderment.

**ESCOBAR**

T... thank you, your Majesty.

The cloaked men put down their crossbows, and huddle together, whispering.

**XENA**

Get reading.

**ESCOBAR**

Of course. Ahem. The first case today will be Jason the herdsman, who is charging Koch the miller of cutting down trees in his pasture and killing two sheep.

A man in the front stands up. He is very well dressed. Another man tries to push through from the back, but he is stopped at the rail.

Xena points at the first man. He was one of the men who tried to bribe her.

**XENA**

Who are you?



**MAN**

I am Koch. I am innocent, your majesty. This is what happened, I was just passing through that miserable bastard's meadow, and I ruined a good pair of boots doing it! Those sheep! They stink! But....

**XENA**

*(loudly)*

Shut up!

She points at the second man.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

Who are you?

**GABRIELLE**

*(whispering)*

Ten dinars it's Jason.

**MAN**

I am Jason, your majesty!

Jason stops speaking and waits. Xena smiles at him. She motions him forward.

**XENA**

Let him up here.



Grudgingly, the guard lets Jason enter. He walks up to the platform. His boots are covered with what you would expect a shepherd's boots to be covered with, and he smells like someone who spends a lot of time among sheep.

**GABRIELLE**

Ah.

**XENA**

*(behind her hand)*

Homesick?

Gabrielle just gives her a look.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

*(to Jason)*

Tell me what happened.

**KOCH**

But your majesty!

I wasn't finished!

Xena glares at him.

**JASON**

It was cold. I had my herd on one side of the meadow near the trees, out of the wind.

Xena nods.

**KOCH**

That's a lie!

**XENA**

*(pointing at Koch)*

Shut up or I'll rip your tongue out.

Everyone stares at Xena. Gabrielle scratches the bridge of her nose.

**GABRIELLE**

*(clearing throat)*

She's not as kind and gentle as she looks.



Xena was about to speak. She stops and gives Gabrielle a look.

**XENA**

Go on.

**JASON**

The miller started to cut the trees down, I told him to wait, but he refused. He cut down a tree, and it fell on my herd.

Two sheep were killed.

Jason points at Koch.

**JASON**

*(cont'd)*

He laughed.

**KOCH**

Lies! Who can believe a shepherd!

**GABRIELLE**

How much were the sheep worth?

**JASON**

*(encouraged)*

Fifty dinar apiece.

**KOCH**

Lies! I was no where near that meadow!

**XENA**

*(pointing at Koch)*

Thought you said you were.  
Thought you ruined your boots.

Caught by his own words, Koch sits down fuming. Xena and Gabrielle lean together briefly and whisper.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

Probably didn't kill the damn sheep on purpose.



**GABRIELLE**

And sheep aren't worth fifty dinars.

Xena considers. Behind her, the two cloaked figures reappear, this time holding poison darts.

**XENA**

All right. You....

She points at Koch again.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

... were responsible for taking  
away part of this man's herd.

**KOCH**

But...!!

**XENA**

QUIET!

**GABRIELLE**

*(pointing at Jason)*

And unless your sheep have  
golden fleeces, I think fifty  
dinars is a little much.

The shepherd grins, and shrugs.

**JASON**

Didn't think I'd get a hearing.  
Thought I'd try anyhow.

**XENA**

*(pointing to Koch)*

Here's what you're gonna do.  
You're gonna give him  
firewood all winter. Got me?

Jason looks surprised, thinks, then nods. Koch opens his mouth to yell, then stops, thinks, and also nods.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

Out! Next!

Escobar goes to his scroll. The crowd starts to chatter. The cloaked figures crawl forward, and raise their blowpipes.

**FADE TO:**

**INT. TOWN HALL - DAY - BEHIND THE THRONE PLATFORM**

We see a view from the cloaked figures POV. We can see Xena's shoulders and head, and the back of Gabrielle's arm. One of the cloaked figures lowers his hand.

**SHADOW 1**

Got a good angle?

**SHADOW 2**

On the big one, yeah.  
Not the other one.

**SHADOW 1**

She's too short!

**FADE TO:**

**INT. TOWN HALL - DAY - JUDGING PLATFORM**

Gabrielle looks at Xena.

**GABRIELLE**

Did you just make a short joke?



Xena frowns.

**XENA**

Me? No!  
(*looking at Escobar*)  
Well?

Escobar has several small pieces of parchment he is juggling.

**ESCOBAR**

A moment, Majesty. This  
case is very complex, and  
I have many notes...

Escobar drops the notes. He kneels down to pick them up. Xena starts to twitch. Gabrielle notices. She pats Xena's hand and gets up, walking over to an ornate piece of carved wood sticking up on one side of the platform.

**ESCOBAR**

(*cont'd*)

If I can just get these  
arranged we can begin.

**FADE TO:**

**INT. TOWN HALL - DAY - BEHIND THE THRONE PLATFORM**

The cloaked figures get ready.

**SHADOW 1**

That's better. Got her now.

**SHADOW 2**

I got the big one. Ready?

One... Two....

**SHADOW 1**

Wait. Let's use two each.

Make really sure.

They load the blowpipes with two darts, then inhale and put the pipes to their mouths, aiming right at Xena and Gabrielle.

**FADE TO:**

### **INT. TOWN HALL DAY - JUDGING PLATFORM**

Gabrielle thumps the board with one hand and it comes free. She picks it up and examines it, then turns to Xena.

**GABRIELLE**

Got any nails?

Xena studied her hands, then extends them.

**XENA**

Only these.

Gabrielle walks back over with the board anyway. Xena gets up as she arrives, and reaches her hand out for the board.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

Escobar, get up here.



Escobar hurries to join them, but trips as he gets to the platform, scattering the bits of parchment everywhere. Gabrielle tosses the board to Xena as she kneels to help pick them up.

As the board passes between them, Xena steps forward in front of it and the four darts embed themselves in the wood with a series of tiny 'thwoks'. Xena grabs it and keeps moving, handing the board to Gabrielle as she straightens up.

**GABRIELLE**

Oh... hey, thanks.

Great idea.

Gabrielle pins the notes to the board with the darts, then hands it over to Escobar. Gabrielle dusts her hands off and stands up. She and Xena walk back and sit down. Escobar holds the board up and starts to read.

**FADE TO:**

**INT. TOWN HALL -DAY - BEHIND THE THRONE PLATFORM**

The two cloaked figures look at each other in consternation.

**SHADOW 1**

All right. Now I'm really mad.

**SHADOW 2**

Yeah! We gotta get nasty now.

The two crawl off.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. INN BANQUET HALL - DAY - LATER**

The room has been set up to serve a lavish lunch. Well dressed townspeople are standing around, all speaking with animated gestures. It is obvious they are not entirely happy.

Xena and Gabrielle enter. The room goes silent. Everyone glares at them. Xena and Gabrielle stroll across the room, pretty much oblivious to the murderous looks.

**GABRIELLE**

I think we did pretty good,  
don't you? Five down, and  
how many to go?

Xena appears pleased.

**XENA**

Yeah. That one guy with five  
people accusing him of cheating  
them pissed me off though.

**GABRIELLE**

I think he got that point after you  
told him to let them each go into  
his store for a quarter candlemark  
and take whatever they wanted.



Xena chuckles.

**XENA**

I thought that was pretty lenient.

They both step over a rope stretched across the floor. As they continue walking, a trap is sprung and the rope turns into a lasso that rapidly contracts around their legs.

Xena and Gabrielle step out of the closing loop just as it reaches them and continue up a low step to a table set for them. They take seats on the two big chairs. The rope collapses together and flies up in to the air, slamming into a set of three pitchforks lashed together overhead.

**GABRIELLE**

I think the tough cases are  
after lunch. That's when  
Maltos' problem comes up.

They are seated at a square table. There are four other chairs present. Reluctantly, Maltos, Escobar, and two others climb up to join them and sit down. They all appear nervous.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

So, how are we doing so far?

All four stare at her.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

Thanks. We thought so too.

Servers enter with trays. One holds a tray with two sets of dishes, obviously meant for Xena and Gabrielle. The other tray has dishes for the rest of the table. The two servers approach and we realize it is the shadowy cloaked figures now dressed in frilly shirts and knickers.

**XENA**

*(to the table)*

Careful what you ask for next time.

The servers start to set the bowls down, but they are interrupted by the door opening. A poorly dressed man in rags and bare feet rushes in and heads for the head table.

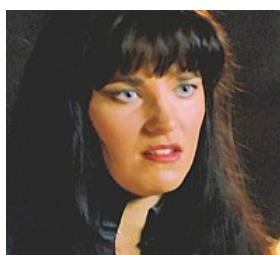
**ESCOBAR**

Guards! Guard!

Men run to intercept the man, but he evades them and throws himself down at Xena's feet. Xena leans over the table to look at him.

**XENA**

Get up.



The man rises on his knees.

**MAN**

Your majesty, please!  
I need your help!

The room stirs nervously.

**ESCOBAR**

Your Majesty, this man  
should not be allowed....

**GABRIELLE**

Good reason for us  
to hear him. Go on!

Gabrielle gets up and turns to the servers, smiling at them as she takes the bowls from the trays and puts them down, setting the two meant for her and Xena in front of Malcos and Escobar. She puts down her and Xena's bowls, then sits back down.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

Sorry. It's been a long  
time since breakfast.



The two servers look at each other in despair.

**MAN**

You seem to want to hear the  
truth. I will tell you the truth about  
what FAKES THESE MEN ARE!

The man points at the table. Everyone freezes in shock. Xena takes a spoonful of soup and slurps it in all that silence.

**XENA**

No sheep dung, Cicero.  
*(pausing)*  
G'wan. Tell us more.

The man smiles. Malcos holds out his bowl of soup.

**MALCOS**

Here, good man. Have some.  
You look like you could use it.



The man takes the bowl, and starts to drink.

FADE TO:

INT. BANQUET HALL - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

The man stops in mid sip.

MAN  
Ew. Lentils.

He puts the bowl down on the ground.

MAN  
(cont'd)  
They give me hives. Now  
your majesty, let me  
begin my story.

The man removes a tattered scroll from his back pocket, and unrolls it. It is covered with tiny writing, front and back, and even sideways in the margins.

MAN  
(cont'd)  
I have all the injustices suffered  
for a decade. I have heard that  
you are a just woman, and I  
am sure you will fix them all!

Xena is caught drinking from the edge of her soup bowl as everyone's head swivels to stare at her. She raises an eyebrow, and spits a bit of root back into the bowl before she sets it down.

XENA  
How many are we  
talking about here?

MAN  
(counting silently)  
Four hundred and twelve.

Everyone gasps.

XENA  
Gonna be tough to do in  
one day. Better read fast.



**MALCOS**

No! I mean.... We cannot  
allow this! It will ruin us!

**XENA**

With any luck.

The townsfolk in the room gasp. Malcos stands up abruptly.

**MALCOS**

No! I won't allow it!  
We must stop him!  
Everyone! With me! Now!!!

Malcos leaps over the table. The rest of the crowd hesitates, then they all jump up and rush the man, holding anything in their hands such as knives, forks, and bowls to beat him with.

**MAN**

Kill him!

**WOMAN**

Tear him apart!

The frustration of the past year now comes rushing out as the crowd goes wild and turns into a raving, insane mob. The man screams, and disappears under a pile of arms, legs, and waving utensils.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. INN BANQUET HALL - DAY - SAME TIME**

Xena and Gabrielle stare at the seething pile, then at each other.

**GABRIELLE**

What was all that  
about being peaceful?

**XENA**

What was all that  
about not kicking ass?



They both stand up and toss aside their napkins, kick over their chairs, and leap over the table towards the fight in perfect unison.

**CUT TO:**

## INT. TOWN HALL - LATE AFTERNOON

Everyone is in the town hall. This time, the prosperous people are behind the railing. They are dirty. They are banged up. They are bruised. Many have torn clothing. It looks like the entire bunch of them have been dragged behind several horses over a very rough road and then pooped on.

The rest of the townsfolk are seated on the benches, hands folded and on their best behavior.

Xena and Gabrielle enter. Their clothing is pristine, and un-creased. They do not have a speck of dust to be seen on either of them. They appear fresh as daisies as they walk to the platform and sit on their thrones together.

**XENA**  
Everybody here?

Everyone nods.

**XENA**  
(*cont'd*)  
Good.

She pauses, and looks at Gabrielle.

**XENA**  
(*cont'd*)  
Gabrielle?

Gabrielle stands up and clears her throat.

**GABRIELLE**  
Okay. It's pretty obvious  
to us that your system  
here is just not working.

Hesitantly, Escobar raises his hand. Gabrielle pauses and looks at him.

**GABRIELLE**  
(*cont'd*)  
Yes?

**ESCOBAR**  
I think we just got carried  
away. It is not usually like this.

The beaten-up townsfolk murmur agreement.

**POOR MAN**  
Yeah, sure. You just  
buy the judge off!

The poor townsfolk start yelling agreement. Xena stands up.

**XENA**  
HOLD IT!

Everyone shuts up as though their tongues were severed.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

Your traditions are hogwash.

Gabrielle clears her throat.

**GABRIELLE**

You've been using traditions  
to mask injustice.



**XENA**

*(under her breath)*

I just said that.

**GABRIELLE**

Letting everything build  
up all year, and then  
fixing it so nothing gets  
resolved. It's not fair.

**MALCOS**

*(unrepentantly)*

It is fair! We paid  
good money for it!

Xena growls. Malcos hunches down and disappears.

**GABRIELLE**

That's not justice. You just  
got your way because  
you have more money.

**ESCOBAR**

Well, that is the way we  
do it here. It's our choice!

The crowd in back agrees. The crowd in front disagrees. Xena stands up and everyone falls silent again. Xena turns and gives Gabrielle a meaningful look. Gabrielle exhales, and shrugs.

**GABRIELLE**

Do you really believe this is  
the best way? Hurting poor  
people so rich people can  
have what they want?

The crowd in back has the grace to look embarrassed. The crowd in front wipes a tear from their eye.

**ESCOBAR**

Um... what other way is there?

Xena and Gabrielle exchange glances. Xena sighs, then she removes a coin from her belt pouch and tosses it to Gabrielle. Gabrielle catches it and winks.

**GABRIELLE**

Glad you asked.  
We've got some ideas.



**FADE OUT.**

**END OF ACT FOUR**

TAG

FADE IN:

INT. ROYAL GARDEN - EVENING

It is near sunset. Xena and Gabrielle sit together on the garden bench, dressed in their usual traveling clothing. Next to them is their gear. The house behind them is dark, and shows evidence of being torn down. There are rich draperies hanging out of the window, and the shutters are missing. Ladders are leaned up against the walls.

GABRIELLE

You know, I was thinking.

XENA

If you say you're wondering  
if we did the right thing, I'm  
gonna beat you over the  
head with those daisies.



Gabrielle laughs.

GABRIELLE

No. I know we did. Convincing  
them to elect a panel of half  
rich people, and half poor is a  
great start to real justice.

Xena leans back on her hands and looks up at the sunset.

XENA

You really think so?

GABRIELLE

You don't?

Xena remains silent.

GABRIELLE

*(cont'd)*

You think they're just going to  
go back to doing what they  
have been, only find someone  
more bribable next year, don't you?

**XENA**

Well....

Gabrielle frowns.

**GABRIELLE**

I think they'll at least try another way. All those people who have been conned won't let them not try.

Xena apparently has her doubts.

**XENA**

Maybe.



Gabrielle links her arm through Xena's, and leans against her.

**GABRIELLE**

You need to have more faith in people, Xena. Sometimes, they can surprise you.

Xena looks at Gabrielle. The words have a deeper meaning suddenly than they appear on the surface. Xena looks into Gabrielle's eyes.

**XENA**

*(seriously)*

Sometimes they don't surprise you at all.

Gabrielle looks down, then she looks back up at Xena.

**GABRIELLE**

No, sometimes they don't.



Xena takes Gabrielle's hand, and they sit watching the sunset together. After a few minutes of silence, Xena leans over and gives Gabrielle a kiss on the cheek.

**XENA**

You were right. Sometimes  
talking through a problem  
is the right choice.

Gabrielle seems charmed.

**GABRIELLE**

You were right too, though.  
Sometimes you just have to kick  
people's ass to get them to listen.

They spend a few more moments watching the sunset. It paints them in a rich golden red light.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

And besides, we can always  
come back next year  
and check up on them.

**XENA**

Mm. Yeah.

Xena rests her head against Gabrielle's.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

And kick their asses  
all over again.

They both chuckle. Gabrielle reaches behind her and pulls out a new leather bag, obviously stuffed with something.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

What's that?

**GABRIELLE**

Our dresses. I rescued  
them from the shredders.

Xena looks intrigued.

**XENA**

Yeah?





**GABRIELLE**

I thought maybe you'd like  
to join me for a little midnight  
picnic and dance tonight.

**XENA**

Hmm....I think I could be  
bribed to show up for that.

**GABRIELLE**

Oh yeah? How much?

They kiss.



**XENA**

Bout that much.

**FADE OUT.**

**DISCLAIMER**

No royal prerogatives were harmed during the filming of this motion  
picture, but Xena still can't get Gabrielle to stop embroidering little  
crowns onto her curiously bland and often dangerously exposed lingerie.