

Xena: Warrior Princess - Subtext Virtual Season 9



Production #V908 – Candlemarks

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TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. WOODS - SUNSET

The young man rides slowly through the thick, forested land, neck craned and eyes squinting in an attempt to find a sign of his quarry before darkness truly falls and forces his delivery to be delayed until morning. That would get him in trouble with the Boss, and trouble is one thing he doesn't particularly relish. This is his third job in as many moons and if he can't manage to keep this one, his new wife will certainly go back to her parents.

He is dressed all in brown; brown shirt, odd brown trousers that end at the knee, brown socks that peek out of short brown boots and a brown cap perched jauntily on his head. His horse is almost the exact same color, as are the bulky saddlebags, except where they are emblazoned with a bold, golden 'USS'.

When the narrow path he is following abruptly widens out into a small clearing, he reins his weary horse to a stop and pulls a small wooden placard from the pocket of his shirt.

MAN

(softly)

Well laid camp. Check.

(beat)

Two people, I think.

At least there are
two bedrolls. Sorta.

(beat)

Yellow horse. Perfect.

Nodding in satisfaction, he slips down from his horse and grabs a scroll from the saddlebag. The camp is empty, but from the looks of the slowly roasting meat over the cheerily blazing fire, its inhabitants are close by.

Closer than he thinks, as he is brought to an abrupt halt by the sudden appearance of a tall, half-clad, beautiful woman holding a razor sharp disc to his throat. He swallows hard and the razor edge gives him a shave he doesn't recall asking for.

The woman stares at him through narrowed, steely blue eyes.



He swallows again. Hard.

MAN
(*cont'd*)
Um.... Delivery?

The woman continues to stare at him as if he's speaking some language other than Greek.

With exaggerated slowness, he raises the scroll and peers at the name written on the attached tag.

MAN
(*cont'd*)
For Miss... um...
Bard, Battling.

He pauses.

MAN
(*cont'd*)
Are you her?



For a second, just a second, he fancies he can see a glint of amusement in those striking eyes, but then brushes it off to an overactive and terrified imagination as the gaze returns to its former inscrutability.

MAN
If you're not her, d... do you
know where I can find her?

This time he is sure he can feel it... a slight lessening of the intense pressure against his throat. A moment later, a young, blonde woman enters, dressed only in a brief towel that barely covers her modesty. Looking upon her loveliness, he blushes hot enough to rival the fire.

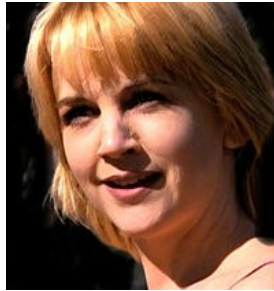
Seeing his reaction, his captor quirks her lips into something he might almost be tempted to call a smile. If he were drunk. And senile.

XENA
(*sing-song*)
Oh, Gabrielle. There's
someone here to see you.

Gabrielle turns and sees Xena and their guest, and offers both a bright smile. She approaches, apparently heedless of the effect she's having on the poor young man.

GABRIELLE

Hello there. Can I help you?



MAN

(squeaky voiced)
Are you...?

He clears his throat and tries again.

MAN

(cont'd)
Are you er....

He looks at the tag again.

MAN

(cont'd)
Bard, Battling?

Gabrielle's gaze switches to Xena. They share an amused look.

GABRIELLE

(to man)
Some people call me that.

XENA

Hey!

Gabrielle smirks.

GABRIELLE

I'm Gabrielle. Can I help you?

The young man blinks, startled out of his haze.

MAN

Er, yes! I have this scroll
for you. Special delivery.

Their hands brush as he hands it over, and the delivery man considers fainting, then considers it again as she bestows upon him another beautiful smile, this time in thanks.

He hears something suspiciously like a growl to his right and startled, he looks in that direction. Only to be sorry he did as Xena's eyes threaten to incinerate him on the spot.

MAN

Oh! Um... if I could just get you
to sign this, Ma'am, to show
you've received it, I'll just...
you know... be on my way.

Gabrielle takes the proffered placard and quill, signs her name with a flourish, and hands them back.

GABRIELLE

Thanks again, and be careful
getting home in the dark okay?

She turns away.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Give the man a tip,
will you, Xena?

He looks at Xena expectantly.

XENA

(growling)

Don't take any wooden dinars.



The look he receives sends the poor man vaulting onto his horse and riding away in a cloud of dust, too fast and too frightened to hear the peals of laughter following him home.

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. CAMP - SAME NIGHT

Gabrielle, still clad in only a towel, sits on the bedroll reading her just delivered scroll. A delighted smile spreads over her face and soon turns into an impish smirk as she continues reading.

Xena, perched on a nearby log and attending to some slices in her leather, looks up at the sound of Gabrielle's evil cackle.

XENA

Share the joke?



Startled, Gabrielle looks up a trifle guiltily and quickly begins re-rolling the scroll.

GABRIELLE

(over-lightly)

Oh, it's...nothing... really.... Just some news from some of my friends back at the Academy.

XENA

(suspiciously)

Sounded like some pretty funny news.

GABRIELLE

Yeah, well you know how we bards are, Xena. One laugh after another.

XENA

(drolly)

Oh yeah, that's you bards all right. A real laugh a minute.

Gabrielle shifts uncomfortably, then quickly looks up at the star-filled sky.

GABRIELLE

Oh my, would you
look at the time?

She gives a very false stretch and yawn.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

I'm really tired. I think I'll
turn in now. G'night, Xena.

XENA

(rumbling)

Gabrielle....

The innocence shining in Gabrielle's eyes could rival a newborn's.

Xena of course isn't buying it for a minute.

GABRIELLE

Yes, Xena?



XENA

I think I just might be in
the mood for some funny
bard news. So, what say you
give me the scroll to read?

She gives Gabrielle a predatory smile.

XENA

(cont'd)

After all, you can't read
it if you're sleeping.

Gabrielle's eyes dart about the encampment. It's obvious she's thinking a mile a minute.

GABRIELLE

No, no, Xena. I don't think you'd find this stuff very funny. Just... bard jokes. You know... 'Why did the bard cross the footpath?', 'How many bards does it take to light a candle?' Stuff like that.

(beat)

Pretty dry for a warrior of the world like yourself.

XENA

Mm.

She slowly rises to her feet.

XENA

(cont'd)

I think a 'warrior of the world' should decide these things for herself, don't you?

Holding the scroll tight against her chest, Gabrielle springs to her feet and darts away.

GABRIELLE

Xena, no, really! Say!
Don't you think your sword could use some sharpening?
It seemed pretty dull when you were hacking into that bandit this afternoon.

Gabrielle darts again as Xena reaches out to grab her. She's just quick enough so that the warrior is left only with a handful of towel, and uses this to her advantage. Faking a trip, she dumps the scroll into the fire and watches as the fragile papyrus is quickly consumed.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Oops! Clumsy me. Heh.
Heh. Oh well, I guess that ends that. I think I'll hit the bedroll now. G'night, Xena.

She clearly expects another chase, and is mildly disappointed when Xena only stands there, looking at her as she slips in between the furs.

XENA

That's all right, Gabrielle. You
can keep your little secrets.



Feeling only slightly relieved, Gabrielle curls up on her side, her eyes drifting slowly closed.

XENA

(cont'd, silky soft)
For now.

Gabrielle's eyes pop back open and remain that way for most of the night.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAKE WITH WATERFALL - SUNRISE

Humming softly to herself, Xena bathes in the shimmering lake as the sun rises over her, turning the water to gold. She eases over to the gently falling water then rises up and ducks her head back, letting the spray of water flow over her.



XENA

Ahhhh.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUSHES AT SHORE OF LAKE - SUNRISE

A youngish man dressed in a garish blue and white uniform and sporting a bag of scrolls around one shoulder peeks through the bushes. He leers at the sight of a beautiful woman bathing in the lake. His eyes get quite a bit wider, nearly popping out of his head when the woman moves to the waterfall and raises half out of the water to rinse her hair.

After a long moment he steps back, allowing the bushes to obscure his view again. He treads with slow, exaggeratedly quiet steps around the shoreline in order to get a better vantage point.

Grin firmly set on his face, he parts the bushes again...

... to see a large fist headed directly for his peeping eye.

All goes black.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMP - SLIGHTLY AFTER SUNRISE

Gabrielle, stretched out on her belly, is disturbed from the embrace of a very nice dream by the feel of water dripping on the back of her head.

GABRIELLE

C'mon, Xena! No fair! I only
got to sleep an hour ago!

No response but the water that continues to drip on her head.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)
Xena!

Drip. PLOP! Drip.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)
Look Xena, if this is to pay me back
for that little incident last night,
you're wasting your time. A bard's
gotta have **some** secrets, you know.

Drip. Drip. PLOP!

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)
Grrr. Xena!

Prying her eyes open, bare feet very close to her head slowly sharpen into focus. Her gaze trails slowly up lovely, long, wet, naked legs, stopping only at the knee because a pair of booted, swinging feet come suddenly into her view.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)
GRAH!

Hopping quickly to her feet, she manages to keep her fur wrapped around her, preserving her modesty.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Who...? What...?

The man before her, held helpfully off the ground by Xena's fist to the back of his shirt, is quite wet and bearing a nicely blackening eye. Grabbing a scroll from his dripping pouch, he thrusts it at her.

MAN

Are you Gabriellethebard?

GABRIELLE

I'm Gabrielle.



MAN

Scroll.

Gabrielle takes the scroll.

GABRIELLE

Thank you.

A wooden placard and drooping, dripping quill is handed to her.

MAN

Sign here.

Gabrielle signs her name and hands the items back to the delivery man.

The items are shoved back in his scroll bag, and his now empty hand is thrust before her again. Gabrielle looks at it a moment, then brightens.

GABRIELLE

Oh! You want a tip.

The man nods, vigorously.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd, smirking)

Don't ever disturb the
Warrior Princess when she's
having her morning bath.

The delivery man screams as he is unceremoniously tossed back in the general direction of his horse.

Xena and Gabrielle share wicked grins.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMP - LATER SAME MORNING

It is a rather leisurely morning. Gabrielle is sitting on their furs reading the scroll. She casts frequent, furtive glances toward Xena, who appears to be focused on sharpening her "dull" sword.

GABRIELLE

Xena?

Xena lifts the sword and turns it this way and that, letting the light catch the blade and checking for nicks.

XENA

Mm?



GABRIELLE

I was wondering....

Rising to her feet, Xena plucks a hair from her head. As it flutters down, she lashes out with her sword, cleaving it directly down the middle. Two strands of identical length hair float down to the ground. Nodding in appreciation, she sits back on the log she's using and uses an oiled cloth to wipe down her weapon.

XENA

Yessss...?

GABRIELLE

Are we headed
anywhere specific?

XENA

Not particularly.

With a smooth, powerful inward jerk of her arms, Xena pops the breast dagger up from her cleavage, catches it by the blade and throws it, pinning a poisonous beetle inches from Gabrielle's unknowing hand, all without looking up from her sword.

Gabrielle looks at the thrumming hilt and swallows.

XENA

(cont'd)

Why do you ask?

GABRIELLE

Oh...

She gives Xena an overly bright smile.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

No reason.

XENA

Mm.

Several moments pass in absolute silence. Gabrielle looks down at the scroll in her lap, her expression pensive. Letting out a heavy sigh, she strengthens her resolve.

GABRIELLE

Xena?

XENA

(drawling)

Yeessss?

GABRIELLE

If we're not heading anywhere specific...I was wondering if we could maybe go to Poteidia?



Looking up from her weapons, Xena stares at Gabrielle, eyebrow raised.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

I know, I know, there's not much
of it left after the warlords attacked,
but... last time I heard from Lila,
some families were looking to rebuild.

She pauses, thinking.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

And orphans! Lots of them!

Xena's eyebrow climbs so high that it's lost beneath her bangs, but Gabrielle is on a roll.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

All those poor, homeless young girls...
having to grow up without ever
once knowing what it's like to be a....

She looks around.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Horn...y... feather.

Had Gabrielle been looking at Xena just then, she would have seen her partner's eyes
narrow down to glittering slits. She doesn't look however, being too wrapped up in a story
of her own devising.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

No one to teach them how to start a
fire or build a shelter. No one to
teach them how to keep from
getting lost in the woods....

Gabrielle lifts a hand to her eyes as if wiping away tears ready to fall.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

...or the Hornyfeather wave....

A moment of solemn silence as Gabrielle slowly demonstrates said "wave".

GABRIELLE

(cont'd, whispering)

In...out...around...up.

In...out...around...up.

Xena's eyes narrow even further. Her thumb rubs slowly over the razor sharpness of her sword.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Or the chant.

Gabrielle clears her throat and tries to sing. Xena winces.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

~Oh hail to thee, Chief Hornyfeather~

~Solemnly we swear~

~We will never....

XENA

(pained)

Gabrielle!



When Gabrielle finally meets Xena's impenetrable gaze, her eyes are huge and pleading like a puppy's.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Please?

After a moment, Xena sighs. She well knows she's being played and royally too, but hasn't yet figured out Gabrielle's angle. She sighs again as Gabrielle adds a trembling lip to her arsenal and her eyes become even larger pools of beseeching green. She can resist that look no more than she can resist breathing.

XENA

(tightly)

Fine. You want to go to
Poteidia? We'll go to Poteidia.

Flipping her sword over her shoulder and into its scabbard, she rises gracefully and turns away to gather her belongings.

Gabrielle pumps a fist in the air.

GABRIELLE

(whispering)

Yes!

Xena turns at the sound, only to find Gabrielle's hand curled behind her shoulder.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd, innocently)

Itch.



With a roll of her eyes and a shake of her head, Xena stuffs her items into her saddlebag and walks over to Argo, leaving a grinning Gabrielle behind.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. HOT TUB - EARLY EVENING

After a hard day's travel, Xena and Gabrielle have settled in for the evening, taking up lodging in a small village and are currently relaxing in the hot tub, side by side.

GABRIELLE

C'mon, Xena! Give it
a try! It's fun!

Gabrielle demonstrates the "Hornyfeather wave".

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

In... out... around... up.
In... out... around... up.

With very exaggerated movements, Xena slides several feet away from her partner as if Gabrielle's contracted something that just might be contagious.

Seeing this, Gabrielle splashes her palm on the water and sighs.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Fine.

(beat, muttering)

Don't know why I
even bother anyway.
You're never any fun.

Xena's eyebrow pops up.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

C'mon... just once is all I ask.
Look at the graceful arm and
wrist movements. If anything,
you might even learn a new
sword move out of it!

She waits a moment off Xena's continued silence.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Just do what I do. Ready?

(beat)

In. *(beat)* Out. *(beat)* Around. *(beat)* U—

On “up”, Xena vaults from the water, landing on the hot tub rim just as the door bursts open and yet another garishly costumed messenger, this one clad in bright orange, steps through the door.

Upon seeing the Warrior Princess naked and with sheets of steaming water slipping down her body, the messenger’s eyes roll back in his head and he performs a perfect faint, landing flat on his back, scroll still gripped tightly in his hand and pointing at the thatched ceiling.

With her back still to Gabrielle, Xena plucks the scroll from the messenger’s clenched fist and looks at it, head cocked. She purses her lips and holds the still closed scroll slightly in front of her.

XENA

In... out... around... up!

Tossed over Xena’s shoulder, the scroll lands neatly in Gabrielle’s hands. With a hidden smirk, Xena squats down and lifts the unconscious messenger into her arms and strides from the hut. Gabrielle looks on after her, eyes wide and unblinking.

CUT TO:

INT. HOT TUB - EARLY EVENING

Alone and still in the hot tub, Gabrielle sighs and breaks the seal to this newest scroll. She reads it over quickly, then again more slowly, eyes narrowing in anger.

GABRIELLE

Oh, for the love of.... Will
you people please make
up your **minds**?!

With a shake of her head and another deep sigh, Gabrielle tosses the scroll over the lip of the hot tub and slouches against the backrest.

GABRIELLE

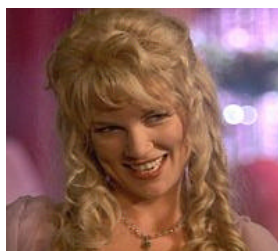
(cont’d, miffed)

Blessed Aphrodite, help me.

A shower of pink sparkles and the goddess in question appears.

APHRODITE

You rang, sweet pea?



With a startled jump, Gabrielle plasters one arm across her chest and the other across her hips.

GABRIELLE

(angrily)

Aphrodite! What are you doing here?!

APHRODITE

Exsqueeze me? **You** called **me**, remember?

GABRIELLE

I didn't.... Just... turn around and give me that towel!

Aphrodite rolls her eyes.

APHRODITE

Puh-lease. I'm the Goddess of Loooove, Gabby. This isn't exactly the first time I've seen that bodacious bod in the buff, ya know.

Gabrielle glares at her. Tendrils of smoke begin to snake from her ears.

APHRODITE

(cont'd)

Party pooper.

With a careless flick of her wrist, more pink sparkles erupt. When Gabrielle looks down, she sees she's now clad in an atrocious orange and pink flowered "Annette Funicello" two piece bathing suit. Aphrodite is now sitting next to her in the water, clad in an identical outfit, complete with matching rubberized bathing cap with orange and pink plastic flowers sticking out of it.



APHRODITE

(cont'd)

Whadda ya think?
Pretty classy, huh?

Gabrielle grits her teeth.

GABRIELLE

Oh yeah. Classy.

APHRODITE

Thanks!

She scoots down until the water touches her chin, stretching out beneath the water and getting comfortable.

APHRODITE

(cont'd)

So, how can the loooooove goddess
help you today? And where's tall,
dark, and delicious anyway?
You two have a tiff?

GABRIELLE

Aphrodite....

APHRODITE

Aww, c'mon, sweet pea! You
can tell me! That's what
friends are for, right?

Gabrielle hangs her head in frustration. Then an idea glimmers and she raises it, smiling.

GABRIELLE

You know? You just might
be able to help after all!

CUT TO:

INT. HOT TUB - SHORT TIME LATER

Still in the hot tub, Aphrodite sits back and laughs.

APHRODITE

Like, mondo fantabulous plan
there, Gabs! I'm on it!

With a little shimmy and a snap of her fingers she disappears.

A beat of silence.

GABRIELLE

Aphrodite!

Aphrodite reappears.

APHRODITE

Yes, oh snappy sweet pea?

GABRIELLE

Aren't you forgetting
a little something?

The love goddess stares blankly. Gabrielle points at her 'costume'. Aphrodite fields the clue and grins.

APHRODITE

Sure you don't wanna keep it?
It's a 'Dite original, ya know.

Gabrielle growls.

APHRODITE

All right, all right! Geez, somebody
woke up on the wrong side of
the love nest this morning!

GABRIELLE

Just... get rid of it, please?
Before Xena comes back?

APHRODITE

Your wish is my command, oh
bardly one. Just don't let leatherbabe
know I took your clothes off, k?

With a snap, the bathing suit disappears. Aphrodite takes a long look and winks.

APHRODITE

(cont'd)
Later!

She disappears for good this time.

Gabrielle sinks slowly under water.

CUT TO:

INT. INN BEDROOM - NIGHT

Propped up in bed, Gabrielle is scribbling away in a scroll. She stops to watch Xena cross the room, and frowns when her partner begins taking some items from their shared saddlebag and stuffs them into her own.

GABRIELLE

Xena?

XENA

Mm?

GABRIELLE

What're you doing?

Xena doesn't look up as she continues to transfer some of her things from one bag to another.

XENA

Figured I'd head on over to Amphipolis
while you were busy doing your
hornywhatever thing with the Poteidian
orphans. See how the tavern's doing.
Check up on Lila and Sara.



Gabrielle pales.

GABRIELLE

No! You can't!

She hesitates at Xena's stare.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

I mean you **can**, technically. I
mean, who's gonna stop
you, right? Heh. Heh.

She clears her throat.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

What I mean is... I need you in
Poteidia. With me. Who's
going to teach those poor
girls how to light a fire?

XENA

You're an Amazon.
You teach 'em.

GABRIELLE

But....

Gabrielle sighs.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

All right. It's like this.... I kind of...
promised the girls that they'd get to
meet you, okay? And they'll be **so**
disappointed if I show up alone.

(beat)

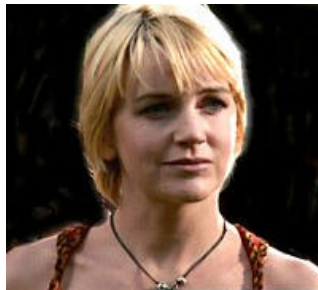
Please? It'll only be for a day or two,
I promise! Then we can both go
to Amphipolis and we can
stay as long as you want!

Xena looks up at her.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Please?



Xena swears to herself that the eye thing isn't going to work again, but after a few moments' exposure to it, she can feel her will begin to crack into tiny little pieces. Quite beyond her conscious motivation, her hands gradually slacken their grip on the saddlebag and she slumps down on the bed in a posture of defeat.

Her eyes, however, are twinkling.

XENA

Fine.

(beat)

But for only **two** days.

GABRIELLE

(happily)

I promise!

XENA

And then we go to Amphipolis.

GABRIELLE

Right! We won't stop for anything!

XENA

And we stay as long as I
want. No complaining.

Gabrielle makes a locking gesture to her lips.

XENA

(cont'd)
Deal.



Gabrielle launches herself across the bed and smothers Xena in a tight and loving hug.

GABRIELLE

Thank you, Xena! You won't
regret it. You'll see.

XENA

(gruffly)

Yeah, yeah. Let's just get some
sleep. We've got some horny
feathers to see tomorrow.

GABRIELLE

Hornyfeathers, Xena. One word.

XENA

Whatever.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

EXT. FOOTPATH - MORNING

Xena and Gabrielle are walking along a moderately shaded footpath. They do not converse, but there is a sense of them genuinely enjoying one another's company. The tension from the night before is absent.

A sparkle of light and Aphrodite appears, her hair slightly mussed and her gown just a bit off center. She looks a beat too long at Gabrielle, which immediately raises Xena's hackles.

APHRODITE

Thank **me** I've found you!
Please, guys, you, like,
gotta come with me right now!

XENA

(suspiciously)
Why?



APHRODITE

I don't have time to argue
with you, leatherbabe.
Just trust me, ok?

Before Xena can say a word otherwise, Aphrodite grabs her wrist and Gabrielle's then vanishes, taking both women with her.

CUT TO:

EXT. TEMPLE OF APHRODITE - SOMEWHERE IN GREECE

Aphrodite, Xena, and Gabrielle materialize just outside of a large, garish temple. It is a true monstrosity, done up in different shades of pink, with a large, pink marble statue of the Goddess herself standing just beside a pink fountain spouting pink water from the mouths of pink cherubs.

Xena curls her lip.

Gabrielle looks distinctly ill.

APHRODITE

Pretty cool, huh?
I designed it myself!

XENA

(sarcastically)
Do tell.

Silence descends upon the group. Gabrielle turns her head to stare at Aphrodite, her eyes widening and narrowing in a sort of SOS for mimes. Aphrodite stares back, unfazed.

GABRIELLE

Well?



APHRODITE

Well what, sweet pea?

Gabrielle grits her teeth.

GABRIELLE

The. Emergency?

APHRODITE

(puzzled)
The emer....

If looks could kill, Gabrielle's would have rendered Aphrodite as lifeless as the statue she stands beside.

APHRODITE

(cont'd)
Ohhhh! The **emergency!**

GABRIELLE

Riiiiight.

APHRODITE

It's right through here.
You guys gotta see this!

Aphrodite walks to the door and flings it open, gesturing to both of them.

APHRODITE

(cont'd)

C'mon! You won't believe it!

Xena and Gabrielle rush past her and into the temple. Then they stop dead and stare.

GABRIELLE

You're right....

I **don't** believe it.

If the outside of the temple was garish, the inside is a true monstrosity of pink; a Mary Kay nightmare come to Technicolor life. It almost hurts the eyes to look at, and Gabrielle spares a second to wonder if what she's seeing is really what she should be seeing.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Is it...**supposed**
to look like this?



Aphrodite turns to look at her.

APHRODITE

Well, duh! Of **course** it is,
Gabs! This is, like,
my secret hideaway.
Totally fab, right?

Xena then turns to Aphrodite, her eyes narrow and glittering.

XENA

All right, Aphrodite, aside from
letting us know you regularly
get your interior decorators
stoned on henbane so they
can create these monstrosities,
what was so important that you
had to bring us here?

Gabrielle looks at the Goddess as well, wondering the same thing... with just a bit of panic.

APHRODITE

Touchy, touchy!
It's over here. Look!

Aphrodite leads them over to a garish standing mirror.

APHRODITE

(cont'd)
See?

XENA

See what? It's a mirror.



APHRODITE

Like, duh, Xena. It's not **just** a mirror. It's a **special** mirror. Hefhy made it for me before you, like... you know....

She makes a slashing gesture across her throat.

APHRODITE

(cont'd)
Anyway... watch!

She turns and speaks to the mirror.

APHRODITE

(cont'd)
Mirror, mirror, standing tall, who's like,
he most fabuloso Goddess of them all?

MIRROR

(in Aphrodite's voice)
Well, duh! Like, **you** are, you
bodacious, bitchin' babe, you!

Xena rolls her eyes. Gabrielle just stares.

APHRODITE

See?

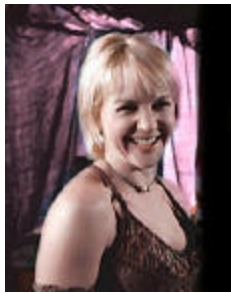
XENA
(miffed)
See **what**?

Aphrodite stamps her foot.

APHRODITE
Gabby, you tell her!

Gabrielle's smile reaches only as far as her lips. Her eyes are hard as diamonds.

GABRIELLE
(sweetly)
Oh no, Aphrodite. I couldn't
possibly tell it as well as **you**.



XENA
Somebody better start
telling me something or this
temple's gonna start looking
even worse than it does now.

She mutters under her breath.

XENA
(cont'd)
If that's even possible.

Aphrodite sighs.

APHRODITE
Can't you see?
They broke it!

XENA
Broke what?
Who broke...?

Jaw clenched, Xena closes her eyes and takes several deep, calming breaths.

For her part, Gabrielle is having a curiously satisfying mental fantasy of holding Aphrodite's face under water and beating her senseless with her orange and pink flowered bathing cap.

Xena's eyes finally open. Outwardly, she appears calm, though Gabrielle can easily feel the roiling tension within.

XENA

(cont'd, deceptively soft)
Who broke the mirror,
Aphrodite?

APHRODITE

Well, like, if I knew,
I wouldn't need
your help, would I?

She continues, noting Xena's clenched fists.

APHRODITE

(cont'd)
I don't know, Xena! Just some
scruffy smelly bandit dudes, I
guess. And look! They
even trashed my temple!

GABRIELLE

How can you even tell?

Aphrodite eyes her. Gabrielle smirks.

XENA

(still deceptively soft)
Where?

APHRODITE

(pointing)
Over there! Can't you
see it? My
poor, poor temple.

As Xena steps off in the direction of Aphrodite's pointing finger, the Goddess slams her hip into the table standing beside the mirror. A large pink vase tips back and forth, and, with another hard check to the table, falls to the floor with a resounding smash.

APHRODITE

(cont'd)
And look! They even destroyed
my favorite vase! Those...
those... those... losers!

Xena spins toward Aphrodite, teeth bared in a feral snarl.

XENA

All right. That's it. I'm outta here. C'mon, Gabrielle.
Maybe we can make it to Poteidia before dark.

With that, she storms out of the temple.

Gabrielle rounds on Aphrodite, her expression remarkably similar to Xena's.

GABRIELLE

This was your **plan**?!



APHRODITE

Hey! It was the best I could do on short notice!

GABRIELLE

Short notice?! Aphrodite, you had an entire **day**!

She hangs her head, beating at her thighs with her clenched fists.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Gods! How could I have **been** so stupid?!? Xena's warned me never to ask for help from a god, but no, I just **had** to do it. Stupid. Stupid. Stupid.

Aphrodite's face falls.

APHRODITE

Oh, I'm sorry, sweet pea! I **wanted** to help! I really did! I... guess I just kinda got caught up in other things.



Gabrielle sighs and reins in her temper.

GABRIELLE

Look. I appreciate that you wanted to help, Aphrodite. It's just that.... Forget it. Thank you for trying. I mean that. I'll... see you around, ok?

As Gabrielle heads for the door, Aphrodite's expression becomes determined.

APHRODITE

Gabby! Gabby, wait!

Gabrielle stops, but doesn't turn.

APHRODITE

(cont'd)

Just... stay here a minute, ok?
Please? I'll be right back.

When Gabrielle finally does turn, the Goddess is gone.

CUT TO:

EXT. APHRODITE'S TEMPLE - MID-MORNING

Xena is pacing next to the fountain, waiting for Gabrielle to join her. Instead, Aphrodite materializes, though without her usual fanfare and pink sparkles.

APHRODITE

Xena, I'm sorry, ok?

Xena looks at her, but remains silent.

APHRODITE

(cont'd)

Look, I know that was a mean trick I pulled, but the truth is.... I'm lonely.

Yeah, yeah, I know, what a joke, right? The Goddess of Love lonely.

As if! But it's true. And you and Gabby are, like, my friends and I kinda just wanted to, you know, hang out with you guys awhile.

XENA

Why didn't you ask?

APHRODITE

Come on, leatherbabe.
You're, like, the big WP!
You don't do the "hang out" thing, ya know?

XENA

So you tricked us.



APHRODITE

Bummer, right?
I'm **really** sorry.

Xena thinks about it, then finally nods.

XENA

Fine. But you'd better ask Gabrielle if she has time to hang out, since we're supposed to be in Poteidia tomorrow.

APHRODITE

Oh yeah! I heard. Teaching those hornychicks, right?

Xena's hackles go right back up.

XENA

How do **you** know
about that?

Aphrodite giggles.

APHRODITE

Duh, Xena. I'm a
goddess, remember?

XENA

Mm.

APHRODITE

Now listen, Xe. If Gabby says yes, well,
I know you'll be, like, bored out of that
beautiful skull of yours with our girl talk,
so.... There's a stream right around the
corner absolutely packed with those
squirmy slimy sea creatures you warrior
types love to catch, so have at it, k?
Me and the Gabster will get
you when we're done.

XENA

Oh. Joy.



Laughing, Aphrodite disappears. After a moment, Xena gives a slight shrug of her
shoulders and heads around the corner to whatever fate awaits her.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

EXT. STREAM - MID-AFTERNOON

Boots off, Xena is lying on the bank of a wide stream, eyes closed and head tilted toward the sun filtering down through the leaves of the overhanging trees. By her side is a sizeable string of rather enormous fish, some of which even Xena with her vast experience has never seen before.

Her eyes pop open, and a moment later, a strange sound can be heard coming from the trees. She leaps to her feet just as a man with long blonde hair and sporting a leopard skin loincloth comes swinging toward her on a vine, a scroll clutched tightly in his free hand.

MAN

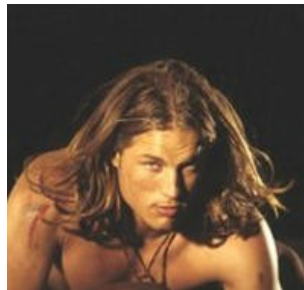
ahAHahAHahAHahAHah

As he swings past, Xena neatly plucks the scroll from his hand, smirking.

His return swing brings him back and he hops off the vine, landing in front of Xena.

MAN

Me Tarxan. You Bard?



Xena gives him a slow, wicked smile, displaying all her teeth.

XENA

Do I look like a bard to you?

Tarxan considers for a moment, then shakes his head and holds out his hand imperiously.

TARXAN

No bard, no scroll.

XENA

Ah...so you want this, huh?

TARXAN

Tarxan want scroll.

XENA

No.

TARXAN

Give Tarxan scroll.

Xena lifts an eyebrow.

XENA

Or...?



He appears briefly to consider using force to regain the scroll, then just as quickly discards the option as he eyes the woman standing in front of him. Putting his hands on his leopard skin clad hips, he leans forward and opens his mouth wide.

TARXAN

(VERY loudly)

AHAHAHAHAHAHAHA

HAHAHAHAHAHAHAH

Completely unfazed, Xena merely blinks at him.

Discomfited by the non-reaction, Tarxan swallows hard, shrugs and tries again even louder.

TARXAN

(Very VERY loudly)

AHAHAHAHAHAHAHAH

AHAHAHAHAHAHAH

Xena's slow smile spreads again.

XENA

AYIYIYIYIYIYIYIYIYIYIYIYIYI

With a sound very much like a whimpering puppy, Tarxan grabs his vine and climbs it as fast as his legs can carry him, soon disappearing into the trees.

XENA

Heh.



Chuckling, she gathers up her catch, tucks the scroll under her arm, and heads back to the temple.

CUT TO:

INT. APHRODITE'S TEMPLE - MID AFTERNOON

Whistling, Xena walks through the door to Aphrodite's temple and once again stops dead in her tracks.

Gabrielle and Aphrodite turn to look at her. They are dressed in fluffy pink robes with their hair hidden beneath matching towels. Their faces are completely covered save for the eyes and nostrils with some sort of white glop that Xena can't readily identify, nor would she wish to.

Their toes are separated by white balls of cotton; newly manicured nails painted a flaming pink match equally manicured and polished fingernails.

Each has some sort of glossy bound scroll in her hands. Gabrielle's bears the title "Cosmo-polis" while Aphrodite is apparently reading something called "Vanitas Faire."

Between them sits a huge wooden bowl filled with what Aphrodite calls popcorn.

Behind them, two barely clad and massively muscled men wave huge pink-feathered fans slowly.

Gabrielle gives Xena a huge grin, which turns her face into a grotesque mask that is a little hard to look at.

GABRIELLE

(happily)

Xena! How was fishing?

In answer, Xena holds up the large string of even larger fish. Then she tosses the scroll in Gabrielle's direction.

XENA

Picked this up from
an interesting
character by the river.

Dropping the magazine, Gabrielle catches the scroll and quickly unfurls it. Her grin widens as she quickly scans the text, causing a bit of the white glop to fall from her face and land on the scroll. She wipes it away impatiently, still reading. Finally she looks up.

GABRIELLE

All right! Great news!

APHRODITE

Yeah?

GABRIELLE

The best!

Rolling the scroll, she gets to her feet, stepping toward Xena.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

C'mon, Xena! We've delayed here long enough. Time to head to Amphipolis!

XENA

Amphipolis? I thought we were going to Poteidia?

Gabrielle stops.

GABRIELLE

Oh. Yeah. Well... that's what the good news is!

Xena's eyebrow climbs.



GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Yeah! See, it turns out that Heap Big Chief Diva Hornyfeather wasn't lost in the raid after all. She was just on something called a Jamboree, whatever that means. So, you see? We're free to head right to Amphipolis! So let's go! C'mon!

Gabrielle walks quickly for the door, then stops when she realizes she is walking alone. She turns with her hands on her hips, and wide, questioning eyes peering out from an all white face.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)
Well?

Xena pauses, obviously considering what she wants to say.

XENA

You might wanna....

She brings her hand to her face in a scrubbing motion.

Gabrielle copies her, only to wind up with a hand full of white glop. She laughs, embarrassed.

GABRIELLE

Uh... yeah. Aphrodite?

Aphrodite looks up from her magazine and grins.

APHRODITE

Sure thing, sweet pea!

A waggle of her fingers and Gabrielle is instantly transformed back into her regular, glowing self. With pink fingernails. And toenails, which are thankfully hidden by her boots.

GABRIELLE

Ahhhh... much better. Thanks!



APHRODITE

No worries, Gabs! Thanks for the girl chat! Stop by again, k?

With another flick of Aphrodite's magic hand, Xena and Gabrielle disappear from the temple, only to reappear exactly where she'd originally accosted them. Argo, happy to have her mistress back, nudges Xena and the trio starts off down the road to Amphipolis.

CUT TO:

EXT. AMPHIPOLIS - NIGHT

It's nighttime when Xena and Gabrielle finally get to the town proper. The first thing they notice is that like the night around it, the town is mostly dark and a bit foreboding.

Though no one's on the streets, Xena knows that Amphipolis isn't deserted. She can feel the people hidden behind shuttered windows and thick wooden doors.

Gabrielle can also feel the weight of many eyes on her as she and Xena make their way cautiously toward the Tavern. The usually bustling evening market is empty, its stands bereft of their usual colorful fabric and shouting vendors.

Even Argo's acting a little spooked.

GABRIELLE

Kinda creepy.

Xena's eyes dart back and forth as she draws her sword from its scabbard.

XENA

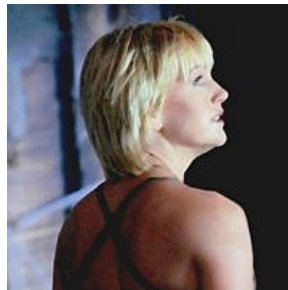
(grimly)

I don't like it.

Something's going on.

GABRIELLE

Maybe they just like
to turn in early?



Though she can't see her eyes, Gabrielle knows Xena is giving her the Look.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Just a thought.

When they finally come upon the tavern with its darkened windows and the quarter-moon shining down through the building clouds, it looks much as it did when the mouth of hell was taking up residence in its backyard.

Like the town itself, the tavern appears deserted but isn't. Xena can feel her watchers as easily as she can feel the light caress of Gabrielle's breath on her shoulder. Sword at the ready, she edges past Gabrielle to the door.

XENA
Stay here.

Gabrielle laughs a tad nervously.

GABRIELLE
Come on, Xena. I'm sure there's a perfectly rational explanation for....

XENA
I said stay back.

Taking a step back, Xena measures the strength of the door with her eyes. Gabrielle can almost see the angry energy swirling about her like a cloud.

GABRIELLE
Xena, please. If you go barging in there like that, you might wind up hurting....



With a soft grunt, Xena lifts her leg and kicks the door open. It swings hard and hits something.

SOMETHING
Oof!

GABRIELLE
(cont'd, resignedly)
... somebody.

Xena jumps into the space she's created and brings her sword down....

Just as several dozen candles flare, lighting the room and the people within. They all stare at her, open-mouthed.

Somewhat stunned, Xena looks around blinking, then looks down at her sword which has managed to cut a large and well-decorated sheet cake directly in half with almost surgical precision.

Holding one half, Lila looks at the Warrior Princess with wide, slightly chagrined eyes.

Gabrielle steps past Xena and looks at the other half of the cake that is pressed rather intimately against Lila's daughter Sara, who is passed out cold on the floor.

LILA
(softly)
Surprise?

CUT TO:

INT. CYRENE'S TAVERN - SEVERAL MOMENTS LATER

Most of the guests have recovered from their initial shock and are slowly approaching the guest of honor, who's managed to get over her own shock. Xena has sheathed her weapon, though she looks as if she's ready to draw it again any second.

The townspeople are much friendlier than they were during her last visit. Each one comes up quietly to offer their best wishes and thanks for her help in restoring the tavern.

After they leave, Xena turns to Gabrielle who is trying her best not to smirk and is failing miserably.

XENA
You knew? Of course you did.
You set this all up, didn't you?



GABRIELLE
Yup. Hey! I had to get you back
for all those mean tricks you
pulled on me the last time.

Xena rolls her eyes, but the grin she's been trying so hard to hide twitches her lips briefly. For Gabrielle, it's a beaming smile and she tilts her head as Xena moves in.

They break apart only after the wolf whistles and catcalls have settled down somewhat. Xena doesn't even bother glaring.

XENA
So... that's what all the
lame scroll stories were
about, huh? I was trying
to figure out your angle.

GABRIELLE
(fake anger)
They were **not**....

She grins

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Ok, ok, I'll admit it. They
were pretty lame. But I got
you on the Hornyfeather thing.

XENA

C'mon, Gabrielle. **Hornyfeathers?**
Please. And that wave....

Grinning, Gabrielle demonstrates it for her then laughs.

At that moment, Aphrodite in all her finery pops in with a huge pink cake with pink frosting. One candle is in the shape of a little Xena and remarkably lifelike for its wax nature sitting atop the cake. With a grin, she sets it in front of the Warrior Princess and leads the group in a rousing chorus of "Happy Birthday".



Xena endures it all, and Gabrielle can tell that her cheeks just slightly resemble the cake's frosting. She hides a grin behind her hand, then joins in the last chorus.

APHRODITE

Make a wish and blow out
the candle, leatherbabe!



With another eye roll, but secretly pleased, Xena does as she is bade and snuffs the candle in one soft breath.

The crowd cheers.

APHRODITE

So? What did ya wish for?

XENA

That's for me to know and
you... **not** to know.

APHRODITE

Party pooper.

As the partygoers amble over to have a piece of cake, the door from the kitchen opens and Lila and a neatly recovered Sara come out bearing a medium sized chest. With matching grins, they place it on the table in front of Xena and step back.

LILA

We, um, found these things when
we were cleaning out the rest of
your Mother's room. We figured
you might like to have them.

With a little trepidation, Xena opens the lid and sees several cloth-covered objects. Pulling out the first one, she unwraps it and a definite tint of redness comes to her cheeks as she spies what's inside.

GABRIELLE

By the gods, that is
adorable! Let me see!

Xena grabs the object and holds it out of her reach.

XENA

No.

GABRIELLE

Please? It's so cute!

XENA

(growling)
Gabrielle....

GABRIELLE

Please? C'mon,
Xena, let me see.

Finally Xena relents and hands it over. It is a small, much faded and much loved stuffed purple dragon.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)
Oh, Xena, this is absolutely
precious! What's its name?

XENA

It doesn't have a name.

GABRIELLE

(plainly disbelieving)

Come on, Xena. All kids name
their stuffed animals. Even you.
So give. What's its name?

Xena mutters something under her breath.

GABRIELLE

I couldn't quite catch
that, Xena. Say again?

XENA

(softly, but distinctly)

I said... his name is Flameball.



GABRIELLE

Awww! How sweet!

She holds the dragon slightly away from her face.

GABRIELLE

Hello, little Flameball.
How are you?



FLAMEBALL

(Gabrielle's high pitched voice)

I'm fine, Gabrielle.

How are you?

XENA

Give me that!

Snatching the toy away, she sets it aside then reaches in for the next object. This one is longer and heavier, and she sets it before her and carefully unwraps the cloth. Tears spring to her eyes when she sees what's inside.

Two crude wooden swords obviously shaped by a child's hand lay on the soft cloth. The initials on the pommels are only light smudges now, their grooves worn down by many hours in the hands of active children, but Xena can see them as easily as when she carved them so many years ago... X and L.



She closes her eyes for a moment, her fingers caressing the smooth, aged wood over Lyceus' monogram, swamped by sweet memories of hours spent with her beloved brother in the woods or in some farmer's field playing war with one another.

She takes a deep breath, lets it out slowly, and opens her eyes. The others in the room are looking away, talking quietly amongst themselves to give her the privacy she needs. Gabrielle's hand is warm and loving on her arm, and she takes comfort from that.

More steadily now, she reaches into the chest and picks out the last object, which is a simple piece of cloth. She takes one look at it, and tucks it in her hand, rising slowly, and leaving the tavern.

Gabrielle rises as well, and smiles at the stunned guests.

GABRIELLE

It's ok. Just... keep

eating your cake.

I'll be right back.

She gives a brighter smile to a plainly confused and saddened Lila and reaches over, squeezing her wrist.

GABRIELLE

It'll be fine. I promise.



With that, she turns and leaves.

CUT TO:

EXT. CYRENE'S TAVERN - NIGHT

Gabrielle spies Xena in the dark, leaning against one of the porch posts and gazing up into the sky. The moon is brighter now, and Gabrielle can easily see the tear tracks gracing Xena's cheeks.



Softly, she approaches Xena and stands silently by her side, offering her the only support she can. She notices the small bit of cloth hanging limply from Xena's fist but says nothing.

Without turning her head, Xena hands Gabrielle the cloth and Gabrielle looks down at it. It is a small, faded, much folded and obviously much beloved embroidery sampler crafted from a child's quite talented hand. In the center, the word "Mom" is done in incredibly tiny, very neat stitching, causing Gabrielle to marvel anew at the vast well of talent Xena possessed even as a child.

XENA

(hoarsely)

I...um.... That was the first
piece that I was really
proud of. I gave it to
her for her birthday.

Clearing her throat, she looks up at the sky again, giving a minute shrug of her shoulders.

XENA

(cont'd)

I... never saw it
again, so I figured....

She shrugs again, tossing off an old childhood hurt as fresh tears spill down her cheeks.

GABRIELLE

(whispering)

Oh, Xena....

Moving in, she wraps an arm around Xena's waist, please to find Xena respond by wrapping her in a tight hug and laying her cheek on soft, golden hair.

XENA

It's funny.... All along, I
thought she didn't care, only
now to find out how much she
did. And now, it's too late.



GABRIELLE

No. You listen to me.
She knows. You know she
does. She always has.

Xena doesn't respond. She just hugs Gabrielle tighter, turning up her eyes back to the stars as we....

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR

TAG

FADE IN:

INT. LYCEUS' TOMB - NIGHT

Xena is standing by Lyceus' casket, her hand brushing softly over the cast of his face.

XENA

(softly)

Still dirty, I see. A lot of
people don't like places like
this, Ly, but I do because it
makes me feel close to you again.

Smiling, she wipes a few tears from her eyes.

XENA

(cont'd)

Mother saved those swords of
ours, Ly. Kept 'em with her all
these years. Remember the
holy Hades she used to give
us for fighting in the tavern?

Laughing softly, she shakes her head at the memories.

XENA

(cont'd)

Anyway, I guess I just wanted
to say 'hey' and tell you that
I love you still, and always will.
My life's gotten a lot better
these last few years, Ly, and it's
good not to feel so alone anymore.

VOICE

(o.c.)

You're never alone.

Xena turns slowly, her face a mask of shock.

XENA

(whispering)

Mother?

With a broad smile and tears brimming in her own ghostly eyes, Cyrene enters the crypt and opens her arms in welcome.

CYRENE

Happy Birthday, my little one.

Xena falls into her mother's embrace, feeling the woman solid and warm against her. She buries her face into the much missed fragrance of Cyrene's hair, tears slipping from her eyes like diamonds.

XENA

I love you, Mother.
I miss you.

CYRENE

I love you too, little one.
More than you'll ever know.



XENA

I never got to tell....

CYRENE

Shh. I know, my daughter. I know.
I'm here with you, always. There isn't
a day that goes by that I don't look
at you, at the wonderful woman
you've become, and beam with
pride. You are my heart and my
joy and you always will be.

They hold one another for a very long time, parting only when each realizes that Gabrielle is standing quietly just outside the tomb, tears of her own running unashamed down her face.

Cyrene smiles and holds an arm out.

CYRENE

(cont'd)

Come in, daughter.

Gabrielle's eyes widen a bit at the name she's been given.

CYRENE

(cont'd)

Yes, you. Come, come.

Slowly she approaches the duo and is soon wrapped in two sets of arms.

CYRENE

(cont'd)

Thank you, Gabrielle, for making my little one so happy. Her love for you shines from her soul, and for a mother, that is the most beautiful sight in the world.

Gabrielle can feel a flush heat her face, but she smiles and hugs the two women to her more tightly than ever, reveling in the all too absent sense of contentment, peace, and joy.



GABRIELLE

(whispering)

Happy Birthday, Xena.

FADE OUT.

DISCLAIMER

Many deliverymen were harmed during the making of this motion picture, but according to Heap Big Chief Diva Hornyfeather, they're all convalescing nicely. TarXan, however, is still running for his life and was last seen on a New York City rooftop.