

Xena: Warrior Princess - Subtext Virtual Season 9



Production #V910 – Pompeii – Part 1

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TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. TOWN - EVENING

Night is drawing swiftly down over the town of Lemonas, but to its residents, the coming of the dark holds far less disquiet than the predicament in which they now find themselves. Months of drought have been finally broken by a massive storm whose lightning, touched to the tinder-dry straw of thatched roofs, has sparked an inferno.

Men, women, and even children rush about with buckets of water and rakes in a frantic attempt to put out the fire before it destroys their town and everything in it, including the large stable and the massive grain storage tanks standing to the east.

Xena and Gabrielle, drawn on by the smoke and screams, have pitched in to help. Xena stands with a stable hand helping to get the panicked horses from their burning quarters, while across town, Gabrielle stands atop the roof of the village inn, wetting it down to prevent the fire's spread.

From her position on the roof, Gabrielle can see a young woman running back and forth, pulling at her hair and screaming. She can't make out the words, but she knows the woman is in trouble.

GABRIELLE

Hold this!

Handing off her water pail to a middle aged man, she makes for the ladder and quickly slides down. Running to the woman, Gabrielle gently grabs her elbow and spins the WOMAN to face her.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

What is it? What's wrong?

WOMAN

My baby! Oh,
please... my baby!!

Gabrielle looks around, but doesn't see any young children in the area.

GABRIELLE

Where is she?



WOMAN

I... our house... caught fire and
I... I only put her down for a
minute! She must have gone
back inside, and I... I can't....
Please! Help me! My baby!!

Turning toward the stable, Gabrielle scans the area for Xena. She finally spots her manhandling two rearing horses threatening to stampede through the town. She turns back to the distraught woman.

GABRIELLE

All right, I'll help you get
your daughter. Come and
show me where she is.

The woman turns and runs toward the western edge of the town, Gabrielle close at her heels.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE - LATE EVENING

The small hut's roof is almost entirely engulfed in flames. Looking in through the small, unshuttered window, Gabrielle can see fire licking up from the floor and walls. She can also hear quite distinctly, the cry of a small child despite the roar of the flames and the wailing of the woman. Gritting her teeth, Gabrielle turns toward the woman.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Your shawl.



WOMAN

My what?

GABRIELLE

Your shawl. I need it.

With slow, uncomprehending movements, the woman unwraps her shawl from her narrow shoulders and hands it over.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Thanks!

Reaching out, she snags a water pail from a passing man and dunks the shawl in it until it is sodden. Then removing it from the water, she drapes it over her head and gives the woman a grim smile.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Wish me luck.

With a last look toward the stables and Xena, she rushes into the house, heedless of the danger surrounding her.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE - LATE EVENING

Shawl draped over her head and shoulders, Gabrielle enters the house at a run. The heat is overpowering, and the smoke causes her to choke and bring one corner of the thick wrap over her mouth and nose. Listening carefully, she pinpoints the sound of the child's choking cry and heads off in that direction, holding one hand out in front of her to navigate through the thick smoke. A lit ember lands on her forearm and she swats it off with a small cry of pain. Still, she continues on.

In a tiny room in the southern corner of the hut, she finds the child; it is a young girl of no more than three. Pulling the shawl from her face, she gives the girl her brightest smile.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Hi there, sweetheart. I
need you to come with
me, okay? Your mama's
waiting just outside for you.

The girl takes an uncertain step toward the blonde stranger. A pile of burning thatch falls down through the ceiling, and the child screams and runs away, deeper into the small room. She squats down in the corner, choking.

Batting out the flaming straw with her shawl, Gabrielle forges into the room and gathers the sobbing child into her arms. She then makes her way out of the room and toward the door.

Just then, a large roof-beam timber crashes to the ground, blocking their path to the door in a wall of fire. The girl screams again as Gabrielle darts backward, narrowly missing being severely burned. Trying desperately to calm the frantically wriggling child, Gabrielle looks around for another avenue of escape.

She can find none.

Suddenly, the fire hisses as several buckets of water are thrown at it, but it roars up just as quickly, seemingly higher and more ferocious than before. A smile then spreads over her face as a tingle in her gut heralds a war cry more precious to her than any jewel.

A second later, Xena is flying through the flames. Hitting the floor, she tucks, rolls, and springs to her feet.

XENA

Couldn't wait to find some trouble, huh?



GABRIELLE

(blithely)

Well, you know me. Always on the lookout for adventure.

XENA

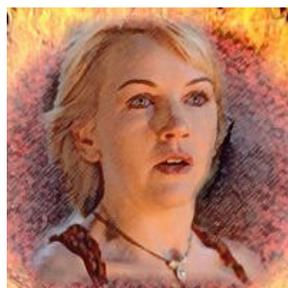
Mm.

Grabbing the child from Gabrielle's arms, Xena waits until the flames are temporarily doused by several more pails full of water. With a soft grunt, she tosses the child through the dissipating smoke and into the waiting arms of a soot-coated man standing at what used to be the door.

The rest of the roof chooses that very moment to fall down around them, knocking them both to the floor. Gabrielle lands atop Xena's back, her body sheltering as much of her partner as it can. The sodden shawl protects her upper back and head from the falling embers, though her legs are hit liberally with bits of flaming straw. When she feels the rain of fire begin to die down, she quickly rolls off of Xena and looks down into her soot-blackened face.

GABRIELLE

Are you all right?



XENA

(falsely smiling)

Just peachy. Help me get that
beam off my legs, will ya?

With a soft cry, Gabrielle scrambles to her feet and, flings off her shawl, wrapping it around one end of the smoking beam. Bending her legs, she puts all of her strength into the lift. The beam moves, but not enough to free Xena's trapped legs.

XENA

(cont'd)

Wait a minute. Let me help.
Ready? One... two... three!

Together, they dredge up the strength needed to move the beam from Xena's legs. Xena turns onto her back, relieved.

GABRIELLE

Hang on a second. Is anything
broken? Can you move them?

XENA

I'm fine.

To prove it, she rolls to her knees, then stands up. The fire is still blazing all around them despite the great amounts of water being thrown at it.

GABRIELLE

What now?

Xena looks up at where the roof had been just moments before. She gives Gabrielle with a wicked grin.

XENA

Ready?

GABRIELLE

Somehow, I just knew that
was going to be your choice.

XENA

That's what I get for being
predictable. Hang on!

Singing out her war cry, Xena vaults them both straight up through the hole in the roof, flips, and lands them safely on the ground. She grunts softly as her bruised legs absorb the shock of the landing, and Gabrielle pulls away giving her a stern look.

GABRIELLE

Just peachy, hmm?

XENA

I'll live.



GABRIELLE

The jury's still
out on that one.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

The fire has been successfully fought with no loss of life. Much to the dismay of the thankful townspeople Xena and Gabrielle chose to camp a short distance away from the village for some much-needed privacy.

Gabrielle, her minor burns tended and wrapped, now concentrates on her partner's bruises and burns. Tying off the last one on Xena's upper thigh, just below her leathers, she smiles up at her and pats her thigh. Xena smiles back.

XENA

Thanks.

GABRIELLE

Any time. Are you thinking
what I'm thinking?

XENA

Vacation?

GABRIELLE

Oh, yeah.



FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. SEAPORT - MORNING

While Xena arranges stabling for Argo, Gabrielle walks along the rows of merchant shops facing the harbor. Though they've arrived at their seaport destination, the question of where they will go for their vacation is still up in the air. Various places have been tossed about but each has been rejected for various reasons.

Gabrielle stops outside of a shop that announces itself as "FALAFEL'S TRAVEL AND CHARIOT RENTAL AGENCY". And, below that, in smaller letters, "We Try. Really!"

GABRIELLE

Nah... it couldn't be.

Giving a small shrug, she enters through the beaded curtains.

CUT TO:

INT. FALAFEL'S SHOP - MORNING

The shop is empty when Gabrielle enters, and she takes her time examining the interior. The walls are covered with lurid stick figure drawings of sailing ships and what she takes to be passengers waving from the railings. Each drawing bears a loud caption scrawled in bold ink strokes.

GABRIELLE

(reading)

'Visit the land of the Norse Gods
on the Grecian Cruise Line's newest
unsinkable ship, the Titan!'

(beat)

Been there, done that.

She strolls on.

GABRIELLE

(Cont'd, reading)

'Last Chance to Visit the Unique
Continent of Atlantis! The Perfect
Trip for Those Who Want to Get
Away from It All. Permanently!'

(beat)

Ahhh...no.

A rattle of beads and the shop's proprietor steps through, smiling at her. Gabrielle's eyes widen.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Are you....?



FALAFEL

No.

GABRIELLE

But you don't know what
I was going to ask you.

FALAFEL

Yes I do, and the
answer is no.

GABRIELLE

But you look just like....

FALAFEL

Poor casting.

GABRIELLE

What?

FALAFEL

Never mind. Now, how can I
help you this morning?
Interested in seeing the world?

GABRIELLE

Just looking to get away
for awhile, I guess.

FALAFEL

(beaming)

Well, I can offer you an excellent
deal on our Atlantis package.

GABRIELLE

Not **that** far away.

Falafel frowns. Then his face clears.

FALAFEL

The Pride of Japa sails in
a little over an hour, if
you're interested in that.

GABRIELLE

No... My traveling companion
lost something there
the last time we visited.

FALAFEL

Oh? What?

GABRIELLE

Her head.

FALAFEL

Ah. How about beautiful
Rome? The villas, the
coliseum, the...

GABRIELLE

Someone else lost
his head there.

FALAFEL

Oh. North Africa?

GABRIELLE

Gurkhan.



FALAFEL

Another beheading?

GABRIELLE

Afraid so.

FALAFEL

Hmm. How about Indus?
Did you lose anything there?

GABRIELLE

My hair.

FALAFEL

You, dear lady, are making this very difficult. However, I'm not about to allow a good sale...I mean a valued customer... get away from me so easily.

(beat, thinking)

How about the Norselands?

GABRIELLE

No.

FALAFEL

Another loss?

GABRIELLE

Xena's memory.



FALAFEL

You're making this up, dear lady. You **must** be!

GABRIELLE

Not a word.

Falafel looks at her for a long moment and believes.

FALAFEL

Well, and I can't believe I'm actually saying this, but with luck like that, one would think you'd be looking for ways to stay home.

Gabrielle gives him another look. He blanches.

FALAFEL

(cont'd)

Yes. Well.

He looks down at the brochure in his hand and smiles again.

FALAFEL

(cont'd)

How about Pompeii?

GABRIELLE

Another beheading. Xena's doing. Though it was for a good cause.

FALAFEL

Not the General, my dear lady. The island!

As he notices Gabrielle's sudden interest, his greasy grin broadens.

FALAFEL

(cont'd, dramatically)

Oh, fair Pompeii, the land of beauty and legend, an artist's paradise! Rolling green hills, the beautiful Mount Vesuvius....

GABRIELLE

Excuse me. Did you say 'artist's paradise'?

FALAFEL

Indeed I did, dear woman. Indeed I did! Why, Pompeii is known around the world as a haven for artists and artistic types of all stripes! It's a veritable wonderland of plays, performances, concerts, festivals....

GABRIELLE

Sold!



FALAFEL

Sold?

GABRIELLE

Sold.

FALAFEL

But I didn't even tell you the pri....

GABRIELLE

Sold.

FALAFEL

Will that be cash
or barter?

CUT TO:

EXT. SHORES OF POMPEII - DAY

The ship is no more than docked when Gabrielle rushes down the gangplank and all but kisses the ground. She spins in a circle, taking in the sights, arms flung wide.

GABRIELLE

By the gods, Xena, did you
ever see anything so beautiful?

Xena, carrying the lion's share of their combined baggage, steps off the gangplank and drops the bags to the ground.

XENA

It's not bad.

GABRIELLE

Not bad?! Look at it! The hills,
the temples, the villas, the
architecture! It's so... so... so....

XENA

Beautiful?

GABRIELLE

I couldn't have said
it better myself!



XENA

Well, I'm sure it'll be just
as beautiful once we
actually get inside, so....



GABRIELLE

You're right, of course.
What are we waiting for?
Let's go!

Entranced, Gabrielle heads off at a quick clip, leaving Xena to roll her eyes and heft the baggage back over her shoulders. She sighs and begins walking.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY OF POMPEII - DAY

A wide-eyed Gabrielle strolls down the Via dell'Abondanza. Unfortunately, she is walking against the flow of traffic, and nearly gets flattened by a group of boisterous, toga-clad citizens. Only a quick grab from Xena saves her from an up close and personal view of the cobblestone streets.

GABRIELLE

Hey!

XENA

You need to watch
where you're going.

Finally, Gabrielle takes a look around, and sees the setup of the streets.

GABRIELLE

Oh. Whoops.

XENA

Whoops is right. How about you
helping me carry some of this gear?
I'm beginning to feel like a pack mule.

Gabrielle laughs, a little embarrassed and takes some of the bags, lightening Xena's load somewhat.

GABRIELLE

Better?

XENA

Much. Did this 'travel agent'
of yours happen to set us
up with a place to stay?



GABRIELLE

Well...no. But Xena, look around!
All the cute little cafes, the shops.
It's a vacationer's paradise! I'm sure
we'll find a place without a problem.

Xena looks unconvinced.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Trust me.

XENA

Famous last words.

GABRIELLE

Ha. Ha.

Turning away, Gabrielle once again becomes completely engrossed in the wonder that is Pompeii. Not so engrossed, however, as to miss the sudden gathering of citizens very close to them, nor to miss the pointed looks and whispered words, many of which sound remarkably like "Warrior" and "Princess". With a sinking feeling in the pit of her stomach, she comes to a stop before an immense TOGA-CLAD MAN blocking the road.

TOGA MAN

(to Xena)

Are you the
Warrior Princess?

Xena stares back at him evenly.

XENA

I am.

To Gabrielle's immense surprise, the man breaks out into a beaming smile and opens his slab-like arms.

TOGA MAN

Welcome to Pompeii,
Warrior Princess!

He turns to an equally immense man standing to his right.

TOGA MAN

See, Stentonious? I told you
it was her! I'm never wrong
about these sorts of things.

(to Xena)

We're all great fans of yours
here, Xena. The way you
showed up those bastards
Julius and Caligula. It was...
magic. Pure magic.

Xena rolls her eyes.

XENA

I... appreciate the welcome,
but if you'll excuse us, we
need to find a place to stay.



Rather than giving way, the man bows deeply in her direction.

TOGA MAN

I, Marcus Antonius, am at your
service, great Warrior. I would be
humbled and greatly honored if
you would stay with me at my grand
villa for the duration of your visit here.

XENA

Thank you, but....

STENTONIOUS

Great villa? Hah! I've seen
beggar's huts larger than your
'villa', Marcus Antonius!
(to Xena)

I, however, have the grandest
villa in all of Pompeii and it would
be my most fervent joy if you
could consent to stay with me
during your visit, Xena.

GABRIELLE

(*sotto voce*)

Should I get out my shovel? It's
getting pretty deep around here.

MAN

Grandest villa in all of Pompeii?
That tumbled down old wreck??
I saw the inspectors out the
other morning threatening
to condemn the place!

MARCUS ANTONIOUS

You're one to speak, Africanus!
What would you offer her? A
room in your brothel? I'm sure
she'd love the sounds of your
two bit whores servicing
toothless old Senators all night!

The crowd laughs.

Roaring, Africanus rounds on Marcus Antonious just as Stentonious clobbers him one
across the jaw, setting off a brawl that the Pompeian's join in with gleeful abandon.

Arms crossed and a smirk on her face, Xena watches the growing brawl while
simultaneously fielding and rejecting a myriad of increasingly outlandish offers for housing.



Gabrielle, meanwhile, has turned her attention back to the many shops and cafes lining the
road. A middle aged, beautifully dressed WOMAN catches her eye from one of the nearby
establishments and beckons her forward with a smile and a wave.

WOMAN

Welcome to Pompeii, Gabrielle.
Forgive me for assuming. You
are the Bard Gabrielle, correct?

GABRIELLE

I'm Gabrielle, yes.

The woman smiles in relief.

WOMAN

I thought so. The descriptions I've
heard of you were quite compelling.

GABRIELLE

(surprised)

You've... heard descriptions?
Of me?

WOMAN

But of course! In many circles
you are just as well-known
as your companion after all.

GABRIELLE

(smugly)

I am, huh?

WOMAN

Oh, indeed.

Gesturing toward the door to her establishment, the woman inclines her head.

WOMAN

(cont'd)

Won't you come in
and rest your legs?

Gabrielle demurs, glancing over at the growing brawl. Xena is safely out of the way, still watching with avid, smirking, interest. To one side, money appears to be changing hands.

WOMAN

(cont'd)

Xena will know where
you've come.

GABRIELLE

How do you know?

With a grin, the woman points to the sign she's standing beside.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

The Bard Rock Café.
I like it already!



WOMAN

Then I bid you welcome, Gabrielle.
I am Marcellas Flavias, and
this is my establishment.
Please, come inside.

CUT TO:

INT. BARD ROCK CAFÉ - DAY

Entering the café, Gabrielle stops and stares in wonderment. The walls are filled to the brim with colorful, exquisite paintings of famous literary figures Gabrielle could only dream about knowing. Beneath each picture is a small snatch of a scroll upon which snatches of oratory are scrawled, and beneath that, the signature of each artist.

Gabrielle's shock is conveyed in her whisper.

GABRIELLE

By the gods! Catullus! Ennius,
the founder of Roman literature!
Horace! Ovid! Plautus! Sulpicia!
Sappho! This is... incredible!

Beaming, Marcellas Flavias glides over, an exquisite long-stemmed goblet in her hand.

MARCELLAS FLAVIAS

Here. Please sample the fruits
of Pompeii as you look around.

Gabrielle looks doubtfully into the mug. Wine has never been her favorite drink.

MARCELLAS FLAVIAS

(cont'd)

Please. No one should leave
our shores without having tasted
our greatest treasure. One sip.
I won't be offended if you
take no more than that.

Still looking doubtful, Gabrielle takes the goblet from the woman's hand and brings it tentatively to her lips. One sip and a smile blooms over her face.

GABRIELLE

This is fantastic!



MARCELLAS FLAVIAS

I'm pleased you find it so.
Please, continue your tour.
I'll be happy to answer any
questions you might have.

Sipping her wine, Gabrielle resumes her walk around the good sized café, her eyes avidly running over the famous lines of text written in each author's very own hand. Her whisper becomes reverent.

GABRIELLE

The Elysian Fields
for Bards.

Marcellas Flavius laughs gently.

Gabrielle walks to the wall nearest the bar and stops. Her eyes narrow, then widen as they look over lines of text that are... quite... familiar.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd, reading)

I sing a song of Xena
Warrior Princess, friend, lover, soulmate
Champion of the greater good
Set to wander the earth in
atonement for her past misdeeds....

Her voice trails off as she looks up and sees a very lifelike rendering of herself done in exquisite reds and golds. Her expression one of abject shock, she slowly turns to the proprietress.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

That's me!

Marcellas Flavius walks to her, quill in hand.

MARCELLAS FLAVIAS

Indeed it is. And I would
be most honored if you
would sign your work?

Almost as if she's watching the action from a distance, Gabrielle reaches out, grasps the quill and slowly signs her name beneath the last line of her poem.

GABRIELLE

I can't believe
this is happening.

Just then, a shadow falls across the room, and Gabrielle turns to see Xena filling the doorway, a smile on her face.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)
Xena! Come, look!

Striding across the room, Xena snags the half filled goblet from Gabrielle's hand and drains the rest of it in one gulp.

XENA

(drawling)
Niiice.

Then she looks at what Gabrielle is staring at and her grin broadens.

XENA

(cont'd)
Very nice!



Marcellas Flavius approaches again, two filled goblets in her hands.

MARCELLAS FLAVIAS

Welcome Xena. If you're not already
tired of the testosterone-fueled
boasting outside, I'd be honored if
you would consider staying here
during your visit. I have a charming
little cottage in the back, away from the
crowds and noises we're famous for.

Xena and Gabrielle exchange a look. Gabrielle's shining eyes seal the deal, and Xena nods her acceptance to the hostess.

MARCELLAS FLAVIAS

(cont'd)

Wonderful! I'll show you to the cottage now so you can put down your luggage and relax awhile. If Gabrielle is willing, many of our artisans, writers and actors will be gathering here tonight to exchange stories and gossip. You're both more than welcome to join in the fun.

XENA

Sounds like a plan.

A beaming Marcellas Flavius leads them out the rear entrance and toward the small stone cottage not far away.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Xena gently eases herself out from beneath Gabrielle's heavily slumbering weight and pads across the room to where a mug filled with herbs has been set out. Pouring fresh water from a pitcher into the mug, she stirs the mixture and waits for the herbs to dissolve. When the herbs have fully dissolved, she lifts the mug and returns to the bed, slipping into the tiny space Gabrielle's sprawled body has allotted her.

A moment later, bleary green eyes pop open. Gabrielle smiles. Then she winces. Then she frowns.

XENA

How's the head?



GABRIELLE

Ugh.

XENA

Thought so.
Here, drink this.

GABRIELLE

Please...don't
use that word.

XENA

What word? Drink?

GABRIELLE

Xena....

Scowling, Gabrielle grabs the mug and takes a small sip. She chokes on the taste.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Gods. Are you sure this
is supposed to help?



Xena laughs softly and takes the mug. Then she gathers Gabrielle into her arms, resting Gabrielle's head against her chest.

XENA

Promise.

Gabrielle snuggles in, waiting for the herbs to work their magic.

GABRIELLE

What did I drink last night?

XENA

A better question would probably
be what didn't you drink.

Gabrielle sighs.

GABRIELLE

That bad, huh?

XENA

Nah. Besides, you're entitled to
cut loose every once in awhile.

Gabrielle slowly lifts her head and peers into Xena's eyes.

GABRIELLE

Why don't I like the sound
of that? What happened?

XENA

How much do
you remember?

Lying back against Xena's chest, Gabrielle closes her eyes in thought.

GABRIELLE

Well.... we were
sitting in the café.

XENA

Good....

GABRIELLE

We'd just finished an
absolutely fantastic dinner.

Xena chuckles.

XENA

You would remember that.

The tease earns her a light slap to the belly.

XENA

(cont'd, warningly)

I could leave you
guessing all day.



The non-existent sting from the slap is rubbed soothingly away.

XENA

(cont'd)

That's better. So, what
else do you remember?

GABRIELLE

Let's see... A group of
really nice people came in.

Her face brightens noticeably.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

It was like...they all knew me!
I mean, they knew my work,
and our deeds. It was...
I really liked it. I felt....

XENA
Famous?

GABRIELLE
Good. I felt good.



Straightening, Gabrielle turns to look at her partner.

GABRIELLE
(cont'd)

Xena, I love our life together.
You know I do. But sometimes,
it feels nice to be recognized for
the things I do that don't involve
beating up the bad guys. You know?

Xena gives Gabrielle a loving smile.

XENA
You deserve that recognition,
Gabrielle. That, and so much
more. You're an outstanding
bard and a wonderful person.
You're my light. And if people
can't see beyond your sais,
they don't deserve to know you.

GABRIELLE
Oh, Xena....

The two share a long embrace. When Gabrielle finally pulls away, her eyes are shining and she's wiping happy tears from her cheeks.

GABRIELLE
(cont'd)

So, what's on the
agenda for today?

XENA
Sure you don't want to
know the rest of what
happened last night?

Gabrielle laughs.

GABRIELLE

It's starting to come back to me.
Besides, if I had stripped down
naked and danced through the
café with a chandelier on my
head, I'm sure you would
have told me by now.

XENA

(dryly)

You have a point. Anyway, I
thought maybe we'd walk
around a little, take in the sights.
See if anything strikes our fancy.



GABRIELLE

That sounds perfect.

Headache forgotten, she scrambles out of bed and looks down at her comfortably sprawled partner.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Well? The day's not getting
any younger, you know.
Let's move!

Xena can only chuckle as she rises from the bed and prepares to face the day.

CUT TO:

EXT. POMPEII WALL - MORNING

The wall that surrounds the city is famous for its trysts, its notoriety as a meeting spot, and its graffiti, most of it rather bawdy. Xena and Gabrielle stroll along the wall, pointing various bits of purple prose out to one another.

GABRIELLE

“Happiness to the people of Pozzuoli! Prosperity to all from Nuceria! The meathook for the Pompeians and those of Pithecusa!”

XENA

“Here Harpocras has had a good %&#@ with Drauca for a denarius.”

GABRIELLE

That’s crude.

XENA

I think it’s pretty funny.

GABRIELLE

You would. Oh, look at this one! “Money doesn't stink.”

XENA

(dryly)

How profound. “Celadus the Thracier makes the girls moan!”

GABRIELLE

Xena!

XENA

You know what they say about those of us from Thrace....

GABRIELLE

Mm. Good point.

Xena smirks.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

All right, enough of this. How about heading to the main square? I’ve heard that many a great orator got his start in the main square of Pompeii.

XENA

Oh, goody.

GABRIELLE

Excuse me?

XENA

I said, lead on.

GABRIELLE

Riiiiight.



CUT TO:

EXT. MAIN SQUARE - DAY

The square is filled with Pompeian's of all shapes and sizes gathered in groups at various sites around the large, open area. The crowd is boisterous and loud. The air is filled with laughter, jeers, and oratory on any topic known to man and some never before heard of.

Xena and Gabrielle walk along, catching snippets of increasingly outlandish conversation, until they happen upon a rather large group of jeering citizens, most of whom are armed with rotting fruits and vegetables. Every once in awhile, one such projectile is launched forcefully toward the front, and presumably the speaker, to the loud laughter and applause of the rest.

GABRIELLE

Wow. I feel sorry for whoever's rating this treatment. Can you hear what he's saying?

As the two draw closer, the noise of the crowd dies down enough for the thin, reedy voice of the ORATOR to come through clearly.

ORATOR

I tell you, my brothers and sisters,
the time for my God's wrath is at
hand! But you can save yourselves!
Repent your sinful ways! Repent
your wickedness! Repent
and you will be saved!

MAN

Repent this!!

An overripe fruit flies through the air and lands with a sodden thump against the speaker's chest. The crowd laughs.

Xena rolls her eyes and makes to walk away, but a hand on her arm stops her.

GABRIELLE

Xena, wait. Doesn't that voice sound a little familiar?



XENA

The voice of self righteous indignation usually does, Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE

No, I'm serious!
I know that voice.

ORATOR

Hit me if you want! Deride me! It won't change the fact that the God of Eli loves you all!

Xena and Gabrielle exchange looks. Gabrielle turns and begins forcing her way into the crowd. Sighing, Xena follows. The members of the crowd recognize them and give way good-naturedly.

MAN

Hit him with your chakram, Xena!

The group laughs.

MAN #2

That'll shut him up!

MAN #3

For good!

Cheers abound.

Gabrielle finally pushes to the front of the crowd, followed closely by Xena, and stops, staring at the food spattered young man standing atop a small box.

XENA

(whispering)

Loos.

The man sees them and smiles, his expression transformed into one of radiance, which unfortunately goes poorly with the tomato pulp slowly dripping from his hair.

LOOS

At last! My prayers have been answered! The God of Love has sent his Sword of Justice to smite the enemy! Behold! The Mother of the Messenger! Smite them, Xena!

CROWD

Xena?!?

Xena stares back at them and shrugs.

XENA

Sorry, folks, I guess I'm just not in a smiting mood today.
Maybe tomorrow.

Turning she rushes across the small space separating them grabbing Loos' arm and hauls him bodily from the crate he's standing on.

XENA

(cont'd, hissing)

What in Tartarus do you think you're doing?!?



LOOS

(fervently)

Thank Eli, you've finally
come, Xena! I was
beginning to lose hope!

XENA

Listen, Loos, I don't know what
the reason is that you think I've
come, but whatever it is, you're
wrong. Now, let's get out of here
before our Pompeian friends decide
to do some smiting of their own.

With Gabrielle leading the way, the trio pushes its way out of the crowded square and onto a relatively empty alley.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Once clear of the crowd, Xena stops, turns, and slams Loos back against the alley's stucco wall.

XENA

What are you doing here? I
thought you were back in Greece
with the rest of the Elijians.

LOOS

Well, I was! But then when Eve
died...Xena, I'm very sorry for
your loss. The world mourned
when Eve was taken from us.

He makes as if to embrace Xena, but is held back by the powerful hands still clenching his shoulders and forcing his back against the wall.

XENA

(sincerely)

Thank you, Loos. But that
still doesn't explain why
you're here and not there.

Loos' face lights up.

LOOS

Eve's sacrifice was such a noble
one, Xena! I felt that the only
way to honor it, to do it justice,
was to make my own sacrifice!

XENA

I don't think dying under the weight of rotting fruit is quite what Eve would have wanted.



LOOS

No! Don't you see? Look around you, Xena! This is a den of iniquity! It is a festering pit filled with filth and depravity! It absolutely reeks of evil!

Xena and Gabrielle exchange another look.

XENA

Loos....

LOOS

Think of it, Xena! If I could sway just seventy of this city's sinners in her name, Eve would be honored throughout history!

GABRIELLE

(doubtfully)

Seventy?

LOOS

Sixty?

They both stare at him.

LOOS

(cont'd)

Ten, then. Surely there are ten righteous people to be found in this pit of Hell! Time is running short, Xena. The God of Eli's wrath is soon to come down upon these wicked, wicked people. I can feel it.

XENA

The only wrath you're gonna
be feeling is the Pompeians'
if you keep calling them
wicked and depraved.

LOOS

I speak only the truth! God
commands my tongue!

XENA

Well, I'm commanding the
rest of you. Now let's move!

The group runs down the alley and into a more sedate area filled with magnificent villas. Despite their circumstances, Gabrielle looks around, wide-eyed, astounded at the beauty of the architecture surrounding her. Distracted, she almost slams into Xena's suddenly immobile back.

GABRIELLE

What are we stopping for?



XENA

(tightly)

Ask preacher
boy over here.

LOOS

This won't take
but a moment.

As Loos reaches into the breast of his toga, he steps aside, presenting Xena and Gabrielle with a rather interesting mural covering the wall of an immense villa.

Gabrielle's eyes widen appreciably.

GABRIELLE

Oh my. That's....

XENA
Optimistic?



GABRIELLE
Unless his father
was a centaur.

Loos steps back to the mural, a small pot of paint and a brush in his hand. Quickly, he outlines what appears to be a fig leaf over the painted man's impressive anatomy.

Suddenly, the door to the villa is flung open and a LARGE MAN of immense girth comes flying out, face brick red with rage.

LARGE MAN
See here! What
are you doing?!?

Loos paints more quickly

LOOS
Preserving the modesty of any
innocent soul who happens to
pass by this disgusting picture!
It is the God of Love's will!

LARGE MAN
I don't care whose will it is!
That's my wall and if you don't
stop defacing my property,
I'll have you thrashed!

LOOS
My God will protect
me from your evil!

LARGE MAN
Will he protect you
from my fist?!

Xena manages to catch the man's ham-sized fist just before it makes contact with Loos' glass jaw.

XENA

(placatingly)

Sorry about this. He forgot to take his medicine this morning.

GABRIELLE

Yes. We'll... uh... just be taking him back to the home now, ok?

The large man huffs.

LARGE MAN

Who will fix this defacement?

Spying a young boy slouched in the corner, Gabrielle digs into her bag and comes up with a couple of silver coins.

GABRIELLE

Will you wash off this nice man's wall?

Seeing the coins, the boy's eyes light up. He trots over to her, hand already out.

BOY

You bet!

GABRIELLE

Do a good job and there might be more for you.

BOY

I'll do the best job in all Pompeii!

GABRIELLE

Great!

XENA

Later.

Grabbing Loos' hand and causing him to drop his paint and brush, Xena drags the sputtering man away. Gabrielle gives a sweet smile to the homeowner and quickly follows.

GABRIELLE

Some vacation, huh?



XENA

Remind me to thank
your travel agent when
we get back to Greece.

Gabrielle can only laugh.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

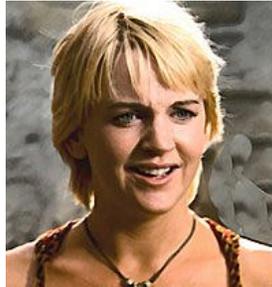
EXT. LOOS' HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Xena, Gabrielle and Loos stop outside of a gone-to-seed old shack on the outskirts of Pompeii.

GABRIELLE

(doubtfully)

Someone lives here?



LOOS

(proudly)

I do!

Gabrielle gazes at the crumbling foundation and the half stove-in roof and flicks a glance to Xena.

GABRIELLE

This place doesn't look very livable. Or safe.

LOOS

The God of Love provides for all his people.

GABRIELLE

I'd talk to management about getting an upgrade.



Loos gives her a blank look. Gabrielle sighs.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Never mind.

Giving a tiny shrug, Loos turns away, ducks under a crumbling archway, and steps inside the dark, dank hut.

LOOS

(voice muffled)

Please, come inside. I'll show you where you can store your gear once you've collected it.

Gabrielle looks at Xena, wide-eyed. Xena rolls her own eyes.

XENA

Loos.

LOOS

(off camera)

Come inside!

XENA

Loos!

After a moment, Loos steps back outside and straightens, wiping soot and cobwebs from his fruit-spattered toga. Gabrielle's lip curls and she backs unobtrusively away.

LOOS

Yes?

XENA

We appreciate your offer, but we already have a place to stay.

Loos stares at them both.

GABRIELLE

So we'll... uh... be seeing you around, ok? Try to stay out of trouble.

LOOS

Wait! Wait! You can't.... You can't seriously be thinking of staying among those... those... infidels!

Xena sighs.

XENA

Loos, they're not infidels.
They're people who live their
lives differently than you do.
There's no right or wrong
about it. It simply is.

Loos' jaw drops.

LOOS

I cannot believe I'm hearing
such words falling from the
lips of the Mother of the
Messenger. It's... heresy!

XENA

No, it's the truth. My truth.
Loos, I may not agree
with your beliefs....

Loos gasps.

XENA

(cont'd)

But I respect them.
I ask the same from you.

She inclines her head to him.

XENA

(cont'd)

It was good seeing you again.
Try to stay out of the way
of the Pompeians, ok?

LOOS

But... but....

GABRIELLE

Bye, Loos!

The two make quickly their escape, leaving Loos to splutter by his broken down doorway.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

He's gonna be trouble.

XENA
Oh yeah.



CUT TO:

EXT. AMPHITHEATER - EVENING

A young boy leads Xena and Gabrielle down the steps of the rapidly filling amphitheater. Gabrielle, her face glowing, is looking all around her as they descend toward the stage.

GABRIELLE
I can't believe it. I just... gods...
we're actually going to see a play
in the amphitheater of Pompeii!

XENA
(dryly)
That's what it looks like, yes.

Gabrielle blushes.

GABRIELLE
Sorry. I'm running on,
aren't I?

Xena grins.

XENA
S'all right. I like it when
you're happy.

GABRIELLE
Oh, believe me, I am
very definitely happy.

XENA
Good.

They stop a few rows up from the stage, and Xena steps aside, allowing Gabrielle to precede her into the row. Thanking the young usher, they soon find their seats, center-stage. Xena settles in.

XENA
(*cont'd*)
Not bad, huh?

GABRIELLE
Not bad?! Xena, these are
the best seats in the house!

She rests her head on Xena's shoulder.

GABRIELLE
(*cont'd*)
Thank you so much for getting
these tickets, and for coming to
see the play with me. I'm sure
you probably have other things
you'd like to be doing right now.



Xena pretends to think about it.

XENA
Nope. Right here, right
now, with you. There isn't
any place I'd rather be.

Gabrielle ducks her head, then turns and kisses Xena's shoulder. Reaching out, Xena slips an arm around her and snuggles her as close as the seats allow.

GABRIELLE
(*profoundly*)
Thanks.

XENA
No problem. Look,
they're about to start.

CUT TO:

EXT. STAGE - NIGHT

A young man clad in rich robes strides out onto the stage and moves to the left, where he leans forward as if looking through a window.

At the edge of stage left, a man and woman stand up against the wall, obviously engaged in a sexual act.

The young man sighs.

SACCUS

Oh, Penellopa, what riches I would
give for the merest taste of your
sweet lips. An entire Kingdom,
were it mine to give, I would
lay down at your feet.

As Saccus continues to gaze adoringly out the window, another actor enters; a middle aged, exceedingly well-dressed man.

PALICUS

See here, young man! The night
grows late! What are you doing
staring out that window?

Saccus straightens and fakes a stretch and yawn.

SACCUS

It is nothing, Father. I was merely
wishing the moon goodnight.

PALICUS

You and your dreaming ways.
You'll never make a merchant if
you continue on so. Now quick!
To bed. The morrow comes quickly,
and I will return from Pompeii
with your new virgin bride.

MAN IN CROWD

There are no virgins
in Pompeii!

The audience hoots and cheers.

SACCUS

Yes, Father. As you wish.

The young man slips into his bed. The father leaves, satisfied.

As soon as the 'room' is empty, Saccus arises and returns to the window. The woman now stands alone, straightening her garments and pocketing the coins she's received for her night's labors. Sensing eyes upon her, she turns and smiles at the young man staring at her boldly from the nearby window. As his eyes stay rapt upon her, she slowly slips down the shoulder of her toga, giving him a view of the merchandise.

From stage right, another man rushes on, a large square of linen in his hands. Yelling incoherently, he rushes to cover the young actress, wrapping the square several times around her until she is as bound as a mummy.

The audience roars with laughter, thinking this is part of the play. Only Xena and Gabrielle, frozen in their seats, know differently.

GABRIELLE

(whispering)

Loos....

Grabbing the woman, Loos turns and faces the stage.

LOOS

The God of Love will punish you
for your lewd acts here tonight!
Heed my words! His wrath is
coming! Repent your sins!
Repent! Repent!!

Several large men rush onto the stage and tackle the unfortunate preacher and the even more unfortunate actress. The crowd voices its displeasure and starts to pelt the stage with more overripe fruit.

Gabrielle makes as if to rise, only to be pulled down by Xena.

GABRIELLE

But....

XENA

Relax. It'll be all right.
They won't hurt him.

GABRIELLE

But how...?

XENA

(forcefully)

It'll be all right.



Sure enough, the angry men are rather gentle with the raving preacher, pulling him up from the ground and leading him, protesting, from the stage.

LOOS
REPENT!!! REPENT!!!

CROWD
BOOOOOOOO!

At last, Loos is ushered off, the actress is pulled to her feet and unwrapped, and the stage is cleared of all debris.

The play continues.

CUT TO:

EXT. AMPHITHEATER - NIGHT

As the actors take their bows, Gabrielle dabs the tears from her cheeks with a bit of cloth from her bag. Her hands are red from clapping and her eyes are red from crying. When the applause dies down, Gabrielle turns to Xena. She smirks, then shakes her companion's shoulder.

GABRIELLE
Xena. Xena, wake up!

Xena starts.

XENA
Wha--? I wasn't asleep.

GABRIELLE
(knowingly)
Just checking your eyelids for holes, right?



Xena gives her a pointed look. Gabrielle grins.

GABRIELLE
(cont'd)
The torture's over.
We can leave now.

Stretching cramped muscles, Xena comes to her feet and helps her partner up.

XENA

So, how'd you enjoy it?

GABRIELLE

Oh, it was wonderful!
So sad, so romantic!
It was just... amazing.

Xena smiles.

XENA

Good. Glad you enjoyed it.

GABRIELLE

I did. So, where to now?

XENA

(offhandedly)

Oh, I thought we might take
up the producer's invite
to the after-play party.

GABRIELLE

(shocked)

The what?

Xena shrugs, hiding a smirk.

XENA

Some of the actors were upset
that they didn't get to see you
at the Café last night, so the
producer asked for the honor of
your company after the play tonight.

GABRIELLE

By the gods....

XENA

If you're interested, of course.



GABRIELLE

Interested?!? Come on!
What are we waiting for?!?

Chuckling, Xena leads an excited and happy Gabrielle from the amphitheater.

CUT TO:

INT. BARD ROCK CAFÉ - NIGHT

The cast party has, like many Pompeian parties before it, denigrated into somewhat of an orgy, with groups of people, in various stages of undress, doing what comes naturally.

Standing in the center of the room, oblivious to the activities around them, are Xena and Gabrielle, pressed closely together and swaying to the sensuous beat of the drums. They are lost in the music, and each other.

Gabrielle pulls away slightly and looks up at Xena, her eyes shining.

GABRIELLE

(emotionally)
Thank you.

XENA

For what?

GABRIELLE

For making this one of the
most magical nights of my life.

Gifting her with a wonderful smile, Xena spins Gabrielle, then pulls her back in close, then bends her head to purr in Gabrielle's ear.

XENA

My pleasure.

They then share a long, slow kiss that dissolves naturally as they go back to their dance.

Xena stiffens for a moment, then relaxes against Gabrielle, resigned, as she hears a commotion to the rear.

Loos comes charging in, all but dragging two large men who are guarding the door against intrusions such as his.

LOOS

Repent, you minions of Lucifer!
Repent! The God of Love will
bring down retribution on your
heads! A great burning is coming!
You will swim in a lake of fire
for all eternity! Repent!!

Roundly ignored, he stops abruptly as he spies Xena and Gabrielle standing in the center of the room. He rushes over to them.

LOOS

(cont'd)

What are you doing here?!?

XENA

What does it look like?

We're dancing.



His face softens into a smile.

LOOS

Offering one another sisterly comfort as a bastion against the abominations surrounding you. You are true children of Eli.

Gabrielle gapes at him, astounded.

GUARD

Come on, you. Out you go.

LOOS

Xena, Gabrielle, please come with me! You must not be exposed to any more of this depravity!

GABRIELLE

Loos, we're fine. Just go, ok?

LOOS

But....

XENA

Go!

LOOS

Repent!! All of you!!
I'll not warn you again!!

MAN

Thank the gods for that!!

Still yelling, Loos is led from the café.

Xena smiles down at Gabrielle.

XENA

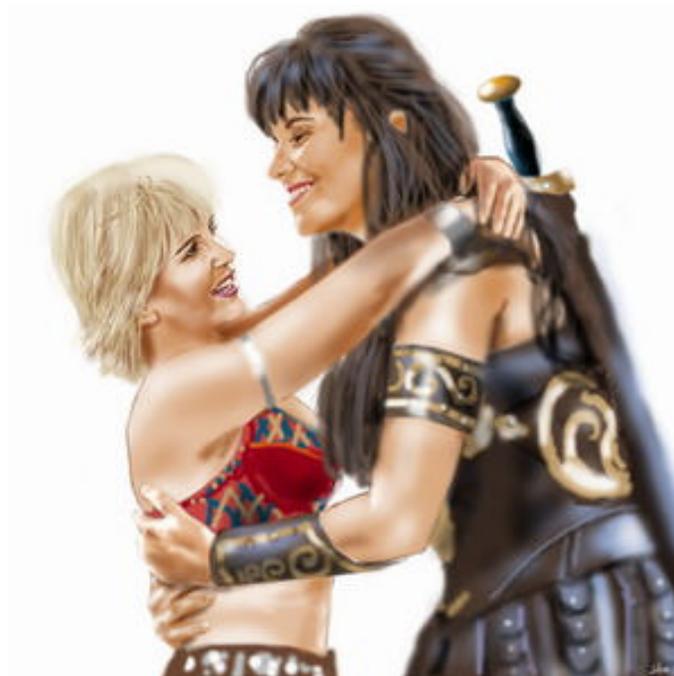
Shall we take this...
conversation... to a more
private location? Sister?

GABRIELLE

Xena, if my sister ever looked
at me the way you're looking at
me right now, I'd have to kill her.



Xena chuckles.



XENA

If she ever looked at you
this way, I think I'd kill
her first. C'mon.

With a happy grin, Gabrielle allows herself to be led from the party.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. BEDROOM - LATE MORNING

Though it is late in the morning, Xena and Gabrielle are entwined on the bed, both apparently still deeply asleep. Xena's eyes pop open, alert and aware, a moment before a loud knock sounds on the door. Gabrielle lifts her head from her partner's chest, blinking sleepily.

The knock sounds again.

Slipping from the bed and pulling the sheet over Gabrielle, Xena yanks on a shift and pads over to the door. Opening it slightly, she peers through the crack, eyes narrow.

XENA

Yes?

Marcellas Flavius stands just outside the doorway, impeccably dressed as always, though looking a little flustered.

MARCELLAS FLAVIAS

I'm sorry to have disturbed you,
Xena but...I need your help.

GABRIELLE

(off camera)

What is it?

Xena looks over her shoulder to see Gabrielle, fully dressed, standing beside the bed. Smiling slightly, she steps back, opening the door more fully and inviting Marcellas Flavius inside with a raised eyebrow.

MARCELLAS FLAVIAS

(to Xena)

Thank you.

(to Gabrielle)

It's your louse, I'm afraid.

Gabrielle's brow wrinkles.

GABRIELLE

You mean Loos?



Marcellas Flavias smiles.

MARCELLAS FLAVIAS

Yes, though I do believe that at this moment, my fellows would agree that my pronunciation of his name is a bit more apt.

Gabrielle sighs.

GABRIELLE

What's he gotten into now?

MARCELLAS FLAVIAS

The better question might be what hasn't he gotten into. We've spent the past two days preparing for the Vulcanalia and he's running rampant through the streets, smashing statues and defacing property. He's completely destroyed the fish catch that we were going to offer in sacrifice, and he's even tried to water the wine!

GABRIELLE

Oh boy.

MARCELLAS FLAVIAS

It's... not good. He's escaped from the constables twice now and I'm afraid his life will be forfeit if he's caught again. Please, you must restrain him. For his sake and ours.

After a moment, Xena nods.

XENA

We'll do what we can.

MARCELLAS FLAVIAS

Thank you.

Bowing to them both, she gracefully slips from the room, closing the door quietly behind her.

GABRIELLE

Don't say it.

XENA

(innocently)

What?

GABRIELLE

Just... Xena, if we were on a deserted island in the middle of nowhere, some madman on a mission would manage to find us. So let's just find Loos, stick him somewhere safe, and try to enjoy what's left of our vacation, ok?

Xena grins.

XENA

Fine with me.



CUT TO:

EXT. POMPEII - DAY

The street in front of the café looks as if a tornado has run through it. Carts are overturned, shards of broken statuary and jars litter the cobbled ground, wall paintings have been defaced with large black swaths of paint, and the citizens are red-faced with anger.

GABRIELLE

By the gods....

XENA

Looks like he's been at it for awhile.

GABRIELLE

I'm surprised they haven't strung him up somewhere by now. Xena, when we leave, I think we should take him with us. He's not... he's not well.

XENA

First things first. Let's go.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREETS OF POMPEII - DAY

Loos' rampant destruction makes it easy to track him, and Xena and Gabrielle waste no time in their task. When they finally catch up to him, he is surrounded by a crowd of screaming Pompeians thirsting for blood.

Xena and Gabrielle wade quickly into the melee plucking angry, toga-clad citizens out of the way as they go. Xena reaches him first and pulls him up from the ground where he's fallen. His face is bloody; his body a mass of bruises and welts. His muddy toga has been rent at the seams and hangs off of his narrow body.

XENA

(cont'd)

All right, that's enough.
Back off.

MARCUS ANTONIUS

Back off?! Have you seen
what he's done, Xena?

XENA

I see it. I also see
what you've done to
him. Now back off.

AFRICANUS

He's ruined our festival!

STENTONIUS

He's destroyed our statues
and defaced our property!
Our sacrifice is gone!
What will we offer
Vulcan in its stead?

LOOS

Offer him nothing! The
gods you worship are
false... mmmph!

Xena slaps a hand over Loos' mouth and glares at the rest of the men.

MAN

Start up a bonfire and
offer up the lunatic!!

The crowd cheers and begins to press forward again.

XENA

Don't even think about it.



Her free hand drifts toward her chakram. The men notice and stop moving.

Gabrielle presses through and stands beside Xena. She eyes the men directly.

GABRIELLE

(calmly)

Please. It's obvious this man is... troubled.

LOOS

Mmmmph!!

GABRIELLE

Let us take him back to his home and keep him there for the rest of the day.

AFRICANUS

But what of the damage he's caused?!

GABRIELLE

We'll... find a way to make it up to you.

She looks around at the huge mess, and sighs.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Somehow.



Africanus grumbles, not willing to concede.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Will taking his life really
make things right?

Much shuffling of feet as the men look at one another slightly abashed.

STENTONIUS

I guess not. But please, make
sure he stays away from here.
This festival is very important to us.

GABRIELLE

(relieved)

We will. You have our word.

Stentonius looks to Xena, who nods.

STENTONIUS

Very well. But I'm warning you, Loos. If I spy so much as a hair on your head for the rest of the festival, I swear by Jupiter I'll throw you into Vulcan's fire myself.

With that, he gathers the rest of the men and stalks through the debris, muttering and grumbling.

Removing her hand from his mouth, Xena gives Loos a fierce glare. He swallows hard, but mercifully keeps his mouth shut.

XENA

Let's go.

CUT TO:

INT. LOOS' HOUSE - DAY

Entering the dark, dank, crumbling structure, Gabrielle picks a sticky cobweb from her face and hair with a shudder of revulsion. She blinks as her eyes slowly become accustomed to the darkness.

GABRIELLE

Wow. Talk about
your fixer uppers.



Xena pushes Loos through the doorway, then enters herself. Straightening back to her full height, she grabs the remains of his toga and yanks him across the room to a rickety table and chair sitting off to one side. As Gabrielle lights the few stubby candles scattered about the hovel, Xena pushes Loos down into the chair, then tilts his face up, assessing his injuries.

XENA

Gabrielle, get some clean rags if you can find any, and some water from the skin.

Gabrielle returns with the requested items. Loos remains uncharacteristically subdued as Xena tends to his injuries, wiping the blood and dirt from his face, chest and arms.

Her task complete, Xena tosses the filthy rag on the table.

XENA

(cont'd)
You'll live.

LOOS

(softly)
Thank you.

With a final, piercing look, Xena stands up from the table, turns, and leaves the house.

Sighing softly, Gabrielle approaches the table and looks down at the beaten man.

GABRIELLE

Loos, why are you doing this?

LOOS

I told you. For the God of Eve and of Eli. For their sakes, these people must be cleansed.

GABRIELLE

With violence?

Loos shrugs.

LOOS

If that is what must be.

Gabrielle lays a gentle hand on his shoulder.

GABRIELLE

Loos, Eli was the kindest, most loving, most gentle man I knew. He hated violence. He would have given his own life rather than harm anyone or anything. Can't you see that what you're doing in his name, what you're preaching and threatening, isn't right?

LOOS

(passionately)

It is right, Gabrielle. I am doing as my God commands.

He makes as if to stand, but Gabrielle's strong hand pins him in place.

GABRIELLE

I wouldn't.

XENA

(off camera)

She's right.

Xena steps into the hovel and straightens a sneer on her face.

XENA

(cont'd)

You really don't want to make me any angrier than I already am, my friend, so be a nice little zealot and pray or chant or whatever it is you do, and don't even think about setting one foot outside of this house until morning.



LOOS

But you don't understand!

XENA

Oh, I understand plenty. I understand you've got two choices. You either stay in that chair of your own free will... or I tie you to it.

Loos stares at her for a long moment, gauging her seriousness. Finally, his shoulders slump and he nods, defeated.

Satisfied, Xena crooks an eyebrow toward Gabrielle who smiles briefly and steps outside of the house behind her partner.

CUT TO:

EXT. LOOS' HOUSE - DAY

Sitting back against the crumbling stucco that makes up the outer walls of Loos' home, Xena and Gabrielle look toward the city. They listen to the gaiety of the celebration heard in the music, and the good natured shouts, and the laughter of the people of Pompeii. Gabrielle turns her head to look at Xena's profile.

GABRIELLE

Heck of a way to spend our last day here, huh?

Xena smiles.

XENA

Could be worse.

GABRIELLE

(surprised)
It could?



XENA

Sure.

Smirking, she lifts a skin heavy with sweet wine from the bushes where she'd hidden it.

XENA

(cont'd)

We might not have had this.

Laughing happily, Gabrielle snatches the heavy skin from Xena's grasp, uncaps it, and squirts a stream of liquid into her mouth, gulping noisily.

GABRIELLE

Mm. This stuff is great!

XENA

Give me that.

Grabbing the skin, Xena tilts her head back and helps herself to several tasty swallows of wine before handing it back. Gabrielle laughs and rests her head against Xena's shoulder as she enjoys the fruits of Pompeii.

CUT TO:

INT. LOOS' HOUSE - NIGHT

Still sitting at the table, Loos has his hands clasped before him. His head is bowed and his lips move soundlessly in prayer.

From a swept out and reasonably clean corner of the room, Xena and Gabrielle watch him.

GABRIELLE

How long do you think
he's going to keep that up?

XENA

Till morning, I hope.



She stiffens, and Gabrielle looks at her.

GABRIELLE

Xena?

Xena holds up a hand, cocking her head. Recognizing the gesture, Gabrielle stills her breathing as she strains to pick up whatever sound Xena might be hearing.

VOICES

(distantly)

Xena! Gabrielle!

A beat, then...

VOICES

(cont'd, closer)
Xena! Gabrielle!

Xena moves to rise from her position on the floor, but Loos beats her to it, jumping to his feet, wide-eyed and full of energy.

LOOS

Stay here, both of you!
I'll take care of this!

Before either of them can move, he is gone.

CUT TO:

EXT. LOOS' HOUSE - NIGHT

A huge crowd of men and women surround the front of Loos' home. Many of them are wearing fabulous costumes and carrying lit torches, chanting the names of Xena and Gabrielle.

Loos faces them, face red with anger, body tense with righteous indignation.

LOOS

Begone from here,
you infidels!

CROWD

XENA!

LOOS

Go back to your pits of
sin and defilement!

CROWD

GABRIELLE!

LOOS

The God of Love's judgment is
coming and his retribution will
be swift and painful! Go back
to your pits and pray! Pray
for his mercy! Repent!!

MARCUS ANTONIUS

Get out of the way, Loos!

AFRICANUS

We don't care about
you or your God.

STENTONIOUS

We want your guests!
Bring out Xena and Gabrielle!

LOOS

Never!

CROWD

XENA! GABRIELLE!

LOOS

Never! I will not offer them up
to be further tainted by your
depravity! Leave now or
feel the wrath of my God!

Taking her cue, Xena ducks out of the hut before the Pompeians can take up Loos' challenge. Gabrielle follows right behind. The crowd cheers at their presence.

CROWD

XENA! GABRIELLE!

Xena holds up her hands. The crowd quiets.

XENA

Thanks. We're... uh....

She looks at Gabrielle.

XENA

(cont'd)

Touched...
by your enthusiasm.

The crowd cheers again.

XENA

(cont'd)

But we're gonna have
to decline your invitation.



MARCUS ANTONIOUS

What?

AFRICANUS

Why?

Gabrielle steps forward.

GABRIELLE

It's not that we don't want to
join the party. It's just that...
we have to get an early
start in the morning.

STENTONIOUS

All the more reason for you
to celebrate with us tonight!

The crowd cheers.

GABRIELLE

(sincerely regretful)
Thanks, but... we can't.
I'm sorry.

MARCELLAS FLAVIAS

Please?

GABRIELLE

No. I'm really sorry.
We'll see you tomorrow
before we leave, okay?

Realizing that their friends will not be swayed, the people finally sigh in resignation and slowly turn and walk back toward the city. They leave Xena, Gabrielle and Loos to stare after them.

Xena and Gabrielle exchange a sad, regretful look and duck back inside the house. Loos continues to stare after the departing crowd, grinning fiercely, the light in his eyes not quite sane.

CUT TO:

INT. LOOS' HOUSE - MORNING

The interior of the hut is still dark when Xena awakens. As she listens, the crazed cackling laughter that awoke her sounds again.

GABRIELLE

(fuzzily)
What was that?

XENA

(grimly)

Loos. He's finally snapped.



GABRIELLE

Finally?!

Hopping to her feet, Xena pulls her partner up with her.

XENA

C'mon.

CUT TO:

EXT. LOOS' HOUSE - MORNING

As Xena and Gabrielle exit the house, they see Loos capering about and laughing like a madman. His toga is wrinkled and mud-spattered, his hair sticks up in greasy spikes. His eyes are rolling crazily in their sockets, lit as if from within.

LOOS

(screaming)

I was right!! God's judgment against
the evil of this city is at hand!! My
prayers have been answered!!!
Blessed be the God of Love and the
wonders he performs!!! Prepare to
meet your doom, citizens of Pompeii!!

Turning, he finally notices his two watchers. He laughs again.

LOOS

(cont'd)

Xena! Gabrielle! You thought
I was mad, didn't you?

GABRIELLE

Loos....

LOOS

You thought I was crazy! Well you were wrong! Come see! Come see the wrath of the God of Eli against this unholy city! Come see!!

Xena walks forward several steps, her gaze following Loos' wildly pointing finger. Her eyes narrow then widen. Her lips part slightly.

GABRIELLE

(nervously)

Xena? What is it?

XENA

(softly)

Son of a bacchae....



FADE OUT.

To Be Continued....

DISCLAIMER

The cities of Sodom, Gomorrah, and Pompeii were harmed well before the making of this motion picture.