

# **Xena: Warrior Princess - Subtext Virtual Season 9**



**Production #V915 – Deserting the Past**

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## TEASER

FADE IN:

### EXT. DEEP FOREST CAMPSITE - NIGHT

It is a clear and starry night. On a hilltop stands a forest, and in the middle of the forest on the top of the hill is a tiny clearing.

In the center of the clearing is a fire, neatly made, with a ring of rocks around it to keep it from burning down the surrounding trees.

On one side of the fire, a pile of furs is lying, looking very thick and comfy, and on top of the furs lie Xena and Gabrielle.

**GABRIELLE**

Wow. What a beautiful night.

Xena is busy munching on something.

Other than Gabrielle, surprisingly.

**XENA**

Yeah, and if you make me another  
one of those sweet sandwiches,  
it'll be even more beautiful.

Gabrielle reaches to one side and picks up a small square confection, with something squishy in the middle. She hands it over.

**GABRIELLE**

*(indulgently)*

Whatever you desire, Princess.

**XENA**

Ooh. You could get in a lot  
of trouble saying things  
like that, y'know.

**GABRIELLE**

*(smirking)*

I know.



Gabrielle crosses her ankles and looks up at the sky.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

So what do you  
think, a ship?

**XENA**

*(looking)*

Ox cart.

Gabrielle gives Xena a loving, but long suffering look. Xena doesn't turn her head, but she grins as though she sees Gabrielle anyway.

Gabrielle shakes her head.

**GABRIELLE**

It's really pretty out here. I'm glad we came this way.

**XENA**

*(nodding)*

Me too. I think I can find a lot  
of those rare herbs I was telling  
you about around here.

Gabrielle reaches over and absentmindedly plays with Xena's hair. Xena gives her a 'look' but does not comment.

**GABRIELLE**

You know, I'm really glad  
you decided to do that.

She looks at Xena.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

Start recording all the healing  
knowledge you have.

**XENA**

*(shrugging)*

Be nice to have something for people  
to remember me by besides kicking  
heads in. Maybe if we run into any  
sharp kids like you want to teach,  
I can leave them notes.



Gabrielle rolls over, and sits up. She removes a pan from the fire, taking several more of the square confections from it, and setting them to cool on a rock near the furs.

**GABRIELLE**

We've been just reacting to life for so long, it's a little weird to be planning for the future, isn't it?

**XENA**

Very.

**GABRIELLE**

I mean, we always help people. But it's usually....

**XENA**

Right then.

**GABRIELLE**

Yeah. I like the idea of giving them something to help in their future... like teaching them to read.

Xena leans over and swipes another treat. She lies back down.

**XENA**

*(satisfied)*

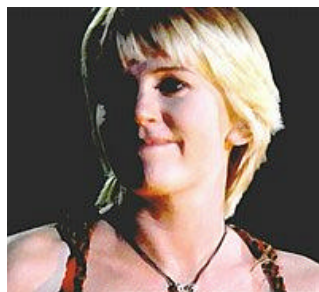
I like that idea too. It's time we put our past behind us. Make something new going forward.

They both fall silent. The crickets get louder. The stars twinkle overhead.

**GABRIELLE**

*(clearing throat)*

Isn't this where some messenger out of your past usually falls out of a tree on top of us?



**XENA**

*(chuckling)*

We're not under any trees.

Gabrielle settles down next to Xena, and rests her head on Xena's shoulder.

**GABRIELLE**

Maybe someday we can  
even start a school.

Xena looks skeptical.

**XENA**

Well....



**GABRIELLE**

Hey, we have to  
retire sometime.

Xena kisses Gabrielle.

**XENA**

Some other time. I have  
other ideas for right now.

Gabrielle laughs, and we -

**FADE OUT.**

**END OF TEASER**

## ACT ONE

FADE IN:

### EXT. FOOTPATH - DAY

Xena, Gabrielle, and Argo II meander down what is nominally a road, but really is more of an overgrown footpath. It appears that not many people have gone this way in a long time.

It is very quiet around them. They are walking through an evergreen forest, with little evidence of any habitation. Birds chirp overhead. Somewhere not far off is the sound of running water.

**GABRIELLE**

You're sure this  
is a short cut?



**XENA**

Of course. Aren't I always?

Gabrielle looks away and whistles. Xena boots her in the butt. They both laugh.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

Well, I'm not positive. But  
it's as good a path as any.

Gabrielle looks around, takes a deep breath.

**GABRIELLE**

Yeah, it is. I don't think  
we've been in these  
parts before, have we?

Xena looks around thoughtfully.

**XENA**

Nope.

**GABRIELLE**

Great! Who knows  
what we'll find?

**XENA**

I do.

Gabrielle turns and walks backwards.

**GABRIELLE**

You do?

**XENA**

Sure. I know we'll find crickets,  
dust, a river, and a bunch  
of pine trees. C'mon.



Xena and Gabrielle continue walking along the road. It dips down into a hollow, and at the bottom of the hollow is a small creek.

The path goes right to the edge, and picks up on the other side. From the worn away appearance of the foliage on either side, it is apparently a ford.

Xena leads Argo II to the ford and starts across. Gabrielle follows her. They slosh through the water, which comes up to Xena's thighs and Gabrielle's waist.

Halfway through, Gabrielle stops.

**GABRIELLE**

Hey... Xena?

Xena stops. Argo keeps going, and Xena releases her reins.

**XENA**

What?

**GABRIELLE**

*(pointing)*

Look.

Xena sloshes back over to Gabrielle and looks. In the water, there is a glint of something underneath, and the water swirls around an object.

**XENA**

Could be a tree... but....

Xena walks forward into the deeper water, feeling her way cautiously. She reaches into the water up to her elbow and feels the obstruction.

**GABRIELLE**

What is it?

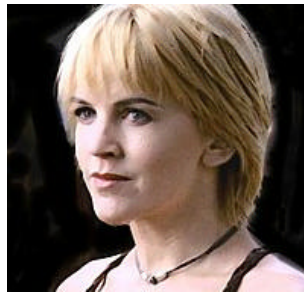
**XENA**

Wagon, I think.

Xena removes her hand, and it comes up unexpectedly holding a broken sword. The blade is dented and twisted, but the hilt appears relatively clean.

**GABRIELLE**

Interesting cargo.



**XENA**

Yeah.

Xena tosses the sword to the opposite bank, then reaches back into the water. She pulls her hand back again, and this time it holds a skull.

**GABRIELLE**

Hope that wasn't cargo.

**XENA**

Driver. Looks like trouble.

**GABRIELLE**

Trouble? Gee. Hm. It's been three days.... Yeah, it's about time.... I was starting to think we'd lost our edge in finding it.

**XENA**

*(amused)*

Never.

Xena walks back over to Gabrielle carrying the skull. She examines it.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

Hasn't been here that long.



Xena turns and tosses the skull back into the water. It sinks, then pops up and goes tumbling past Gabrielle down the creek.

**GABRIELLE**

Was that a sword  
cut in the top?

**XENA**

Yeah.

They walk back to the fording point and climb up the opposite bank, where Argo II is waiting. Xena picks up the broken sword and sticks it under one of the saddle straps.

They move on, but they are now far more alert.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. TINY RUNDOWN VILLAGE - DAY**

In a roughly cut clearing in the forest is a small village. The huts are lashed together from whatever was available - most of the supports are tree limbs, and the roofs are made of woven branches with leaves tied over them to keep most of the rain out.

There is a general air of poverty. There are no herds of stock visible, except for a few goats tied near the huts. A fence of sticks cut from limbs surrounds a tiny, bedraggled garden near one hut.

In the center of the town is a water trough. A young woman stands at the trough dipping a bucket into it. She is dressed in neatly kept rags, and she is barefoot.

She hears the sound of hoof beats and she reacts in almost panic, dropping the bucket and ducking behind the trough. She looks past the last hut, and sees Xena and Gabrielle approaching on the path.

**WOMAN**

Oh!

The woman gets up and runs away, dashing into the nearest hut.

Xena and Gabrielle pause at the entrance to the village. Gabrielle looks around.

**GABRIELLE**

Wow. Thought I was  
from a small town.

**XENA**

Mm.

Xena walks over to the hut with the garden and looks over the stick fence. Gabrielle walks on into the center of the village, which is silent and empty. She sees the bucket, and walks over to it to pick it up.

Xena joins her, looks at the bucket, touches the damp wood inside.

**XENA**

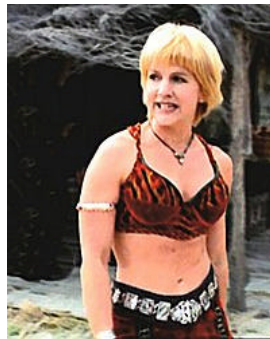
*(cont'd)*

Someone was in a hurry.

Gabrielle sets the bucket down next to the trough. She and Xena look around. A gust of wind opens a door on one of the huts and swings it shut again. The town appears deserted.

**GABRIELLE**

What do you think?



Xena walks over to a half collapsed hut almost behind one of the trees. She picks up what had been the door frame and looks at it - the limb has been chopped in half with some kind of sharp edge.

**XENA**

I think these people  
have a problem.

**GABRIELLE**

People?

Xena nods.

**XENA**

They're out there.

Gabrielle steps away from the trough.

**GABRIELLE**

*(loudly)*

Hello? Anyone here?

*(waiting)*

Hello?

There is no answer. Gabrielle looks questioningly at Xena. Xena taps her ear, and smiles. Gabrielle shrugs.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

Maybe they don't  
want visitors.

**XENA**

Maybe.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. VILLAGE HUT - DAY**

The woman from the water trough crouches next to a man, behind the stick door of the hut.

**WOMAN**

What are they doing?

**MAN**

Just standing there.  
Maybe they won't do  
anything... just leave.

**WOMAN**

Don't be stupid, Casey.

**CASEY**

Well, look! They're  
not doing anything!

They peer through the sticks in the door.

**WOMAN**

Only because there's nothing  
more to destroy. Just keep quiet.

They watch. Xena roams around, examining everything. Gabrielle stands quietly by the trough, scooping a bucketful up and offering it to Argo II.

**CASEY**

See? They look okay!

**WOMAN**

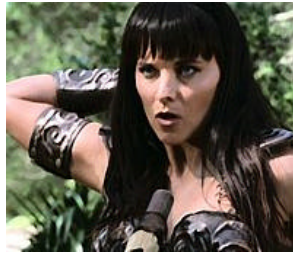
Don't tell me that. You  
haven't lost two sons!

The woman grips the sticks of the door so tightly her knuckles turn white.

**CUT TO:**

## EXT. TINY RUNDOWN VILLAGE - DAY

Xena hears something. She reaches for her sword and Gabrielle goes for her sais as a loud bang is heard. After a second, a goat comes flying out from between two huts, chased by a small boy.



**BOY**

Come back here! Hey!

The goat runs right under Argo II. The boy chases him, then he pulls up as he sees Xena and Gabrielle but he can't stop in time.

Xena makes a grab for the boy, Gabrielle makes a grab for the goat. Both are successful.

**BOY**

*(cont'd)*

*(yelling)*

Lemme go! Lemme go!

Help! Help!

**GOAT**

Maaaaaaa!!!!

**CUT TO:**

## INT. VILLAGE HUT - DAY

The woman jumps up.

**WOMAN**

Dorst! Oh no! Casey!

Stop them!

**CASEY**

Me?

The woman pulls the door open, hitting Casey and knocking him down. She runs out and heads for the trough.

**WOMAN**

Thieves! Murderers!  
Let him go! Help! Help!

**CUT TO:**

## EXT. TINY RUNDOWN VILLAGE - DAY

Xena picks the boy up.

**XENA**

Hey! Shut up!  
I'm not hurting you!

**BOY**

Lemme go!! AHHHH!!!!  
I'm dying! Ahhh! Help! Help!!!!

The woman comes pelting out of the hut, waving a stick

**WOMAN**

*(yelling)*  
All of you! Come out!  
We can't lose another one!  
Rise up! Rise up!!!!

Doors open around the village, and villagers come pouring out. They all have sticks, stones, frying pans, etc. They are frightened, but determined, and they are all heading towards Xena.

**GABRIELLE**

Uh oh.

Gabrielle lets go of the goat and pulls her sais, putting herself between the oncoming rabble and Xena.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*  
Let him go, Xena.



**XENA**

Why? There's only a score  
of em. You can handle it.

**GABRIELLE**

Xena!

The boy is struggling in Xena's grip, and yelling his head off. The crowd breaks into a run.

**BOY**

Lemmegolemmegolemmego!

**XENA**

*(yelling louder)*

Hey! Would you calm down?  
I'm not doing a thing to you, kid!

The boy stops yelling. The crowd doesn't stop coming. They wave sticks, and a few people throw stones.

**GABRIELLE**

Hold up!! Hey!!!

**WOMAN**

You won't get us this  
time, you... you....

Xena tosses the kid on Argo's back as the first wave of villagers reaches them. She starts grabbing sticks, as Gabrielle deflects stones.

**XENA**

*(bellowing)*

STOP IT!



The volume of Xena's voice makes the crowd waver, and Gabrielle claps a hand over one ear nearly conking herself in the head with her own sai.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

WE'RE NOT HERE  
TO HURT YOU.

**WOMAN**

Says who??!

**XENA**

ME!!!!!!!

Gabrielle edges away from Xena and sticks her right sai in her boot. She extends her hand.

**GABRIELLE**

Hi. My name's Gabrielle. I  
think we just started off  
on the wrong foot here.

The boy thumps his bare heels against Argo's shoulders. He is obviously unhurt.

**BOY**

Hey... Ain't this a pretty one?

Argo turns her head and looks at him. Casey pushes his way forward and takes Gabrielle's hand.

**CASEY**

See, Peti? I toldja they were  
okay. My name's Casey.

The crowd stirs, then puts their weapons down.

**GABRIELLE**

*(relieved)*

Casey. Thanks.  
And this is Xena.

Xena watches the crowd, but her name seems unknown. She relaxes. The woman, Peti, still looks suspicious.

**CASEY**

Sorry about all this.  
We've... uh....

**XENA**

Had some trouble  
here lately.

The woman approaches them and looks at them skeptically. She goes to Argo's side and examines the boy.

**PETI**

*(to Xena)*

How do we know you're not  
with them? You look like  
you're the same type.

**CASEY**

Peti, c'mon!

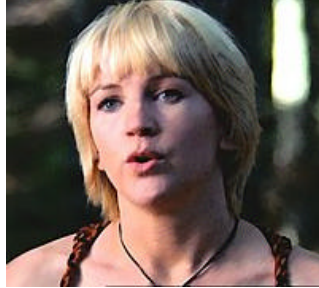
Xena picks the boy up off Argo and puts him on the ground.

**XENA**

We're only with  
each other.

**GABRIELLE**

Same type of what?  
Are you being attacked  
here? By who?



The villagers are now gathered around them. They are all similar in build and coloring, and their ragged clothing is all in a similar style. One man is carrying a scythe, which has symbols written on its blade. Xena notices it.

**CASEY**

Wild animals pretending to  
be humans, that's who.

**PETI**

Casey. Shut up.  
(to Xena and Gabrielle)  
Why don't you just keep  
on moving? We don't need  
any more trouble here.

Xena and Gabrielle exchange knowing looks.

**GABRIELLE**

Maybe we can help. We  
have a lot of experience  
dealing with this kind of thing.

**CASEY**

*(interestedly)*  
Yeah?

**PETI**

Oh, I'm sure you have.  
You look like you'd fit  
right in with them, too.

**CASEY**

Peti! Cut it out!



He looks to Xena and Gabrielle.

**CASEY**

*(cont'd)*

We'd like to hear any ideas you've got. We're pretty desperate.

**PETI**

Fool!

**XENA**

*(to Casey)*

Let's talk.

They start to walk towards the huts. The crowd slowly parts to let them through.

**CASEY**

*(confidentially)*

You don't really look like those troublemakers. Peti's just saying that because you're women.

**XENA**

Women?



**CASEY**

Like the one that runs them is.

Xena looks thoughtful, as she and Gabrielle follow the villagers home.

**XENA**

Interesting.

**FADE OUT.**

**END OF ACT ONE**

## ACT TWO

FADE IN:

### EXT. VILLAGE CAMPFIRE - DAY

The inhabitants of the small village are gathered around the campfire. It is obvious this is where most of the activity of the town happens. There is a small shelter made of limbs and dried leaves to one side, and crude shelves hold pots, cups and other rough serving utensils.

Around the fire are set stumps to sit on. Scattered around also, are various projects the villagers are working on - small tables, etc. A pile of dried branches sits to one side, and some bark lies next to it.

Peti and several other women are clustered on the far side of the fire, watching Xena and Gabrielle with unfriendly looks.

Gabrielle stops and looks around as they enter. Her expression is sober.

**GABRIELLE**

They don't have much.

**XENA**

No.

**GABRIELLE**

Why would raiders  
bother with them?



**XENA**

Good question.

Casey enters the clearing and walks over to Xena and Gabrielle.

**CASEY**

I'm sorry we greeted you  
so harshly. It's not usually  
our way to do that.

**PETI**

Speak for yourself, Casey. If it  
was up to us, all strangers  
would be greeted with worse.

**CASEY**

*(sighing)*

Peti, please.

Xena pulls a coin from her non-existent pocket. Gabrielle looks at her, then simply takes the coin.

**GABRIELLE**

Don't even bother.

Gabrielle walks towards the group of women, leaving Xena with Casey.

They watch Gabrielle leave.

**CASEY**

Is there something wrong  
with your friend?

**XENA**

Nope.

**CASEY**

You are friends, yes?

**XENA**

Among other things.

*(beat)*

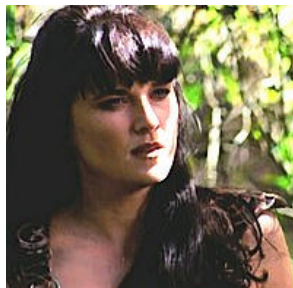
So, tell me about  
these attacks.

She looks around.

**XENA**

*(cont'd)*

What were they after?



Casey also looks around, then grimaces, appreciating Xena's point.

**CASEY**

Not much here, I grant you. But come,  
sit down. I'll tell you the whole story  
and maybe you can understand  
why we acted the way we did.

Xena appears to momentarily regret the non-coin flip. She follows Casey over to the stumps and they sit down. The villagers nearby look at them, but remain silent and continue various tasks.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. VILLAGE CAMPFIRE - FAR SIDE OF CLEARING - DAY**

Gabrielle approaches the group of unfriendly women. She picks a stump near them and sits on it, waiting to see if they start talking.

They do not.

**GABRIELLE**

Hi. I know you're not really interested  
in hearing this, but we're not  
intending on harming anyone here.

The women look at Peti, their apparent spokeswoman.

**PETI**

You could easily be lying.

**GABRIELLE**

*(nodding)*

I could. But the fact is, if  
we wanted to destroy this  
place, we would have.

The woman all stare at Gabrielle. Gabrielle smiles briefly.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

Really. You couldn't stop us.



Gabrielle pulls a sai from her boot and throws it overhand towards the nearest tree. It sinks into the bark several inches with a loud sound. Gabrielle gets up from her stump and walks over to it, pulling it loose. She puts the sai back into her boot.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*  
So....

Two of the women walk over to the tree and examine the holes. One sticks her finger in. It disappears up to the second knuckle.

**PETI**

You captured the boy. What were we supposed think? You acted just like the others. If it smells like sheep, and looks like sheep, I say shear it.

**GABRIELLE**

Catchy. I like it. But some sheep are harder to shear than others, and I should know since I grew up with them.  
*(beat)*

We weren't trying to capture anything. We just didn't want him and the goat to run into us.

**PETI**

She put the boy on the horse!

**GABRIELLE**

*(shrugging)*  
Argo's a big horse. It was the safest place for Xena to put him to get him out of harm's way.

The women look doubtfully at her.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*  
Why do you think we'd want to capture him anyway?

The women look at Peti. Peti crosses her arms and stares at Gabrielle.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. VILLAGE CAMPFIRE - DAY**

Xena is sitting with Casey and two other men. There is a shocked look on her face.

**XENA**

They steal your children?



**CASEY**

*(nodding)*

We were fine here for two seasons. It's not much, I know, but we managed to gather enough to live on, and we were happy. Anything away from the wars was good, you know?

**XENA**

*(somberly)*

I know

**CASEY**

Then they came. I don't know where from. I don't know where they settled at, but one day I saw one of them in the woods, and after that... it started.

**SECOND MAN**

We're the last of our kind. We don't want anything; we just want to be left alone to live and raise our children, and keep our customs.

**CASEY**

Every moon or so, they come down in the night. They never come into the village, but if one goes to get the goats, or to get water, or if they're out playing... they take them.

*(sadly)*

We've never seen any of them again. I lost two sons.

The second man indicates women on far side.

**SECOND MAN**

That's why the mothers.... They're so angry. We have only four children left. The boy is one of them. They thought you were going to take him when you grabbed him today.

Xena looks up and past the men to where the women are. She meets Gabrielle's eyes looking back at her. It's obvious Gabrielle also has heard the story.



**CASEY**

Anyway, I didn't mean to tell you all that. After all, why should you care?

Xena turns her head and looks at Casey.

**XENA**

You have no idea where these rats are taking your kids?

**SECOND MAN**

*(shaking head)*

Espos... he's a our best hunter. He tried to track them, but they just disappear. We think they come from north of here, but we're.... Well....

**XENA**

You're too scared to find out.

The men look embarrassed.

**CASEY**

We're not fighters. We tried to leave all that behind us. We're just farmers, trying to live.

Xena nods.

**XENA**

Well, we're not farmers.  
But living scared is never  
a good answer either.



Xena turns and leaves. The men look after her, both worried and intrigued.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. VILLAGE CAMPFIRE - FAR SIDE OF CLEARING - SAME TIME**

Gabrielle turns back around and faces the women.

**PETI**

I don't know why we're bothering  
telling you this. You don't care.

**GABRIELLE**

You're wrong about that.

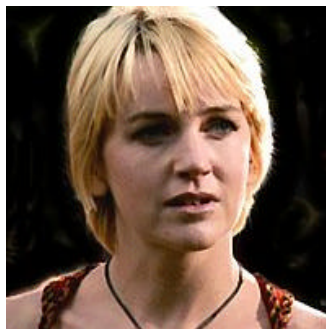
Peti rolls her eyes.

**PETI**

Sure I am.

**GABRIELLE**

We'll find your children.  
We'll bring them back here,  
if they're still alive.



The women stare at Gabrielle in disbelief.



**PETI**

How?

**GABRIELLE**

*(briefly smiling)*

We have many skills. But I don't expect you to believe that. You'll just have to take my word for it until you see it happen.

**PETI**

I will lay no hope on you, stranger.  
Come, the rest of you. We have chores to finish, and water to get for dinner.

Peti leads the women off. Gabrielle remains where she is, her back turned to the fire. She doesn't even flinch when Xena lays a hand on her shoulder.

**GABRIELLE**

Why?

**XENA**

Could be a lot of reasons.  
Slaves, maybe.

**GABRIELLE**

Or sacrifices.

Xena winces. Gabrielle turns her head and looks up at Xena.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

What's our plan? Do we go out now, and look for them?

Xena looks at the sky, which is darkening into twilight.

**XENA**

*(shaking head)*

Morning. Let's see what we can get to add to their dinner pot tonight.

**GABRIELLE**

Ah, the old 'way to their hearts is through their stomachs' trick?

**XENA**  
Can't hurt.



**GABRIELLE**  
*(smirking)*  
Yeah, and sometimes it works.

Xena looks at Gabrielle.

**XENA**  
You insinuating  
something, shortie?

**GABRIELLE**  
*(innocently)*  
Me? Like what?

**XENA**  
Hm. C'mon.

Gabrielle gets up, and they walk off together.

**CUT TO:**

### **EXT. FOREST - TWILIGHT**

Xena and Gabrielle glide through the trees, making almost no sound. Xena carries a dagger, Gabrielle carries a bow and arrow. Xena signals Gabrielle to go one way, she chooses a second and they separate.

Xena creeps up behind a moss covered boulder. She puts her dagger between her teeth and climbs it, cautiously poking her head over the top and looking past it.

She spots a wild goat, and she grins. The goat is cropping grass near a patch of trees. Xena climbs back down and circles the rocks, stalking the goat.

**CUT TO:**

### **EXT. FOREST - CLEARING - TWILIGHT**

Gabrielle has chosen a different hunting method. She has come upon a stream, and has settled behind a fallen log, downwind from the bank. She waits patiently, turning her head to listen to the sounds around her.

She hears something. Slowly, she puts the bow in front of her and draws back the arrow, her eyes fixed on an opening in the brush.

There is motion, and Gabrielle's shoulder tenses. Then the leaves part and a man steps into the clearing, walking very softly.

Gabrielle freezes, then she lowers the arrow and ducks behind the log.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. FOREST - TWILIGHT**

The goat is chewing grass placidly.

Ten feet away, the brush parts, revealing Xena's eyes, and a wicked grin.

Just then, the goat looks up, hearing something. Stalks of grass drop out of its mouth and it starts, then runs off into the woods.

Xena frowns.

**XENA**

Don't tell me I'm losing  
my touch already.



A sound catches her attention, and she looks towards the far side of the patch of grass the goat was on. Two men step out of the forest, dressed in a mixture of animal hides and cloth, their skin stained a purplish color. Xena's eyes widen.

The men slink off into the forest just past where Xena is laying. Xena waits, then she gets to her feet and follows them.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. FOREST CLEARING - TWILIGHT**

The two men step out into the clearing, joining the third already there. They talk together in inaudible voices as Gabrielle watching from behind her log.

The three men separate and go to different trees, hiding themselves behind them. There is an open space leading down to the water, the grass is beaten down there by many people and animals going to the edge of the creek for water.

Xena creeps up behind Gabrielle and hesitates, not wanting to startle her.

Gabrielle reaches back without looking and touches Xena's head, tweaking her hair and pulling her forward. Xena looks a bit surprised. She taps her ear, and looks at Gabrielle in question.

Gabrielle shakes her head, and touches her chest above her heart instead.

Xena joins Gabrielle behind the log, an intrigued expression on her face. After a moment, she merely shakes her head and presses close to Gabrielle as they watch the now empty space.



**GABRIELLE**  
(almost inaudibly)  
Trap?

Xena nods.

They hear voices coming towards them. From between the trees, they can see a group approaching, and after a moment, it's obvious it's the women from the village.

Gabrielle grips Xena's wrist and looks in that direction.

**XENA**  
(inaudibly)  
I know.

**GABRIELLE**  
You get the ones  
on the right?

Gabrielle puts her bow down and reaches for a sai. Xena grabs her hand and holds it still. Gabrielle looks at Xena questioningly.

Xena points at herself, then at Gabrielle, then at the women. She gathers the fingers of Gabrielle's hand together and closes her fist around them.

Gabrielle rolls her eyes.

**GABRIELLE**  
Let them take us?

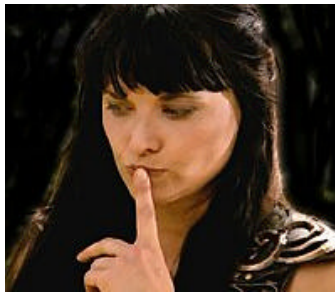
**XENA**  
(shrugging)  
Easiest way to find 'em.

Gabrielle looks at the oncoming women. Then she sighs, and pushes her bow and arrow under the log, shaking her head. Xena carefully excavates a trench and lays her chakram and her sword inside it, covering everything with leaves.

**XENA**  
(cont'd)  
Got in a lot of trouble  
last time I did this.

**GABRIELLE**  
(smiling)  
Gonna take those  
leathers off too?

**XENA**  
Shh.



The women enter the clearing and go to the water, unaware of anything around them. As they cluster near the log, Xena and Gabrielle slip out and join them.

**PETI**  
What? Oh. It's you.

**GABRIELLE**  
Yep, it's us. Just  
needed some water.

**PETI**  
Well, you'll wait till we finish.

Peti and two others go to the edge and start to fill basins with water.

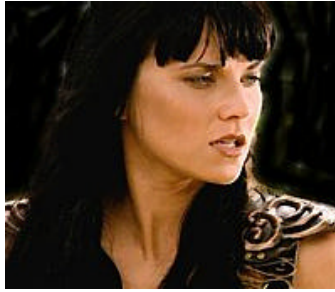
A moment later, a soft hiss is heard, and darts fly from the underbrush, hitting the women.

Xena hears them.

Three women fall, then more darts rush out.

**XENA**

Gab....



**GABRIELLE**

I know.

Xena and Gabrielle drop to the ground almost in unison, flopping into attitudes of convincing unconsciousness.

No one screams. After a moment, the clearing is littered with women's bodies, and silence has returned to the forest.

**FADE OUT.**

**END OF ACT TWO**

## ACT THREE

FADE IN:

### EXT. FOREST PATH - EVENING

The women from the village are fastened together, and their wrists are tied. Their legs are tied also, but loosely so they can walk.

They are not in the same place they were taken. The trees are much closer, and there are no sounds of habitation around them.

Xena and Gabrielle are near the back. They appear docile and avoid looking at the men who have captured them. They have their hands tied behind them.

The men have odd purple staining on their bodies, and all have thick hair and beards. They wear hide clothing, but carry well crafted weapons.

PETI

*(angrily)*

Thought you were  
going to protect us.

One of the captors hears her.

MAN

What?

Peti falls silent, but glares at Gabrielle. Gabrielle doesn't answer. The men prod the women with long sticks.

MAN

*(cont'd)*

Move!

PETI

Where are you taking us?

The man hits Peti across the face with his stick.

MAN

No talking!

Xena watches impassively. Gabrielle looks down and swallows. Her hands clench at her sides, but she also remains where she is.

MAN

*(cont'd)*

Move. Be silent.  
We won't hurt you.

Peti snorts. She is bleeding. The men start herding the women along a half hidden path, drawing aside branches and leaves as they look around to make sure they are not being watched.

**GABRIELLE**

*(under her breath)*

This was a good idea, right?



The best Xena can manage is a shuffle, as the men have tied her legs in a short loop. She does not look pleased.

**XENA**

Hmph.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. WATERFALL - NIGHT**

The men shove the women down a path lit only by moonlight. They are climbing upward, and the women are visibly exhausted.

Xena and Gabrielle climb stolidly at the back of the line. They are in much better shape than the villagers, but it hasn't been an easy night, and both have smears of mud across their skin from falling on the path.

**MAN**

Hold!

The line stops.

**GABRIELLE**

*(softly)*

Xena.

**XENA**

*(whispering)*

You all right?

**GABRIELLE**

Fine.

*(beat)*

I think there's something familiar about these guys.

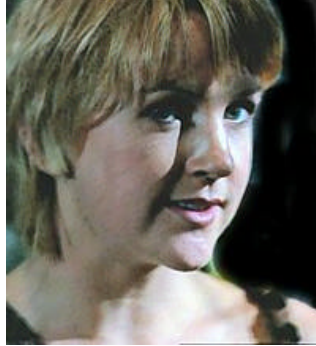


**XENA**

My fist wants to get  
very familiar with them.

**GABRIELLE**

Y'know....



**XENA**

*(sighing)*

This was my idea.  
Yeah. I know.

The men have been removing what appeared to be a fallen log from near the bottom of the waterfall. Now they return, and prod the women forward.

It is apparent they want them to go behind the falls.

**GABRIELLE**

Ah. Guess that's why  
they never found them.

**XENA**

They never looked.

One of them men comes over.

**MAN**

Are you talking?

Gabrielle looks at him with gentle innocence. She points to the waterfall, and then shrugs. The man grunts and shoves her up the path.

Xena moves towards the man. He senses it and turns to look at her, raising his stick and aiming a blow at her head.

Xena evades the stick and keeps walking past the man, shifting as she comes even with him and knocking him back.

**XENA**

Sorry.

**MAN**

Bitch.

**XENA**

*(amused)*

Among other things.



The man shoves Xena, but ends up almost unbalancing himself when Xena proves quite unshovable.

They disappear under the water.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. FAR SIDE OF WATERFALL - NIGHT**

The women emerge from the waterfall, drenched and disoriented. They are faced with a ring of torches. They stop, confused, then they are grabbed and shoved into a large cage made of tree limbs lashed together.

**PETI**

Hey!

**MAN**

Shut up!

The men grab the women in front of Xena and Gabrielle and hurl them towards the cage. Two stumble and fall, and as they do, Xena is revealed in the torchlight.

**WOMAN'S VOICE**

STOP!

Xena's head jerks up in reaction. She tries to see past the torches, but the fire is too bright and she can't shade her eyes from it.

**MAN**

Getting them in  
the box, m'lady.

**WOMAN'S VOICE**

Not that one.  
Put the rest of them in.

The man grabs Gabrielle and pushes her towards the cage. Gabrielle resists, sensing something is very wrong. Her lips twitch, forming Xena's name.

**WOMAN'S VOICE**

*(cont'd)*  
But leave this one out.  
*(laughing)*  
This is one piece of long, cold  
revenge about to be served  
up to me least expecting.

The man wrangles Gabrielle into the cage. Xena remains where she is standing, flanked now by the two other men, holding weapons close to her.

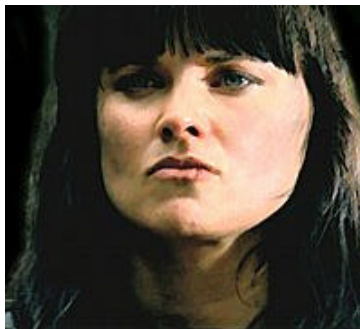
The torches flutter, and a shadowy figure moves past them, into the light.

It is a woman, perhaps in her late fifties, with gray hair showing faint signs of once being red. She wears hide garments like the men, but a battered, faded copper torc circles her neck.

Xena's expression remains very still.

**XENA**

Hello Boudicca.  
Been a long time.



The woman looks at Xena with utter hatred.

**BOUDICCA**

Longer for me than you, apparently.  
But it doesn't matter. I've waited a  
lifetime to find you again, you  
worthless deserting coward.  
*(smiling)*  
It's now been worth it.

She turns to her men.

**BOUDICCA**

*(cont'd)*

String her up. Tight.  
Don't get too close.



Boudicca backs into the shadows. A half dozen men descend upon Xena, throwing ropes around her, while three stand back, with crossbows aimed at her.

Gabrielle puts her hands around the bars, her expression stunned.



**CUT TO:**

**EXT. BOUDICCA'S CAMPSITE - NIGHT - SHORT TIME LATER**

Xena is hung from a tree, her hands tied to an upper branch, and her legs tied to lower. Around her, the men are gathering, bringing drums and laughing together.

Xena looks around. The campsite is a collection of shelters in a semi circle, some tucked under rock overhangs that line the back side of the waterfall.

She sees a small child hanging back near one shelter. The child is dressed like the men, but is watching the women inside the cage with wide eyes.

One of the men spots him and walks over, grabbing him and shoving him inside the shelter.

Boudicca reappears, and approaches Xena.

**BOUDICCA**

These men here?  
*(pointing)*  
They're all that's  
left of my people.

**XENA**

And?

**BOUDICCA**

And the death of us  
started with you.

The men settle around the tree Xena is hung from.

**XENA**

Don't lay your failures at my feet.  
It was your army, Boudicca.

**BOUDICCA**

*(fiercely)*

Aye. It was. But it was your  
battle, and you ran from it.



**CUT TO:**

**EXT. CAGE - NIGHT - SAME TIME**

Gabrielle untwists a bit of the hemp rope tying the cage bars together. The rope extends all the way up the joint out of her reach.

She sits down near a back bar and starts to use the rope to saw through the bar near the bottom.

**PETI**

What are you doing?

**GABRIELLE**

Getting out of here.

**PETI**

Little late to think of that, isn't it?  
Now that you got us into this.

Gabrielle doesn't look up.

**GABRIELLE**

We didn't get anyone into  
anything. If you're going to  
blame someone, blame them.

Gabrielle jerks her head towards the men around the tree.



**PETI**

Well, turns out you aren't the  
heroes you made yourselves out  
to be after all, huh? Your friend  
over there sure got pegged fast.

**GABRIELLE**

*(gritting teeth)*

It's not what it sounds like.

The woman makes disbelieving sounds and comments.

**PETI**

Sounds like you're a  
couple of frauds, to me.

**SECOND WOMAN**

Maybe at least we can  
find out what happened  
to our children ourselves.

**PETI**

Yeah. Who needs heroes?

Peti goes to the front of the cage. Gabrielle doggedly keeps working on her makeshift saw.

**CUT TO:**

## EXT. BOUDICCA'S CAMPSITE - TREE - CONTINUOUS

Boudicca brings a torch close to Xena.

**BOUDICCA**

See their faces? They still remember that day, Xena.

**XENA**

*(quietly)*  
So do I.



**BOUDICCA**

They believed you had a plan. Hell. I believed it.

She brings the torch close to Xena's face.

**BOUDICCA**

*(cont'd)*

And then you turned tail and ran,  
and left us to Caesar's mercy.

Xena blinks as the smoke from the torch enters her eyes. She looks past Boudicca

**XENA**

You would have lost anyway.  
It was never about you.



**BOUDICCA**

No. It was always about you,  
wasn't it? You and him. Did  
he pay you off to lead us  
on, Xena? How much?

Boudicca grabs Xena by the hair and pulls her head back.

**BOUDICCA**

*(cont'd)*

What was your honor worth...  
if you ever even had any?

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. CAGE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS**

Gabrielle is concentrating on her sawing, but she can hear what Boudicca is saying and it is distracting her.

**SECOND WOMAN**

*(kneeling)*

What are you trying to  
accomplish? You'll never  
get out of this thing like that.

**GABRIELLE**

Sure I will.

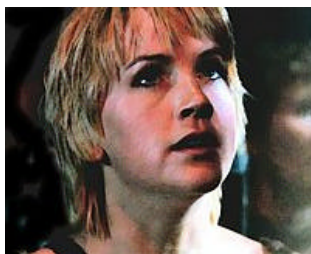
The second woman looks out at the fire circle.

**SECOND WOMAN**

She caused all those  
people to die. What kind  
of people are you?

**GABRIELLE**

It's not.... It's not as  
simple as that.



**SECOND WOMAN**

So you're saying she's lying?

Gabrielle pauses. She looks at the string she's been using, which has just frayed in half. It falls to pieces and drops from her fingers.

**GABRIELLE**

No. Not exactly.

**PETI**

Yeah, I bet.



**GABRIELLE**

She didn't run from  
anything. She...  
(*exhaling*)  
... Had something else  
to take care of.

Peti snorts in derision.

**PETI**

Well, she can't run now.

Gabrielle gets up and goes to the front of the cage. She grabs the bars and shakes them in mounting frustration.



**CUT TO:**

**EXT. BOUDICCA'S CAMPSITE - TREE**

Boudicca plants the torch to one side of Xena. She removes a dagger from her belt and approaches Xena again. With a dispassionate look, she takes a handful of Xena's hair, and cuts it off.

**BOUDICCA**

Something to  
remember you by.

Boudicca puts the knife to Xena's throat. The men start to drum, a low, throbbing sound like a heartbeat.

Xena stares straight ahead.

**BOUDICCA**

(*cont'd*)

One thing, before I decide how  
you'll die, Xena. One thing I  
want from you. One thing  
you owe me. Owe them.

**XENA**

I don't owe you anything.



Boudicca grabs Xena by the throat.

**BOUDICCA**

Liar. You destroyed my people,  
and now I want to hear from  
your lips you admit that.

She sneers.

**BOUDICCA**

*(cont'd)*

Tell me how you turned  
your tail and ran. Tell me  
you're sorry, Xena!

She shakes Xena, then screams.

**BOUDICCA**

*(cont'd)*

TELL ME!

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. CAGE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS**

Gabrielle grips the bars and pulls against them. She takes a breath, then lets it out. She starts looking for another way out, leaping up and grabbing the top bars, and rattling them.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. BOUDICCA'S CAMPSITE - TREE - CONTINUOUS**

Xena struggles for the first time, ripping herself free of Boudicca's grasp and taking a breath. Boudicca grabs her again.

**BOUDICCA**

*(cont'd)*

Say it! Say it and I may let you  
live the night through, Xena.

She leans in next to Xena and whispers.

**BOUDICCA**

*(cont'd)*

Say it.

Xena stares at Boudicca.



**XENA**

*(loudly)*

All right.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. CAGE - NIGHT**

Gabrielle stops in mid-motion and just listens.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. BOUDICCA'S CAMPSITE - TREE**

Boudicca turns to her men. They stop drumming and face her.

**BOUDICCA**

Listen! Listen all of you.  
Remember this. Remember  
all your friends and comrades  
dying. Remember their screams.

*(to Xena)*

Go on. Tell them. Say it!

**XENA**

I'm sorry.

**CUT TO:**

### EXT. CAGE - NIGHT

Gabrielle looks through the bars at Xena's profile. Her expression is very sad.



CUT TO:

### EXT. BOUDICCA'S CAMPSITE - TREE

Boudicca tips her head back and laughs harshly.

**XENA**  
*(yelling)*  
I'm sorry I didn't turn my  
back on you sooner.

Boudicca turns and stares at her.

**XENA**  
*(cont'd)*  
You weren't worth what  
was lost that day.

Boudicca recoils, then lunges for Xena.

CUT TO:

### EXT. CAGE - NIGHT

Gabrielle's head drops, and she looks away. She leans against the bars, shaking with emotion.

Peti walks over to her.

**PETI**  
See? What a bitch.

For a moment, Gabrielle is completely still. Then she whirls and slaps Peti across the face with shocking violence. Peti stumbles and falls.

**GABRIELLE**

You're not worth what  
we're about to go through.

Gabrielle goes to the bars again. She sees Boudicca grab Xena.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd, loudly)*

Boudicca!



Boudicca turns and lets go of Xena. Xena twists and looks over at the cage for the first time.

**BOUDICCA**

Who speaks?

**GABRIELLE**

Why don't YOU tell the truth?  
You couldn't lead your people  
to victory so it's easier to  
blame someone else!!

Boudicca steps out of the circle of torches and shades her eyes. Her expression turns very cold.

**BOUDICCA**

You.

**GABRIELLE**

Yes.

**BOUDICCA**

*(to men)*

Bring that one. Hang her there.  
When the moon rises,  
they'll both die.

Boudicca leaves the campfire circle. The men pull Gabrielle from the cage, and start tying her up. Gabrielle doesn't fight them. She looks past them at Xena, a faint, wry smile on her face.



**FADE OUT.**

**END OF ACT THREE**

## ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

### EXT. BOUDICCA'S CAMPSITE - TREE

Xena and Gabrielle hang next to each other. The men have withdrawn, leaving them alone. A few men are doing chores around the campsite; one brings water and bread to the women in the cage.

**XENA**

Was there a point to both  
of us going through this?



Gabrielle twists, trying to relieve the strain.

**GABRIELLE**

Yes.

One of the women reaches out through the bars to the men.

**WOMAN'S VOICE**

Please... tell us what  
happened to our children!

**MAN**

Shut up! You'll find  
out soon enough.

The man shoves the woman back, and walks away.

**XENA**

Nice.

**GABRIELLE**

Yeah, well, we never do fall in with  
gentler and kinder thugs, Xena.  
It's always the nasty, smelly, kick-us-  
in-the-butt-with-our-own-past kind.

**XENA**

*(sighing)*

Didn't expect this particular kick.

**GABRIELLE**

No. Me either.

*(pausing, then quietly)*

And for the record, not stowing away  
in your saddlebag as you went into  
battle that morning is one of the  
things I'll regret until my dying day.



**XENA**

*(gently)*

Gabrielle....

**GABRIELLE**

*(wryly)*

However many of those I  
turn out to have. Is this  
two or three now?

Xena doesn't say anything. Instead, she smiles reluctantly, acknowledging the truth of the statement.

**XENA**

You're getting a sense of  
humor in your old age?

**GABRIELLE**

I had to. I married you.

Xena chuckles softly. They are both quiet for a minute.

**XENA**

This might be the  
one that sticks.

Gabrielle twists again, and grimaces as her shoulder joint pops. In the darkness past the torches, a soft drumming starts up again.

Through the trees, the gleam of moonlight is seen.

**GABRIELLE**

I've learned in my life that there are  
worse things that could happen to  
me than dying at your side, Xena.



Xena's eyes glisten.

**XENA**

Likewise.



The drums get louder, and closer. Through the torches, a gathering crowd can be seen.

The women from the village stand up in the cage and watch.

**PETI**

Bet you wish you  
were back in here!

**GABRIELLE**

*(loudly)*  
Bet I don't.

Boudicca and her men step out into the torchlight again. They are dressed now in the tattered remains of what was once the strongly colored fabrics of their homeland.

The men fan out and encircle the tree. Two of them carry drums, which they beat on incessantly.

Boudicca comes to stand in front of Xena and Gabrielle.

**XENA**

Where are the kids,  
Boudicca?

**BOUDICCA**

Shut up, Xena.

**XENA**

S'matter, you don't want your image  
tarnished? Those women deserve to  
know what you did with their children.

Boudicca turns to the men.

**BOUDICCA**

Divide yourselves into four. You  
will take hold of the ropes that  
bind her, and all pull in the  
directions of the four winds.

Gabrielle winces.

**XENA**

Classy.



**BOUDICCA**

*(viciously)*

No more than you deserve, and all of those who had brothers and sons die will get a piece of you.

She gives a mirthless laugh.

**BOUDICCA**

*(cont'd)*

Literally.

The men start to untie Xena from the tree. Xena strains against the ropes, but she cannot budge them.

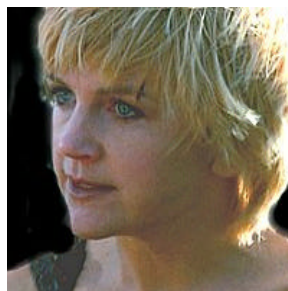
**BOUDICCA**

*(cont'd)*

I'm sure you wish we'd all died also, Xena. But I'm not going to let that happen. My people will survive, even if you do not.

**GABRIELLE**

By stealing babies?



Boudicca looks at Gabrielle.

**BOUDICCA**

I will enjoy watching you watch  
your friend be torn to pieces.  
As I saw my friends torn.

Xena arcs her body and tries to pull herself free. The men yank her back between them, suspending her in mid air.

They pull the ropes hard, and Xena jerks helplessly.

The men laugh.

**GABRIELLE**

Boudicca, it wasn't the  
way you think it was.

**BOUDICCA**

Wasn't it? I'm not sure  
it matters anymore.

Ten men are on each rope. Each rope is tied tightly to Xena's arms and legs. The men move to opposite corners and start to pull.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. CAGE - NIGHT**

Peti and the other women watch.

**SECOND WOMAN**

By the gods.

**PETI**

Don't you feel sorry for them.

**SECOND WOMAN**

But I do. They're feeling  
creatures just as we are, Peti.

**PETI**

You heard the woman!

**SECOND WOMAN**

That woman? The one who had us  
captured? The one who probably  
stole our children and did who  
knows what with them? Whose  
to say \*she's\* telling the truth?

The women from the village murmur together.

**THIRD WOMAN**

She's right. These two have  
done nothing to harm us.

**PETI**

Nothing to help us!

**SECOND WOMAN**

Maybe they were trying... and  
they got caught! Now they're  
going to die. Because of us!

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. BOUDICCA'S CAMPSITE - TREE**

Xena just barely has time to brace herself before the ropes go taut and she is being pulled in four directions. She clenches her fists and resists the pull, her body swinging wildly.

She is looking up at the sky. As the pressure increases, she lets her head tip back so she can see Gabrielle, whose body is tensed in sympathy.

**BOUDICCA**

Pull!

**GABRIELLE**

Boudicca! Stop this! Xena didn't  
kill your people. Caesar's army did!

The drummers increase their volume.

**BOUDICCA**

PULL!

**GABRIELLE**

Boudicca!

The men haul on the ropes. Xena grimaces with the strain of holding them back.

**XENA**

Gabrielle! Save your breath.

**GABRIELLE**

*(frustrated)*  
For what?

**BOUDICCA**

Pull, all of you! Harder! Now!!!

Boudicca grabs the end of one of the ropes, and starts to pull with the men. Gabrielle yanks at her bond with almost mindless rage, causing leaves to shower down over the men, and over Xena's suspended body.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. CAGE - NIGHT**

The woman watch, unable to turn away.

**SECOND WOMAN**

Look!

She points - the small boy has reappeared near the hut in the back.

**PETI**

What? Oh!

**THIRD WOMAN**

*(calling out loudly)*

Bettus! Bettus!

The boy sees them.

**BETTUS**

Mama!!

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. BOUDICCA'S CAMPSITE - TREE**

Boudicca sees the boy.

**BOUDICCA**

Stop! Go inside!

The boy clings to the side of the hut, clearly torn between fear of Boudicca, and wanting to run to the cage.

**GABRIELLE**

*(calling out)*

Let him go to his family, Boudicca.

**BOUDICCA**

We are his family now!

Shut up!

*(to men)*

Pull, damn you!

She's just flesh!

The men lean into the ropes, the drums get louder, and more insistent.

**GABRIELLE**

Is that what you're doing  
here? Stealing babies?

The men dig their feet in and haul in earnest. Xena's eyes close and her face contracts in agony.

**BOUDICCA**

Rebuilding my people!  
Now PULL! PULL!!

**GABRIELLE**

By destroying their families?  
What does that make  
you, Boudicca?!

Boudicca looks over at Gabrielle.



**BOUDICCA**

Shut up! This isn't about  
them. It's about her!

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. CAGE - NIGHT**

The women now are shaking the bars together much as Gabrielle had, but with more success since there are more of them working at it.

**PETI**

Is he the only one? Call for  
them! Call their names!

**SECOND WOMAN**

*(loudly)*

Cassi! Jase! Children!  
Do you hear us??

Bettus dashes from the hut, circling the tree and heading for the cage.

**BETTUS**

Mama! Mama! Oh, Mama!

Boudicca sees him. She starts to call out, then stops, as the boy throws his arms through the bars and tries to hug his mother.

She turns her back on them.

**BOUDICCA**

PULL!!!!

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. BOUDICCA'S CAMPSITE - TREE**

Gabrielle rips one arm loose, the skin on her hand and wrist torn and bloody.

**GABRIELLE**

Xena! Hang on!

Boudicca sees her. She drops the rope and picks up a sword, heading for the tree.

Xena realizes what she's after and reacts, almost convulsing in mid air as she fights the men's pull.

**XENA**

Gabrielle!

The men struggle to control the ropes attached to Xena, suddenly being pulled back a step.

**MAN**

M'lady! Look out!!!

Xena yanks the ropes with all her strength, and she pulls the men back almost enough to gain her feet.

**XENA**

Yeahhhhhhhhh!!!!!!

Boudicca stops, whirls, and then changes direction, striding back to where Xena is fighting.

**BOUDICCA**

PULL!!!!!!!!!!!!

The men lean into the ropes desperately. Boudicca grabs Xena's hair and pulls her head back, raising the sword. Gabrielle redoubles her efforts, shaking the tree.

**GABRIELLE**

NO!!!!!!

**BOUDICCA**

This is for my family. The only  
ones I had left after Caesar's  
bastards raped us!

Gabrielle freezes, knowing she won't get free in time. Boudicca pulls Xena's head all the way back, exposing her throat. Xena fights the hold, but she can't pull free.

**GABRIELLE**

Boudicca! You took your people  
to war, for what? Risked  
everything, FOR WHAT?

Boudicca's eyes are glazed with bloodlust. She turns to stare at Gabrielle, smiling triumphantly.

**BOUDICCA**

For my family. To avenge  
what happened to them.

She puts sword to Xena's throat.

**BOUDICCA**

*(cont'd)*

To avenge what  
happened to me.

Boudicca draws her arm back, then starts to lunge forward. Xena pulls against her grip, against the men, against the ropes, a low growl erupting from her throat.

**GABRIELLE**

*(desperately)*

Then how can you condemn  
Xena for doing the same thing?

The sword tip plunges past Xena's neck, coming to rest with the edge against her skin as Boudicca stares down at her.

Xena stares steadily back.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

She wasn't running from  
Caesar. She just... had a  
friend in a lot of trouble.

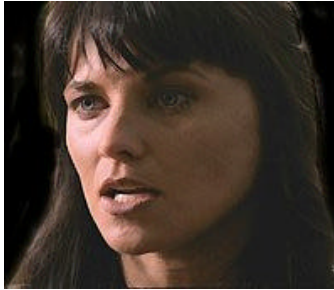
The drums slowly stop, as the men watch both of them. Silence falls, broken by the creak of the ropes still holding Xena taut, and Gabrielle captive of the tree.



**BOUDICCA**  
(*tonelessly*)  
Your family?

Xena looks past Boudicca at Gabrielle.

**XENA**  
Yes.



Boudicca releases Xena's hair and walks away, turning her back on both of them.

**BOUDICCA**  
Release them.

The men slowly relax the ropes, lowering Xena to the ground. Boudicca remains at the edge of the fire, staring into the darkness.

**MAN**  
M'lady, if we let them go,  
they'll know we are here.  
If they know, others will.

Boudicca nods absently.

**BOUDICCA**  
So we move on.

The men mutter among themselves. Xena gets herself free of the ropes and heads for Gabrielle, to help her untie hers.

**GABRIELLE**  
What about the children?



**BOUDICCA**

They are young. They would  
have grown to love us. In time.

**XENA**

And their mothers?

Boudicca walks into the darkness. The men follow her, disappearing into the shadows.

Xena puts her arm around Gabrielle. They walk in the opposite direction.

**FADE OUT.**

**END OF ACT FOUR**

TAG

FADE IN:

EXT. TINY RUNDOWN VILLAGE - MORNING

Gabrielle is sitting in a circle of children, telling them a story. Her hand and wrist is bandaged. Xena sits nearby, with a pensive expression.

Casey walks over and sits down next to Xena.

CASEY

I still don't understand.  
Who were those people?

XENA

Don't try to understand.  
Just be glad they're gone.  
You can live in peace now.

CASEY

*(thoughtfully)*  
For a while.

Xena nods, conceding the point.

XENA

They were desperate. People  
end up doing crazy things when  
they don't think they have options.

CASEY

Stealing our children?  
Our wives? How could they  
think that would work?

XENA

It has before.

Casey looks very surprised. Xena doesn't explain further, so he eventually shrugs.

CASEY

Well, as you say,  
it's peace for now.  
*(sighing)*  
Peace to till our crops,  
and teach our children.

XENA

Right.

**CASEY**

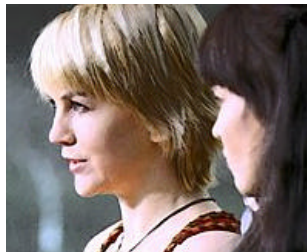
Really, what more  
can you ask for?

Casey gets up and strolls off. Xena sits and listens to the end of the story Gabrielle is telling, then she smiles as Gabrielle gets up and comes over to join her.

The children get up and start playing, laughing and running around, visibly no worse for wear from their captivity.

**GABRIELLE**

They're good people.



**XENA**

*(nodding)*  
They are.

**GABRIELLE**

The kids told me Boudicca  
was starting to teach  
them her traditions.

*(beat)*

They really weren't slaves.

**XENA**

No. Caesar's legions pillaged  
Boudicca's lands.

*(pausing)*

Killed her family. Raped her. She  
led the uprising afterward, but she  
never could manage a campaign.



**GABRIELLE**

She needed you for that.

Xena is silent, then she nods.

**XENA**

I had the plan. Or I  
thought I did, anyway.

Gabrielle links her arm through Xena's.

**GABRIELLE**

Wasn't our plan. We were  
part of someone else's.

She looks away, and exhales.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

But that's water under the  
bridge that I have no intention  
of ever drinking again.

She turns and looks back at Xena.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

I hope Boudicca can find  
what she's looking for.

**XENA**

I think she's just been trying  
to get home ever since.

**GABRIELLE**

*(quietly)*

I feel sorry for her.  
For them.

Xena nods again.

**GABRIELLE**

*(cont'd)*

Now that they don't have  
us strung up like a  
smoked fish, that is.



Xena smiles. She looks off into the distance with a thoughtful expression.

**XENA**

It was good to have reason  
win out for a change.

**GABRIELLE**

Well....

**XENA**

Words over swords.  
You talked, no one  
ended up fighting.

**GABRIELLE**

Only because I had no  
other choice. Though  
chewing through my  
other arm here had started  
to become an option.

**XENA**

I know the feeling.

Xena puts both arms around Gabrielle and hugs her. They stand up and begin to stroll through the town.

Gabrielle looks around the village.

**GABRIELLE**

They could use some help  
here. Want to stick around  
for a while? Must be some  
herbs back in those woods  
somewhere, and these kids  
could use a few good stories.

**XENA**

And we can be here in  
case trouble happens.

Gabrielle circles Xena's waist with one arm.

**GABRIELLE**

Xena, we are trouble.

**XENA**

Hm. Good point. Maybe  
if we're here, no other  
trouble will happen.

**GABRIELLE**

*(chuckling)*

Don't count on it.

**FADE OUT.**

**DISCLAIMER**

Xena's conscience was not harmed in the making of this motion picture. However, she is considering selling off some of her past to start up a retirement fund for her, and Gabrielle's future.

**The Staff of the Subtext Virtual Seasons would like to thank all  
our readers for helping us to keep Xena & Gabrielle alive.  
We hope you join us next fall for Season 10!!**

Carol, Denise, Judi, Missy, Sue, Lucia,  
MaryD, Linda (Calli), Trish, Linda, Marsha