

Xena: Warrior Princess - Subtext Virtual Season 10



Production #V1006 – The Gift

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TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. DIRT ROAD - EVENING

A good sized wagon train filled with farm produce and hand-made items is stopped in the middle of a well-traveled dirt road. Women and children are huddled behind the wagons as the men, farmers all, attempt to fight off an army of twenty or more ill-clothed bandits.

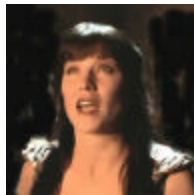
Xena and Gabrielle are in the thick of the battle, each with a group of bandits around them. Xena is kicking, punching, and swinging her sword in mighty arcs while Gabrielle is using her sais to good advantage. She knocks down the man in front of her with a hit to the temple while she kicks behind her and sends a second flying.

Xena, meanwhile, has her hands full with three huge thugs all trying to be the first to whack her head off. She parries one's blow then slices his gut open, head-butts the second into oblivion and engages the third, by far the largest of the bunch.

She hears something, and looks over his head to see two archers in the trees looking for a good shot. Her free hand fingers her chakram, but the behemoth in front of her is much too big to get a clear shot off.

XENA

Gabrielle!



Without looking, Xena tosses the chakram to her partner. With one fist still engaged, Gabrielle lifts her free hand and catches the weapon on the tip of her sai, swirls it once and launches it. The chakram hits a rock outcropping, reverses itself, hits another outcropping and neatly slices the branches holding up the archers, one after the other. As the men fall, it hits the trunk of a third tree, reverses direction and heads toward Gabrielle.



Gabrielle tosses her sais, pinning both archers to the ground, catches the chakram and wings it toward Xena, then kicks her last opponent in the breadbasket, watching as he goes down in a slow crumple.

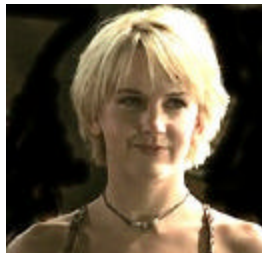
Catching the chakram, Xena uses its deadly edge to slice the huge thug's belt. As he stupidly looks down at his suddenly lowered trousers, she lifts a knee and rams it into his lowered chin, sending him down for the count. The rest of the bandits pick themselves up and run away, limping and holding tight to various injuries.

She looks over at Gabrielle and smirks.

XENA
(*cont'd*)
Nice shot.

Gabrielle smiles primly.

GABRIELLE
I have many skills.



Rolling her eyes, Xena turns to the group of farmers and their families. Women and children slowly come out from their hiding places and run to embrace their husbands and fathers. Only two are injured, and their injuries are very minor.

Maltheus, the head of the caravan, strides over to the two women with his hands outstretched.

MALTHEUS
Xena, Gabrielle, thank you so much.
I don't know what we would have
done if you two hadn't been here
and helped us like you did.

GABRIELLE
(*sincerely*)
We were happy to help.

MALTHEUS
We don't have much in the way of
material belongings to offer, but
please, join us for the evening meal.
The food is fresh, and we have
several excellent cooks among us.

OTHERS

Oh, yes. Please stay!
Please!

Xena and Gabrielle exchange glances. Xena nods and Gabrielle turns her smile to Maltheus.

GABRIELLE

Thank you. We'll stay.

MALTHEUS

Wonderful!

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

A huge bonfire has been laid, and the delicious scents of cooking food mingle in the air. Off to one side not quite in the shadows, Xena and Gabrielle share a fur. Both have large bowls of steaming stew in their hands and are eating heartily. The food is, as promised, delicious and both are hungry after the fight.

Maltheus and his wife, a beautiful young woman, walk up to them. Maltheus smiles.

MALTHEUS

Everything to your liking?

GABRIELLE

It's absolutely delicious!

XENA

Yes, it is. Thank you.

MALTHEUS

You're both very welcome.

(beat)

You know, when I was younger, I
spent some time with the local militia.

Never in all my years of holding a
sword did I ever see fighting like
I saw today. It was... amazing.

When neither answers, he continues, though a bit less comfortably than before.

MALTHEUS

(cont'd)

And that weapon, the one on
your hip, what do you call that?
I've never seen the like.

GABRIELLE

Chakram.

MALTHEUS

Bless you.

Gabrielle laughs.

GABRIELLE

No, that's what it's called. A chakram. This particular chakram is unique, made for Xena herself.

MALTHEUS

But... I saw you wield it as well. Like a pro, you were.

GABRIELLE

Yes, well, that took years and years of practice.

Xena grunts, swallowing the last of her meal.

XENA

She's a natural.



Gabrielle grins at her.

MALTHEUS

Well, natural or not, it was surely a sight to see.

(cont'd, casually)

Where would one go to... find a weapon like that?

XENA

(flatly)

A god.

Maltheus laughs. It's exactly the wrong reaction, and his wife notices it, even if he doesn't. She taps him on the arm and smiles.

MALTHEUS' WIFE

Maltheus, dear, why don't we leave these two alone for a bit, hmm? I'm sure they'd like to finish their meals in peace, and I could use your help getting the children down for the night.

Maltheus looks at his wife in irritation for a moment, then finally notices Xena's icy stare. He reddens.

MALTHEUS

Um... yes... yes... of course. It is getting late, after all. Would you... er... care to spend the evening with us? We've an extra tent if you'd like.

GABRIELLE

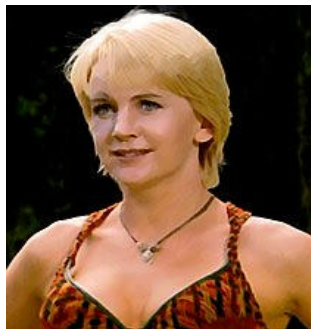
No. Thank you, but no. Xena and I have a site already picked out for the evening.

Brushing her hands off on her skirt, she stands.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

We do thank you for your hospitality, though. It was nice having a meal someone else cooked, and it was very good. Thank you.



Maltheus' wife beams.

MALTHEUS' WIFE

You're very welcome. It was the least we could do to thank you both for saving our lives and our goods. It would have been a hard winter indeed if we hadn't been able to get them safely to market.

MALTHEUS

Yes, yes, thank you.
Thank you very much.

GABRIELLE

Like I said, I'm glad we were there
to help. We won't be camping too
far away, so if you should run into
anymore trouble during the night,
call out. I'm sure Xena will hear you.

Maltheus looks at Xena, who stands and levels him a rather pointed look. He swallows uncomfortably and tugs at his collar.

MALTHEUS

Well, I'm sure you both scared the
ruffians off this day, but if we do
run into trouble in the night, we'll
be sure and holler for help.

GABRIELLE

(smiling)

Good. Well, goodnight, then.
And good luck at the market!

With smiles and waves, the farmers and their families bid Xena and Gabrielle a good night. Both turn and leave the small camp. Gabrielle notices the grim, set look on Xena's face and sighs quietly. It promises to be a long night.



FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

The fire is small, and the furs are laid out. Xena is sitting on a log, tossing sticks into the fire while Gabrielle puts the finishing touches on two cups of tea. Rising, she approaches Xena and hands her one of the mugs, then sits down beside her.

GABRIELLE

You ok?

Xena takes a sip of the tea.

XENA

Fine.

She sips again.

XENA

(cont'd)

Honey?

GABRIELLE

(smirking)

Yes, dear?



Xena rolls her eyes.

XENA

Honey. In the tea.

GABRIELLE

My mother always said it
was good for what ails you.

XENA

Something ailing you?

Gabrielle gives Xena a pointed look.

XENA

(cont'd, with more emphasis)
I'm fine.

GABRIELLE

Mm.

XENA

I am.

Gabrielle bumps Xena with her shoulder.

XENA

(cont'd, sotto voce)
Mostly.

Carefully hiding her triumphant expression, Gabrielle looks closely at Xena.

GABRIELLE

I don't think that farmer
was laughing at your
answer, Xena. He was
just... surprised, I guess.

Xena gives Gabrielle a 'don't you think I know that?' look, and Gabrielle shrugs. Xena sighs.

XENA

It's just been a long
time since I thought
about how I got this.

She lifts her chakram and turns it side to side. Its gleaming metal catches the light of the fire, throwing miniature sparks. It's truly a beautiful weapon, but all Xena can see is horror.

XENA

(cont'd)
It wasn't a very
pleasant time for me.

Gabrielle places a hand atop Xena's and squeezes it gently. Xena gives her a half-smile and stretches. Gabrielle snuggles in.

GABRIELLE

Another story to share? It
might make you feel better...
to get it out, I mean.

XENA

Maybe.



She stares into the fire.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLAINS OF THE STEPPES - DAY - PAST

Xena, in her "coin hat" costume and furs, and riding a brown and white spotted horse, gallops down the grassy plains, followed by fifty or so men.

XENA

(present - voice over)

It was some time after I'd returned from Chin. Borias and I had raised another army. It was easy enough, but we'd had another difference of opinion.



CUT TO:

INT. YURT - EVENING - PAST

Xena and Borias are arguing. Borias raises a hand to slap Xena, and Xena grabs it and twists it behind his back, pulling him against her and whispering something into his ear. His face reddens with anger, and he struggles but cannot break Xena's hold.

XENA

(cont'd, present - voice over)

He was tired of traveling and wanted to stick close to home, raiding the same villages we'd raided a dozen times before. I'd heard that there were several villages further to the north just ripe for the plucking. He wouldn't budge on it, so I split the army, took half with me and left the other half with him. He could plunder dirt if he wanted. I was after bigger game.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLAINS OF THE STEPPES - EVENING - PAST

Xena and her men continue to ride through the plains. The land has become hillier, and here and there small groups of trees huddle together against the ever-present wind.

Suddenly, over the hills, a huge, mounted army appears, easily four times the size of Xena's. The men wear identical leather armor and steel caps, and ride large, fast horses. Each is armed with a light sword and heavy bow, and several carry long, cruelly tipped lances bearing silken war-banners which flap in the breeze.

Xena's men, upon seeing the army, begin to panic and their horses buck and wheel.

SOLDIER

It's Khan!

SOLDIER #2

Run! Run!!

SOLDIER #3

Let's get out of here!

It's Khan!

SOLDIER #4

The Great Khan!

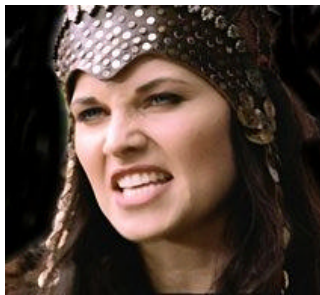
Zeus preserve us!!!

Xena draws her sword and stands up in her stirrups.

XENA

(shouting)

Hold your ground! Any man
who flees dies by my hand!



This threat convinces about three quarters of the army to stay with Xena. The others, terror-stricken, try to flee and are quickly cut down by the oncoming army.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT - PRESENT DAY

Gabrielle looks questioningly at Xena.

GABRIELLE

Khan?



XENA

(grimly)

Genghis Khan of the Mongols. The greatest warrior the world has ever seen. His men fought for the chance to serve him, and the amount of land that he'd conquered made Greece look like a pond compared to the sea.

GABRIELLE

Wow.

XENA

Yeah. He wasn't there that day, of course. It was just a tiny portion of his army, but they were more than a match for us. They came down out of those hills like a crashing wave, killing half my men before we even had a chance to defend ourselves.

CUT TO:

EXT. STEPPES - EVENING - PAST

The large army surrounds the remains of Xena's army in a ring of horses, riding dizzying circles around them while shooting their arrows into the middle and killing man after man after man.

Xena fights as best she can, using her sword to first disarm, then kill the enemy soldiers. But for all her ferocity, she is one woman and barely makes a dent in the circling horde. The circle of horses draws tighter as more and more of Xena's men fall.

She sees a lance coming toward her and grabs it, unhorsing its owner and using the blunt end to sweep several more off of their horses. This creates enough of a break in the circle for her to urge her own horse forward, and she does so.

XENA

Follow me! YAH!!!

Only ten men, all that remains of her army, do so. Dozens of arrows halves that number before they can make it more than three strides outside the rapidly decomposing circle.

She turns and uses the lance to bat away the hail of arrows headed for her, then flips it and throws with all her strength, spitting an oncoming soldier and the buddy who'd hopped up behind him.

Another set of arrows comes, too low for her to even try to catch, and her horse screams as it crumples beneath her, mortally wounded. She hops off before she is crushed and begins to run as fast as she's able, expecting at any moment to feel arrows piercing her spine.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMP - NIGHT - PRESENT DAY

Gabrielle continues to look at Xena with wide eyes.

GABRIELLE

By the gods....
How? What?

Xena smiles wanly and holds up her empty mug.

XENA

All this talking's hard
on the throat.

Gabrielle smirks, then rolls her eyes heavenward.

GABRIELLE

Now she believes me.

She begins to rise when Xena pulls her back.

XENA

I'll get it.

Smiling, Gabrielle snatches the mug and stands.

GABRIELLE

Uh-uh. You tell the story; I'll keep
your throat soothed. It's a fair trade.

XENA

If you say so.

GABRIELLE

I say so.



The tea is quickly prepared with a generous dollop of fresh honey added, and Gabrielle returns to Xena, who in the meantime has gotten up from her spot on the log and now sits on the furs, her back up against a broad-trunked tree. She spreads her cocked legs, inviting Gabrielle wordlessly to sit between them. Gabrielle does and, after taking a sip of tea and setting the mug aside, Xena gathers her in, wrapping her arms around Gabrielle's waist and resting her chin atop her soft hair.



XENA

Every step I took I figured to be my last.
I was angry... so angry. Borias had
tried to warn me, but did I listen?

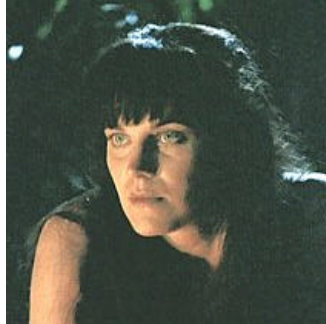
She chuckles bitterly.

XENA

(cont'd)

No. I wanted wealth and power.
He wanted safety.

Disgusted with herself, she shakes her head then resumes peering into the fire.



CUT TO:

EXT. STEPPES - EVENING - PAST

Xena runs for her life, zigging and zagging in a fruitless effort to outdistance her pursuers. She spots a tiny copse of trees in the near distance and cuts toward them, hoping to lose the enemy in their shadowed mystery.

No more than three strides away, her feet are suddenly taken out from under her as a tow-rope with a stone on the end wraps itself around her legs, and she finds herself being dragged along behind a horse ridden by a huge, grinning Mongol.

She struggles to free herself as the rider pulls her up the hills and over rocks and thick prairie grass, but her efforts are useless.

With loud war-cries, the rest of the band surges past, leading the way home.

XENA

(cont'd, present - voice over)

I'd lost my sword in the fight, but I still had
a few daggers. I tried sitting up enough
to cut the rope, but every time I tried, we'd
hit a rock or a hillock and I'd go down again.

Then I smelled water, and before I could prepare for it, I was being dragged through a river. It was deep and rocky and I could feel myself bouncing from boulder to boulder. I felt my shoulder dislocate. Then my arm snapped, but I managed to grab onto a large rock and hold on with all my strength.

Somehow, maybe he was overconfident or thought me already dead, but the man lost hold of the rope, and suddenly, I was free.

Lifting her head, Xena takes in a deep breath of air, then releases the boulder and allows the river's strong current to take her downstream. Arrows pierce the water around her, and one manages to lodge itself in her right leg, but she stays underwater for as long as she is able, counting on the coming night to help shield her position to the enemy.

XENA

(cont'd, present - voice over)

Some instinct told me to head for the bank I'd just crossed, and I did. A tree limb was overhanging the water, and I grabbed it and pulled myself to shore. Arrows were flying all around me, but I managed to get behind the trunk of a tree and gather my strength.

Pulling the arrow from her leg free, Xena grits her teeth and uses the trunk to pull herself to her feet. She stumbles, weakened from blood loss and pain and looks around, then limps deeper into the small forest.

XENA

(cont'd, present - voice over)

I was leaving a trail a blind man could follow, but I thought of nothing except trying to escape.

She reaches the edge of the wood and pauses behind another tree, looking cautiously around. The night is silent and still, and she cocks her head, sniffing the air and listening. Marshalling her rapidly draining strength, she steps out into the open. At that moment, she is spied by a soldier and breaks into a shambling run, headed toward something she can just catch at the edge of her vision.

CUT TO:

EXT. TEMPLE - NIGHT - PAST

A small, blood-red temple stands in the middle of a tiny clearing. Xena looks at it in surprise, permanent structures being rare in this area. She drags herself toward the building and falls into the temple, then scrabbles about quickly, trying to find some way to defend herself against her pursuers. There is nothing but barren floors, and she props herself against a column and stares out into the dark night, waiting.

Twenty or more mounted men burst into the clearing, then stop abruptly. Their horses protest, bucking and neighing, but they come no further. Xena thinks she can see fear in the men's eyes, but dismisses that as a trick of her overworked imagination.

Then to her complete astonishment, the men wheel as one and gallop away from the temple as if the hounds of Tartarus were at their heels.

Xena leans against the stone column, unable to believe her good fortune.



Her injuries then catch up with her, and she sags to the ground, unconscious.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT - PRESENT

Xena pulls slightly away from Gabrielle when she notices the tears trailing silently down her soulmate's face.

XENA

(cont'd)

Why are you crying?
Don't cry.

Shaking her head, Gabrielle swipes at the tears.

XENA

(cont'd)

Sweetheart, please, don't cry. What happened to me back then was no less than what I deserved. I was a greedy, selfish, foolish bit....

GABRIELLE

I don't care. No one deserves to be treated like that, Xena. No one.

XENA

Gabrielle....

GABRIELLE

I love you, Xena, all of you. Who you were then is part of who you are now. Please don't ask me not to grieve for you being hurt. Please. I just can't do that.



Xena sighs.

XENA

All right. I won't ask.

GABRIELLE

Thank you.

XENA

I think it's time we
get some sleep.

GABRIELLE

No! Not yet! I've got
so many questions!

Xena smiles.

XENA

They can wait. The story's not going
anywhere, but we are. You did want
to make it to Selopolis in time to catch
Homer's performance, didn't you?

Gabrielle nods reluctantly.

XENA

(cont'd)

All right, then. Time for bed. I'll
pick it up again in the morning
after we've hit the trail, okay?

Gabrielle nods again.

GABRIELLE

Okay.

Xena rises to her feet, gently pulling Gabrielle up with her, and both head for their bedroll.
Within moments, they're snuggled into their furs, and the only sound is of crickets telling
their own stories to the night sky.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRAIL - MORNING - PRESENT

As usual, Xena and Gabrielle are up early and on the trail before the sun has fully risen.
Xena is atop Argo and Gabrielle walks beside her, munching on some travel rations.
Finishing her breakfast, she wipes her hands on her skirt and looks up at Xena.

GABRIELLE

Nice morning.



XENA

Mm.

Gabrielle sighs. Xena has been uncommunicative since they woke up, and she suspects that the story she so wishes to hear will be forgotten.

Instead, Xena surprises her. Looking off into the distance, she begins to speak.

XENA

(cont'd)

I don't know how long it was, but I
eventually woke up in the temple.
My wounds were well tended, so I
knew that whoever had taken care of
me planned to keep me around for a bit.

CUT TO:

INT. TEMPLE - DAY - PAST

Xena opens her eyes to see the smiling face of an old, gaunt, gray-bearded man looking down at her. He is dressed in a red robe with a black belt and sash. Beyond him is a small, immaculately kept room with space enough for a cot and small bedside table bearing a pitcher of water and a wooden cup.

XENA

(hoarsely)

How... long?

MAN

Several days, warrior. You
were badly injured when
you crossed our threshold.

Xena lifts an eyebrow in surprise.

XENA

You speak Greek.

The man's smile broadens.

MAN

Fortunate indeed, since
I am Greek and serve in
a Greek temple besides.

Xena struggles to her elbows.

XENA

How...? Where?



The man puts a restraining hand on her shoulder. It's a strong hand, despite the man's apparent frailty.

MAN

Fear not, warrior. You are
in the same place where
you fell unconscious
from your wounds.

XENA

A Greek temple?
On the steppes?

MAN

Indeed.

XENA

(suspiciously)
A temple to whom?

The man raises an arm and sweeps it grandly.

MAN

To Ares, of course. What
better place to honor
War than where it is always
so gloriously practiced?

Xena continues to look suspicious.

XENA

What's your name?

MAN

Aeneas.

XENA
(*smirking*)
"Praise-worthy". Think a
lot of yourself, do you?



Aeneas laughs.

AENEAS
Once, perhaps. Now I am but a
lame, old man good only for
keeping the altar cleaned.

XENA
Mm.

AENEAS
And look! My mind slips
from me even now.

He reaches for the pitcher and pours a mug of water, handing it to Xena.

AENEAS
(*cont'd*)
Drink slowly. Your body is still
healing from its wounds.

Xena heeds his words and sips the water. It is clean and cold and slakes her thirst admirably. She hands the empty cup back to him with a nod.

AENEAS
(*cont'd*)
You are a woman of few words,
yet I see many questions
burning in your eyes.

Xena narrows said eyes at him, causing him to grin.

AENEAS
(*cont'd*)
Well, then, may I at least have your
name, warrior? It's good to know
for whom one is invoking blessings.

XENA

I don't need your
blessings, Priest.

AENEAS

You'll receive them, nonetheless.
It is my job, after all.
(*beat*)
Your name? Please?

Growling, Xena relents.

XENA

I'm Xena.

AENEAS

Ahh. I've heard talk of you. It is said
you left this land a cripple, yet aside
from your most recent wounds, even
an old man like myself can see that
you are strong and fit of body.

XENA

(*smirking*)
I had a little help.

AENEAS

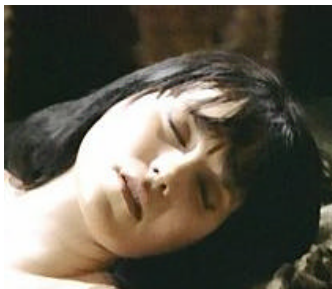
Indeed. A story well worth
hearing, I'd wager.

Xena's smirk broadens, but she remains silent.

AENEAS

(*cont'd*)
Another time, perhaps. For now, you
must rest and regain your strength.
If you have any needs, you need
only call out and I will return.

Still silent, Xena lowers herself back down to the cot and closes her eyes, almost instantly
asleep. Aeneas smiles at her; it is one filled with glee and calculation.



AENEAS

(cont'd, whispering)

You'll do, Xena of Amphipolis.

You'll do very well indeed.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRAIL - MIDDAY - PRESENT

Xena and Gabrielle have stopped their traveling to help a merchant whose wagon has lost a wheel. Having turned down the offer of a live chicken, Gabrielle waves to the departing merchant. Xena wipes the mud from her neck and face with a wet rag.

GABRIELLE

Well, that was our good deed for the day.

XENA

Don't speak too soon.

Gabrielle grins.

GABRIELLE

You're right. The way our lives are, we'll be rescuing a king and his family from a well before dark.



Rolling her eyes, Xena stows the rag, then hops aboard Argo.

XENA

C'mon. The faster we go....

GABRIELLE

The faster we can avoid that king and his wells, I know. So... what happened after you woke up the second time?

XENA

Glutton for punishment, aren't ya?

GABRIELLE

Hey! I happen to think
it's a very interesting
story. The delivery could
use a little work, but....

XENA

Excuse me?
What's wrong with
my delivery?

Gabrielle pats Xena's leg.

GABRIELLE

Xena, Xena, Xena...
it's nothing to be
embarrassed about. It
happens to all novices.

XENA

(growling)
Novice, huh?
See if you get another
word outta me.

GABRIELLE

Oh, come on,
Xena, please?

Xena hides her grin.

XENA

Hmph.

GABRIELLE

Pretty please?

XENA

Nope.

GABRIELLE

Pretty please with those little
dumplings with the red
stuff inside on top?

XENA

For dinner? Tonight?

Gabrielle laughs.

GABRIELLE

Walked right into
that one, didn't I?



XENA

(smugly)

With both feet.

GABRIELLE

All right, all right, I promise.
Story now, dumplings with red
stuff inside tonight. Deal?

XENA

Deal.

CUT TO:

INT. TEMPLE - DAY - PAST

Xena sits on the edge of the cot, looking herself over. Her broken arm is neatly set and wrapped and doesn't pain her all that much. The arrow wounds, scrapes and cuts are already starting to heal, and she nods with satisfaction.

She rises to her feet, not letting herself sway as a temporary dizziness takes hold. Teeth bared and jaw clamped, she takes a few tentative steps then relaxes as her body is well able to support her weight and activity.

Aeneas is standing by the door, watching.

AENEAS

You are a very
determined individual.

XENA

Determined to get the
Tartarus outta here, yeah.

AENEAS

Why? Has your care been so
poor that being here repulses you?

XENA

This is a temple. I bow to no god.
Not even the god of War.



Aeneas smiles.

AENEAS

I don't recall asking you to
bow. Is my mind slipping
away from me again?

Xena growls.

AENEAS

(cont'd)

Xena, Ares neither wants
nor needs your worship.

Xena snorts.

XENA

Yeah, right. He's a god. That's what
all gods want. They're capricious,
egotistical little slimeballs who like
to meddle in the affairs of the mortals
they're supposed to care for.

The priest hides a chuckle behind a cough.

AENEAS

Xena, you are a warrior. Ares is War.
Don't you realize that every time you
draw your sword, you are invoking him?
That every time you feel joy in battle,
you are feeling joy in him?

XENA

Any joy I feel, Priest, is my own. My
strength is my own, my will is my own. I
don't need some two-bit god claiming
credit for what I do. I decide my own destiny.

AENEAS

And yet, if you had not been fortunate enough to literally fall into one of his temples, you would be dead now. If not from your current wounds, then certainly from the barbarian horde intent on displaying your head as a trophy.

XENA

I wouldn't feel all warm and cuddly about that if I were you.

AENEAS

Oh, believe me, I'm not.

(beat)

Please, stay. Khan's army roams at will over these lands. As you are now, your chances at getting through one of his many patrols is slim at best. What can a little time spent regaining your strength hurt?

XENA

You're a lot worse than me if you insist on trying to turn me into one of your little Ares-worshipping puppets.

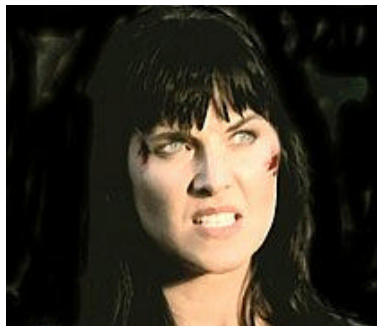
AENEAS

Believe me... that thought never crossed my mind. Please. I obviously cannot hold you here against your will. But I would like to see you stronger before you leave here.

XENA

(calculatingly)

What's in it for you, Priest?



AENEAS

Only the satisfaction of restoring a warrior to her full potential. Nothing more.

XENA

And I can leave
any time I want?

AENEAS

Any time.

Xena looks around the small, neatly kept room, considering.

XENA

All right, but I want my weapons and
armor brought to me. I'm not about to
walk around this place half-naked.

AENEAS

(sotto voce)
Pity.

XENA

What?

AENEAS

I said, right away.

Xena stares coldly after him as he leaves, then she sits down on the cot.

XENA

Right away, my a....

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT - PRESENT

The fire has been laid, Argo tended and the dumplings with the red stuff inside have been made and duly enjoyed. Xena and Gabrielle lie on their furs, looking up into the star-speckled night. Gabrielle points to a certain collection of stars.

GABRIELLE

Look, there's the fish you
shot into the heavens.

XENA

Mm.

Gabrielle's finger moves just the slightest bit as she points out a star that looks as if it's been dipped in blood.

GABRIELLE

There's Ares' planet.



Xena's head turns slowly and she eyes Gabrielle.

XENA

Nice segue.

Gabrielle's eyebrows lift.

GABRIELLE

Segue! I'm impressed.

Xena smirks.

XENA

Pays to live with a bard.

Gabrielle chuckles.

GABRIELLE

Well... since we're
on the subject.

Xena's own eyebrow raises and she considers refusing, not wanting to break the feeling of well-being she's currently experiencing. But the look of poorly hidden expectation on Gabrielle's face changes her plans and she sighs.

XENA

All right, then....

CUT TO:

INT. TEMPLE - DAY - PAST

Xena stands at the threshold of the temple, looking out onto the small clearing. Ten men in mismatched armor and weapons spar with one another. Two or three have the makings of decent fighters, but the others are inept at best. Xena rolls her eyes as she watches a giant, bearded bear of a man trip over his own boots, almost impaling himself on his sparring partner's sword.

Aeneas approaches Xena quietly and stands beside her, looking into the melee.

AENEAS

Mercenaries.

Xena snorts.

XENA

Whoever hired 'em sure
didn't get their money's worth.



AENEAS

Ah, he's dead now, actually. These
are the only ones who remain out
of an army of nearly five hundred
who had the misfortune to go up
against one of Khan's war bands.

XENA

Serves him right, hiring
pathetic idiots like these.

AENEAS

True, true. This group escaped
only under the most...
fortuitous... circumstances.

His lips twitch slightly, suppressing a smile.

AENEAS

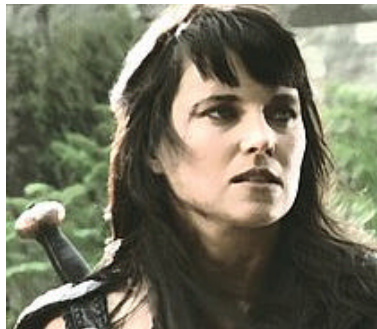
(cont'd)

Seems a storm blew in out of
nowhere and they blundered
their way here under its cover.

Xena's eyes narrow as she looks at the priest.

XENA

Lucky bastards.



AENEAS

(smugly)

Yes, they are, aren't they?

Lifting the hem of his robe, he steps over the threshold and glides down the step to the small, dirt-packed clearing that surrounds the temple.

AENEAS

(cont'd)

Come. Join me. The fresh
air will do you good.

Xena continues to look at him with suspicion for a long moment, then shrugging, casually saunters outside.

CUT TO:

EXT. TEMPLE - DAY - PAST

Several of the men, seeing the priest, stop sparring and bow in his direction. These men are quickly knocked to their knees by their less pious fellows. Xena snickers.

AENEAS

(cont'd)

When in battle, never let anything distract you. Focus. Let that be your watchword. Distraction equals death. Isn't that right, Xena?

The smirk falls from Xena's face, and she stares at the man coldly. His lips twitch again.

AENEAS

(cont'd)

Gentlemen, I would like to introduce you to a fellow Greek and warrior, Xena.

All the men stare at her; some coldly, some leeringly, some haughtily and some with no expression at all. Xena holds their stares until, one by one they have no choice but to look away. Aeneas laughs softly.

AENEAS

(cont'd)

An excellent example of focus, no?

The mercenaries shuffle in place, swords hanging limply in their hands.

AENEAS

(cont'd)

We are actually very fortunate to have this warrior among us, gentlemen. It's said she has traveled many lands and led many armies to victory. Perhaps she will be kind enough to share some of her knowledge with us.

XENA

(sarcastically)

I'm not the sharing type.



AENEAS

Pity, but perhaps you'd consent to doing a bit of sparring with these brave lads, then?

Xena looks at the priest, then down at her splinted arm, then back at the priest. One eyebrow slowly elevates. Smiling, he steps closer to her until their bodies touch.

AENEAS

(cont'd, whispering)

Surely you realize that you
could beat all of these men
with both arms broken.

He eyes her long frame, lingering for a moment or two.

AENEAS

(cont'd, whispering)

And perhaps a leg or two as well.

XENA

I'm not laughing.

AENEAS

And I'm not joking. Xena, these men are
haughty, thinking that their lucky escape
has proven them blessed of the gods.

XENA

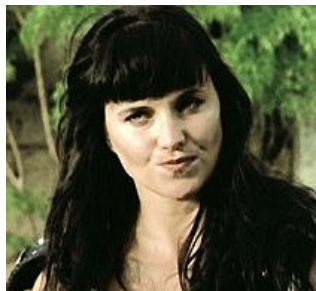
Mm.

AENEAS

I believe you're just the person to
teach them the error of their ways.

XENA

And why would I wanna do
that? They're pathetic.



AENEAS

Perhaps... but you could make them
less so. When it comes time for you
to leave this place, they could
be of great value to you.

She looks past the priest's bony shoulder toward the group of men who are either staring blankly at nothing or are picking at or scratching various parts of their anatomy. She returns her gaze to the priest.

XENA

Yeah. Right.

AENEAS

Then think of this as an
opportunity to regain
your strength. That is
your goal, is it not?

Xena sneers at him, well aware he's trying to play her like a lyre. Still, he does have a point, and she draws her sword with her good left hand, twirling it, then laying the tip against her shoulder. She looks at him challengingly, and he laughs in true delight.

Turning to the men, he claps his hands.

AENEAS

(cont'd, aloud)

All right then, gentlemen.
Line up by twos please.
Each group will spar
with Xena in turn.

MERCENARY #1

But... she's a woman!

XENA

Just figured that out,
didja, Plato?
What clued ya in?

The man flushes.

MERCENARY #2

And she's injured!!

AENEAS

You refuse to fight
injured enemies, then?
How very honorable.

His tone suggests it's anything but.

MERCENARY #2

No, it's not that. It's just....

AENEAS

(firmly)

You came here asking... no begging...
for my help. I am offering it to you
right now. If you think you can find
better elsewhere then by all means,
leave this place and search.

The men shuffle their feet again, then mercenaries one and two heft their swords.

AENEAS

(cont'd)

Well?

MERCENARIES #1 and #2

GRAAAHHH!!

Xena meets their combined attack with negligent ease, blocking their two swords with her one and using it to push them away from her. As they gather themselves, she twirls her sword again and grins at them.

XENA

Is that the best you can do, boys?
I thought we were fighting, not dancing.



MERCENARIES #1 and #2

GRAAAHHH!!

The men run forward again, one aiming high, one low. Xena stomps the low sword onto the ground, trapping it beneath her boot as she easily sweeps the second man's blade from his hand and sends it sailing across the clearing. She uses the hilt of her sword up against the man's temple, then frees the second sword and kicks the handler right between the legs. He goes down with a breathless groan, cupping his injured parts.

XENA

Next?

Aeneas stands off to one side, grinning widely with his dark eyes flashing as Xena easily decimates the men sent against her. Even injured, she hardly breaks a sweat, though he's pleased to note that she's pulling her blows just the slightest bit to avoid killing those she's sparring against.

In all too soon a time, the clearing is littered with injured, groaning men. Xena stands among them, untouched and smirking. She turns to a grinning Aeneas and speaks with obvious sarcasm.

XENA

(cont'd)

Nice workout. I feel
stronger already.

And with that, she saunters back into the temple.

CUT TO:

INT. TEMPLE - NIGHT - PAST

Xena is sitting on her cot, staring down the length of her weapon as the light from the full moon reflects off the high polish. She shrugs the shoulder of her broken arm, trying to loosen the stiffening muscles. She wasn't much tested during the sparring, but her arm does not appreciate even the small amount of work it's been forced to do.

She looks up a second before Aeneas joins her.

AENEAS

You were quite impressive
out there today.

XENA

(disinterestedly)

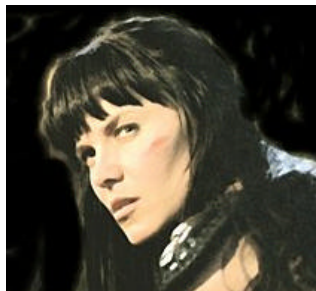
A trained monkey could
have fought off those idiots.

AENEAS

Mm. Is your shoulder
paining you?

XENA

What's it to you, priest?



AENEAS

One good turn deserves
another, does it not?

Xena stares at him, her suspicion plain.

AENEAS

(cont'd)

You did me the favor of
sparring with the men, yes?
The least I can do is lessen
the pain of your injury.

She stiffens as he approaches, staring at him through dangerously narrowed and glittering eyes. He laughs softly.

AENEAS

(cont'd)

You have no need
to fear me, Xena.
I will not hurt you.

XENA

I fear no one.

AENEAS

Good. Now that we've
got that settled....

With a quickness belied by his age, he glides behind Xena and gently presses his hand down on her shoulder. Heat, intense and immediate, radiates through her skin, instantly softening her tense muscles.

She yanks herself away after a moment and turns to glare at him.

XENA

How did you do that?

Aeneas smirks.

AENEAS

One of the perks of being
a Priest of Ares, actually.
It pays to know how to
comfort those on his side.

XENA

(growling)

I am on the
side of no god.

AENEAS

Accept it as a
'thank you', then.

XENA

I don't like being touched
without my permission.



AENEAS

(dryly)

I'll be sure to keep that in
mind for the future. Not a
very trusting soul, are you?

XENA

Trust is a distraction. You trust, you
wind up dead. I much prefer being
alive. What's your angle, anyway?

AENEAS

Angle?

XENA

Yeah. Angle. You claim to be interested in
me as just another warrior, but I don't see
you out there 'comforting' the men I beat
the Tartarus out of today. I'm sure there
are a few of them a lot worse off than I am.

Smiling, Aeneas shrugs and holds his hands, palms up.

AENEAS

What can I say? You're rather a unique
specimen, Xena. A woman, yes, but
with beauty, brains and brawn; quite
a combination, wouldn't you say?

Xena grunts.

AENEAS

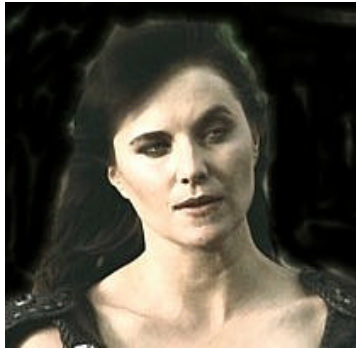
(cont'd)

And so rare in one
who is not an Amazon.

Xena's head snaps up.

XENA

How do you know
I'm not an Amazon?



He laughs again.

AENEAS

I wouldn't be much of a priest if
I couldn't tell an Artemis worshipper
when I saw one, now would I? There
is great potential in you, Xena. I
feel the need to nurture that potential,
to bring it out, shining and glorious.

Xena's face goes stony.

XENA

(coldly)

Others better than you have thought
the same thing, priest. They wanted
to use that potential for their own
ends. I am no one's tool.

AENEAS

I don't want to use you, Xena. I am
but a priest of an obscure temple in
the middle of nowhere. The local
barbarians already fear me. What
need have I for another warrior, even
one so... impressive... as yourself?

XENA

What need indeed?

Aeneas sighs.

AENEAS

Either you will learn to trust me, Xena,
or you will not. I certainly cannot force
you to. You are free to leave here
at any time. Nothing is holding
you here but your own desire.

He crosses to stand in front of her.

AENEAS

(cont'd)

Think about what I have said.
I will see you in the morning.

With a slight bow of his head, he turns and leaves. Xena looks after him, suspicion and thoughtfulness warring for position on her features.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT - PRESENT

Gabrielle is laughing, and Xena looks at her, uncomprehending.

GABRIELLE

Like god, like priest. You draw
them like moths to a candle, Xena.



Xena rolls her eyes.

XENA

If you say so.

GABRIELLE

Oh, come on! Tell me you
can't see it. It's plain as day!

XENA

Whatever you say, Gabrielle.

Gabrielle shakes her head.

GABRIELLE

Fine. So, what happens next?
Did you stay? And what about
the chakram? I thought that's
what this story was about.

XENA

Such impatience.
It's coming.

GABRIELLE

Xena, it's been two
days already!

XENA

(growling)
Do you want to hear
the rest of the story?

GABRIELLE

Of course I do!

XENA

Then let me tell it my way. And
that includes ending it here
or the night. It's getting late.

GABRIELLE

Aww. C'mon!



XENA

Nope!

GABRIELLE

Please?

XENA

No. Besides, I'm in the mood for
another story. One that'll take your
mind completely off of this one.

Gabrielle catches her tone and smiles.

GABRIELLE

Oh yeah? Think so?

Xena slowly slips one of Gabrielle's straps down over her shoulder, and kisses the skin laid bare there.

XENA

(huskily)

Oh yeah. I guarantee it.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

EXT. CAMPSITE - MORNING - PRESENT

Though the sun has already risen, Xena and Gabrielle lie comfortably spooned together beneath their furs. Gabrielle's nose twitches, and as she lifts a hand to rub it, her eyelids flutter open, then widen as she takes in the quality of light surrounding the camp. Very slowly, she turns her head to find Xena looking down at her, smirking.

XENA

Morning.

GABRIELLE

Mor... Xena, it's... well for you
it's practically afternoon!

XENA

(amusedly)

It's not that late. Besides, you'll
be able to walk a lot further with
more than just two hours of sleep.

Xena's smirk broadens as Gabrielle's skin slowly flushes a rosy hue. Then she gathers Gabrielle in and kisses her soundly.

GABRIELLE

(dazedly)

Wow. We should sleep
in more often!

Xena laughs, releases Gabrielle and jumps to her feet, grabbing her leather and armor and deftly slipping it on. She snatches Gabrielle's top, which has landed some distance away in a crumpled heap and tosses it to the bard, who catches it, grinning.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Glad this didn't land in the fire,
or I'd have had to go back
to that putrid green thing.

Xena pretends to shudder.

XENA

Perish the thought.

She looks up at the cloudless sky.

XENA

(cont'd)

Good weather. C'mon, we'll eat on the trail. If we make good time, we should be there before sunset.

GABRIELLE

Right behind you!



CUT TO:

EXT. TRAIL - MORNING - PRESENT

As they travel along, Xena can feel Gabrielle's eyes on her. Finally, Xena turns her head and looks down at Gabrielle.

XENA

What?

GABRIELLE

(innocently)

Me? Oh, nothing.

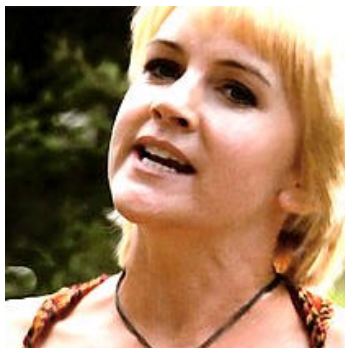
She gives Xena's chakram a long, deliberate look, then smiles sweetly at her soulmate.

XENA

Nothin, huh?

GABRIELLE

Nope! Not a thing.



XENA

(resignedly)

Riiight. I suppose I did promise
you an end to this thing....

She pauses as she looks off into the distance, her thoughts even farther away.

XENA

(cont'd)

To answer your question of last night,
yes, I stayed. It was about three weeks
or so before my wounds were healed
and I'd gotten back to full strength. There
wasn't really any way I'd have a chance
of facing Khan's men before that, and
Aeneas seemed a harmless enough sort....

CUT TO:

EXT. TEMPLE - DAY - PAST

The number of soldiers seeking shelter at the temple has grown to nearly forty. Xena stands off to one side, watching with grudging approval as they spar in groups of two, three, and four. They have improved vastly under Aeneas' training and now resemble an army instead of a group of mismatched mercenaries. Corralled in the woods nearby, a group of horses whinny.

CUT TO:

INT. TEMPLE - DAY - PAST

Sheathing her sword, Xena turns and enters the temple. Aeneas sits on a stool inside the main vestibule. In his hand is a flat, circular object that she's never seen before. As she watches, he negligently tosses it away from him. It hits a column, throwing sparks, then rebounds, hitting next the statue of Ares sitting on the altar, then another column before reversing direction and coming back to his hand.

Xena smirks.

XENA

Nice toy.

Aeneas looks up at her and returns the smirk.

AENEAS

It is, isn't it? But I wonder...
can a toy do this?

He tosses the object again. It hits the column, rebounds, and heads for the statue. With a small buzzing noise, it cuts completely through the neck of the Ares statue. The statue's head hits the altar as the object continues on its way, hitting another column, then landing deep in the chest of an unfortunate mercenary who'd just walked in. The look on the man's face is one of stunned surprise as his knees slowly buckle and he crumples to the floor, dead.

An evil grin spreads over Xena's face as she looks from the headless statue to the dead man, then over to a smirking Aeneas.

XENA

Teach me how to do that.



Rising from his stool, Aeneas prods the dead man with his foot and removes the weapon, wiping the blood off on the man's uniform. He turns to Xena, smirk still fully in place.

AENEAS

I... don't think so. You see, the
chakram, this chakram in particular,
is a very special weapon,
given only to the most special....

Xena draws her sword in a lightning move and holds the tip to the old priest's neck.

XENA

I said... teach me
how to do that.

AENEAS

And I said....

Lifting his arm, he swipes Xena's sword away using the edge of the chakram. Then, before she can fully react, he thrusts the center down over her sword, twists, and her weapon is wrenched from her grip, flying across the temple to land on the altar.

AENEAS

(cont'd)

No.

Xena snarls. Her fists clench and her eyes flash rage. Aeneas' grin broadens, completely unperturbed.

AENEAS

(cont'd, conversationally)

Such fire.... You know, weapons similar to this are quite common in a land called India. You could simply leave here and attempt to obtain one. Or... if you desire this one....

He flings the weapon away toward the column again.

AENEAS

(cont'd)

Catch it.

Xena's eyes narrow as she intently watches the weapon rebound from one column to another, showering sparks all the way. It hits off the altar, reverses itself in mid-air, and heads directly for Xena's head. Instinctively, she ducks and can feel the breeze as it passes over her less than an inch away, to hit off the far wall and zigzag between the two stout columns standing there.

She straightens and continues to watch intently as it makes another circuit of the temple, hitting off the statue and again coming directly for her. This time, she stays where she is and holds up a hand. The chakram flies into it, cutting her deeply. She stares down at the weapon in her hand and the blood that drips slowly to the floor, missing entirely Aeneas' secret, delighted smile.

The priest steps over to her and plucks the weapon from her hand. Her head slowly raises, eyes piercing and so pale that they nearly match the silvered part of the chakram.

XENA

(low, forcefully)

Teach me.

Aeneas pretends to think about it.

AENEAS

Perhaps. But for a price.

Xena shows her teeth.

XENA

What price?

AENEAS

(airily)

Oh, a small one, really.
Certainly less than what
my teaching would be worth.

Xena growls.

Aeneas laughs.

AENEAS

(cont'd)

I could ask you to bow down
and pledge to serve Ares
as your Lord and Master.

XENA

You could try.



AENEAS

Yes, I could. But I won't....
Not yet, anyway.

Another growl.

AENEAS

(cont'd)

What I will ask is this....

He walks over to the altar, sweeps the bits of marble from the beheaded statue away and grabs a parchment map lying off to one side. Unrolling it, he uses the chakram to anchor one corner as he peers down at it.

AENEAS

(cont'd)

There is a town to the north of here. Not far, perhaps a quarter-day's ride. It's very small, not large enough to hold a garrison of Khan's men, though there are a number of his guards there. Inside that town there is a headsman's house, and in that house is a golden statue of Khan himself. It's rather the law. I want that statue. Bring it to me, and you shall have your lessons. Of course, you'll still have to find your own chakram, but at least when you do, you'll know how to use it. Fair enough?

The expression on Xena's face tells him exactly what she thinks of this plan, but then she nods grudgingly.

AENEAS

(cont'd, pleased)

Good! Good! You will, of course, want to take the men with you. If nothing else, it will be a chance to determine if our training has had its intended benefits, no?

XENA

Fine. When?



AENEAS

No time like the present.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOWN OUTSKIRTS - EVENING - PAST

Xena and the rest of the men are hiding in the long grasses that line the hills that surround the small town. The only people out on the streets are Khan's men, well armed and very vigilant. Torches light the way every few feet. The Headsman's house is in the very center, surrounded by seven armed guards. The only path into town is guarded by only two.

XENA

(whispering)

After I take out the two guards, we go in.
Kill any man who raises a weapon against you. I don't care what you do with the other men, but leave the women and children alone. If I see any one of you even attempt to touch so much as a hair on a woman or child, you'll only wish you were dead. Is that understood?

MEN

(whispering)

Yes, Xena!

XENA

Good. Ketulus, give me your bow.

Taking the offered bow, Xena strings and fires two arrows, one right after the other. The two guards fall to the ground soundlessly. She hands back the bow and unsheathes her sword.

XENA

(cont'd)

Take the village!!

MEN

YAAAAAAHHHHHHH!!!!

CUT TO:

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT - PAST

The village is in pandemonium as Xena and her men fight their way through the narrow streets. Xena fights like a woman possessed, killing Khan's men with ease as she counters their sword-blows and catches their arrows. Behind her, several of her soldiers have split off. Three have taken torches and are lighting the houses on fire. Five herd the fleeing women and children in a sheltered area away from the battle. Several more ransack the houses that are not yet burning, coming out with various treasures.

Xena heads for the Headsman's house, skewering an unarmed man in front of her and kicking his body into two of Khan's soldiers running toward her. As they stumble backward, she yells out her battle cry and leaps over the pile, flipping once before landing and continuing her run toward the large house in the center of the town.

One of the guards fires at her from close range. She catches the arrow, reverses it and thrusts it through his throat. As he falls, two others come up to her. She grabs them, slams their heads together and drops them in a pile. Lifting a leg, she kicks the door to the house open and ducks inside.

CUT TO:

INT. HEADSMAN'S HOUSE - EVENING - PAST

An elderly man dressed in fur-trimmed robes stares white-faced at her.

HEADSMAN

P-please....

XENA

Your statue, old man, I want it.

HEADSMAN

B-but I can't....

XENA

Sure ya can.
Get it. Now.



HEADSMAN

P-please, no! I'm forbidden...!

XENA

Forbid this!

Stabbing the man through the gut, she twirls her sword and reverse thrusts under her arm, killing another guard who is rushing her.

XENA

(cont'd)

HA!

Darting off, she quickly moves through the rooms until she spies the statue atop a small altar.

She grabs it and gives it a quick look-over. Exquisitely detailed, it appears to be made of pure gold and trimmed with precious gems.

XENA

(cont'd)

Niiiiice.

Tucking the statue under her arm, she ducks back through the rooms, engages three of Khan's men, kills them and runs outside.

CUT TO:

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT - PAST

Grabbing a torch, Xena waves it over her head.

XENA

Let's go!!!

She then tosses the torch inside the Headsman's house, setting it instantly ablaze. She looks down at a wounded guard moaning at her feet.

XENA

(cont'd)

Tell Khan Xena says hello.

With a triumphant roar, thirty of the forty men who accompanied Xena rally behind her and they leave the blazing village and its grieving and dead in their wake.

CUT TO:

INT. TEMPLE - NIGHT - PAST

Aeneas stands expectantly as he watches Xena saunter into the temple vestibule, statue bouncing in her hand. She smirks when she sees him and tosses him the statue.

XENA

Here ya go, old man.

Aeneas puts the statue on the altar with barely a glance at it.

AENEAS

I trust all went well.

XENA

Like takin' candy from a baby.



AENEAS

Perfect.

Xena eyes the chakram at Aeneas' hip.

XENA

I fulfilled my part of
the bargain, priest.

AENEAS

So you did, so you did.
When would you like to start?

XENA

(mocking)

No time like the present.

CUT TO:

INT. TEMPLE - NIGHT - PAST

Scenes of Aeneas teaching Xena how to throw and catch the chakram. He gives her a thick leather wrap for her hand so that she doesn't cut it and patiently begins to teach her. She's a quick study, and it isn't long before he's standing proudly by as she tries more and more intricate throws. Soon, the leather wrap is discarded and Xena is catching the weapon without cutting her hand. Aeneas nods as she tries an especially complex move and smiles to himself in satisfaction.

CUT TO:

INT. TEMPLE - DAY - THREE DAYS LATER

Aeneas rises from his place at the altar as Xena enters, bedroll in hand.

AENEAS

I take it the time has come for you
to leave this fine establishment?

XENA

I need to move on.

AENEAS

(wisely)

The call to battle sings
in your blood, no?

XENA

Somethin' like that.

(beat, grudgingly)

Thanks...for tending my wounds and
helping me get my strength back.
And for not trying to convert me.

Aeneas laughs.

AENEAS

Oh, I think you're already converted,
Xena. You just don't know it yet.

XENA

Whatever. Listen, I've gotta go....

AENEAS

Just a moment, if you will. I
have something for you. Come.

CUT TO:

EXT. TEMPLE - DAY - PAST

He leads her back through the temple and into the courtyard; a courtyard that is now filled with the mounted soldiers she has worked with and helped train during her stay.

AENEAS

(cont'd)

These men are yours, Xena.
Consider it a parting gift
from an... admirer.

Xena looks at him distrustfully.



AENEAS

(cont'd)

I did tell you that if you helped me train them, they could be very valuable to you, did I not? Besides, I have no need for so many men crowding this temple. It rather guards itself, you see. Please, take them. They're yours now.

MEN

Xena! Xena! Xena!

XENA

I.... Thanks.

AENEAS

My pleasure.... Oh, and before
you leave, one more thing.

Reaching into the folds of his robe, he pulls out the chakram and holds it out to her.

AENEAS

This is yours as well.

Xena's lips part, slightly, in shock.

XENA

But....

AENEAS

I told you it was a very special weapon, made for a very special warrior. You, Xena, are that warrior. Take it, with my compliments. Use it to do Ares proud.



Xena's eyes narrow. Aeneas laughs, delighted.

AENEAS

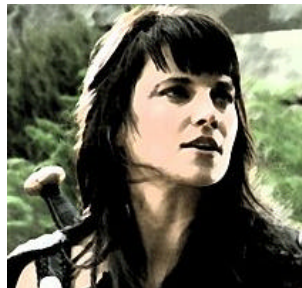
(cont'd)

Ever the distrustful soul. I like that in a warrior. Now, take it.

Slowly, she reaches out and grasps the chakram. He releases it, and she spends a moment just looking at. Then she peers at him over the rim. His eyes are laughing. Without a word, she turns away and hops aboard the horse that one of her new men is holding for her.

XENA

Let's go.



Aeneas watches as the men form neat lines and follow their new commander out of the clearing. Behind him, the temple shimmers and glows, then disappears. As it does, his body also shivers and glows, and reverts to his true form.

ARES

Until next time, Xena.

Until next time.



FADE OUT.

DISCLAIMER

The canon of Xena saying "I used to wonder what you looked like" in The Reckoning was not harmed during the making of this motion picture