

# Xena: Warrior Princess - Subtext Virtual Season 7



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## TEASER

FADE IN:

### EXT. FOREST TRACK - DAY

A wagon trail winds through a deeply forested area. The trees are tall and full of thick leaves. However, they bend in the wind, and the sky indicates a coming storm. It is fall, and chilly.

XENA and GABRIELLE walk down the road together. They are dressed in long coats, and carry their gear in packs on their backs. Gabrielle has her walking stick. It is mid-day, and they have been walking for some time.

**XENA**

There's a creek. Thirsty?



**GABRIELLE**

Enough to drink that wine we bought back at the harbor.



**XENA**

C'mon. Let's take a break and eat.

They leave the road and walk over to the creek. Several rocks provide seating, and Gabrielle takes advantage of them as Xena kneels to fill their waterskins. Gabrielle removes her diary from her pack and takes a quill out, sharpening it before she starts writing.

**GABRIELLE**

(VO)

It seems so strange to be back here in Britannia. The storm that took us off course could have brought us to so Many places - why here? Why now?

Xena brings the waterskins back over and sits down on the ground, using the rocks as a backrest. She hands Gabrielle a cup. Gabrielle takes it with a smile and drinks, getting a little water on her hands that she flicks at Xena. She puts the cup down and continues to write.

**GABRIELLE**

(VO)  
(Cont'd)

We're headed across to another harbor town, where Xena says we can catch a boat. I think she knows I don't want to spend much time here. We haven't talked about it, but this place holds so many horrible memories for both of us.

A bird cries out nearby. Xena and Gabrielle both turn to look at it. Xena's hand clenches on her sword hilt, and it's obvious she's on edge. After a moment, several robins chase each other through the trees, and they both relax.

**GABRIELLE**

(VO)  
(Cont'd)

This is the place where I lost myself. The Gabrielle that Xena met in Potadeia died here.

Xena breaks off half a loaf of bread and hands it to Gabrielle.

**GABRIELLE**

(Cont'd)

Thanks. How much longer to the coast?



**XENA**

If we keep going until dark, we should make it by tomorrow noon.

**GABRIELLE**

Good.

Xena looks up at Gabrielle, then looks away out over the creek, her expression somber.



**GABRIELLE**

(VO)  
(Cont'd)

The sooner we leave, the better.

**CUT TO:**

## EXT. FOREST ROAD - AFTERNOON

A party on horseback ride down a broad, well used road. In the lead is FERGAL - a Celtic chieftain. With him are six men including his son, BONNACH. The men are dressed in Celtic tartans, similar in style and identical in color.

**FERGAL**

Bonnach! Are you getting' yourself ready, m'lad?

Bonnach sits in his saddle, his eyes closed, obviously concentrating. He is a tall, well built young man with a handsome face. He jumps a little at being addressed.

**BONNACH**

Sorry, father. I was working out a bit of my tale there.  
I want it to be perfect for the competition.

**FERGAL**

And that it will, lad. You're the best shot we've  
had in generations to take the bard's title.

Bonnach smiles a touch shyly, but he is proud of his father's assurance in him.

The party rides down between two slopes as the road takes an old dried river bed's track between what was once banks on either side. As they ride through, a yell rings out and suddenly men pour over the banks and rush them. The men wear hoods to cover their faces.

**FERGAL**

*(Cont'd)*

Men! To me!

Fergal's men rush to defend him. The hooded men swarm over them and swing axes and pikes in a vicious attack. One of Fergal's men is dragged off his horse, and his arm is chopped off, sending a spray of blood into the air.

**CUT TO:**

## EXT. FOREST TRACK - DAY

Xena and Gabrielle continue to walk through the forest, side by side. The track they are on is now moving downward, and through the trees, a glimpse of a larger road can be seen that intersects their path.

Xena is a little uneasy at the silence. She turns and regards Gabrielle's profile, which seems a little too serious for her tastes.

**XENA**

Hey. Human or animal?

Gabrielle has been deep in thought. She looks up in some surprise.

**GABRIELLE**

What?

**XENA**

C'mon. Play the game with me.



**GABRIELLE**

Oh.

*(pausing)*

Xena, I'm really not in the mood for it.

**XENA**

All right. You stump me, then.  
That usually puts you in a better one.

Gabrielle has to smile at that, and does, because she knows it's true.

**GABRIELLE**

Okay.

*(thinking)*

Go ahead. Guess.

**XENA**

*(pleased)*

Animal, mineral, or vegetable?



**GABRIELLE**

No.

Xena looks at her in puzzlement.

**XENA**

What? What d'you mean no?

Gabrielle grins.

**GABRIELLE**

Heh. You'll never get this.



**XENA**

Oh yeah? We'll see....

Their banter is interrupted by the sudden sounds of battle.

**XENA**

*(Cont'd)*

Later. C'mon.

**GABRIELLE**

You always find an excuse.

Xena and Gabrielle run towards the sound of the fighting.



**CUT TO:**

### **EXT. FOREST ROAD - DAY - BATTLE**

The hooded men are getting the better of Fergal and his clan. Most of Fergal's men are off their horses, and two are lying in the dirt, apparently injured or dead. The remainder have formed around Fergal and are fighting desperately. Bonnach is on the ground, grappling with an attacker.

Xena and Gabrielle run up from behind them and take on the hooded men. Xena unsheathes her sword and distracts three of them, drawing them away from Fergal. With her staff, Gabrielle takes out one of the men who was about to spit Bonnach with a spear, then finds herself under attack by two others. She drops her staff, pulls out her sais and meets their swords.

Xena slugs one man with her sword hilt, then kicks another halfway across the road. She ducks as a man tries to take her head off with a pike.

**XENA**

Been there, done that. Never again.



Gabrielle hears her, and is distracted for a moment. The man she's facing takes advantage of that and knocks her sai out of one hand. Gabrielle recovers, grabbing his arm and turning to deliver a roundhouse kick that sends the man sprawling.

A moment later, another man leaps at Gabrielle, and she turns instinctively, getting her sai up just as he lands on her. The sai guts him. Gabrielle rolls out from underneath his body and pulls her sai out dripping with blood.

Gabrielle stares at the sai, and for a brief moment her memory flashes back to Dahok's temple.



The hooded men have had enough. They scatter, leaving four of five men dead on the ground, and climbing up the banks to disappear off into the forest.

Fergal is kneeling by Bonnach's side. He is one of the injured clansmen. Another clansman tends to him. Xena and Gabrielle walk over.

**FERGAL**

Strangers, I thank you.

Xena kneels to examine Bonnach. Gabrielle hesitates, then follows.

**XENA**

Thieves?

**FERGAL**

Of lives. We have no coin.  
*(looking at Gabrielle)*  
You saved my son's life, bless you,  
but they stole from us our hope.

Xena and Gabrielle both react slightly to the word.



**GABRIELLE**

What do you mean?

**FERGAL**

We were on our way to the great clan gathering.  
Bonnach was to stand for us to be named chief Bard.

**GABRIELLE**

Chief Bard?

Xena gives Gabrielle a quick glance, her own expression thoughtful.

**XENA**

What does that get you?

**FERGAL**

For our family? Wages enough to make it through this  
coming winter. The weather Killed the crops this year,  
and we had nought to trade with, save that.

Gabrielle keeps her eyes on Bonnach. He is unconscious, and bleeding.

**GABRIELLE**

How awful.

**XENA**

If it's a bard you need, you just  
found one. Gabrielle can do it.

Gabrielle stares at Xena in utter shock. Fergal and his men look eagerly at her, despair turning to hope.



**FADE OUT.**

**END OF TEASER**

## ACT ONE

FADE IN:

### EXT. FOREST ROAD - AFTERNOON

Xena and Gabrielle are riding the horses of the slain men from the clan. Bonnach is carried on a pallet on the small wagon they had with them, along with the bodies of the dead clansmen.

Gabrielle seems very troubled. Xena watches her, concerned.

**GABRIELLE**

Fergal, tell me about this competition.

**FERGAL**

Every couple of years, our great clan meets to choose those who will fill the offices we need for the next seasons.

**XENA**

Who picks 'em?



**FERGAL**

It's a vote of the clan. Our history, our myths and legends. We pass those down from mouth to mouth through the generations, so picking one who will do that is a big responsibility.

**GABRIELLE**

They're your teachers.

**FERGAL**

Aye. Bonnach worked on the tale he was to do the whole season. It was a grand one. If he won, the other families would contract with us to have him go and teach. That's how the trade works.

They are approaching a large, timber walled blockade.

**GABRIELLE**

What was his story about?

**FERGAL**

The old ones. The ancient times of our folk.

*(pausing)*

Whatever story you tell, will have to touch the hearts of my people, Gabrielle. You don't know our traditions, so be sure you pick well of those you do.

Fergal rides forwards to the gates. Gabrielle gazes pensively after him.



**CUT TO:**

**INT. CLAN STRONGHOLD - EVENING**

The entire clan turns out to greet Fergal and his men. The clan chieftain, Lorcan rushes out when he sees the wagon.

**LORCAN**

Fergal! What has happened?!

**FERGAL**

Bastards attacked us on the road.



Clansmen gather around the wagon. The men murmur sympathies.

**LORCAN**

Killian!

Take a dozen men and ride the northern road!  
Mahon's out there, perhaps in danger!

A squad of the clansmen rush out, grabbing for their weapons and calling for horses.

**LORCAN**

*(Cont'd)*

A shame, Fergal. Bonnach's a bonny lad.  
Let my healers take him, and comfort him  
as best they will. A shame for ye, though.

Lorcan notices Xena and Gabrielle. He is surprised to see strangers.

**FERGAL**

The winds move in strange ways, Lorcan. Two came to our aid, and helped chase the brigands off us. This is Xena, and this is Gabrielle, who saved Bonnach from surely perishing.

**LORCAN**

Ah.

*(pausing)*

Then of course you're welcome here, friends.

**FERGAL**

Family. I've made them kin, Lorcan. Gabrielle here will be taking Bonnach's place in the Bard's telling.

Lorcan visibly doesn't like this. Xena steps up behind Fergal.

**XENA**

We're glad we could help.



Lorcan recovers.

**LORCAN**

Of course! Of course! I'll have space set aside for you in Fergal's quarters. Welcome!

Fergal leads Xena and Gabrielle away from the gates. They pass through the crowded, busy stronghold as curious eyes watch them.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. STRONGHOLD - CORRIDOR - NIGHT**

The stronghold is lit with smoky torches. The hallways are narrow, and the floor is covered in straw that hasn't been changed in a bit too long.

One of Fergal's men approaches, with tartans that match the ones Fergal is wearing.

**FERGAL**

Ah. My thanks, Brion.

Fergal hands the tartans to Xena and Gabrielle.

**FERGAL**

*(Cont'd)*

These will mark you as members of my family.

Fergal is called from across the corridor. He stops to speak to a short, bearded man who has hailed him. Gabrielle takes Xena's arm and pulls her to one side.

**GABRIELLE**

We need to talk.



**XENA**

Yeah, this place is pretty nasty.  
Maybe I can find some open space.

**GABRIELLE**

That's not....

They hear a commotion from the gates. Fergal rushes off towards it, along with a number of other men.

**XENA**

Now what? Let's get these on.  
At least they're warm.

Gabrielle sniffs at her tartan.

**GABRIELLE**

It's wool.

**XENA**

You're the expert.

Xena and Gabrielle don the blue and green colored tartans.

**GABRIELLE**

Xena, listen.

The clamor at the gates gets louder.

**XENA**

Hold on. Let's see what this is all about.



Xena starts towards the gates. After a moment, Gabrielle shakes her head and follows.

**CUT TO:**

## INT. STRONGHOLD GATES - NIGHT

The gates are open. Torches flutter on either side of them. A large wagon has entered, surrounded by mounted men. On the wagon a man is standing. He is very tall, and very broad, and has a mane of wild, red hair. This is MAHON, a rival clan chief.

**MAHON**

Fergal!!!

Fergal pushes through the crowd. Mahon leaps down off his wagon and they greet each other with bear hugs and hefty buffets.

**MAHON**

*(Cont'd)*

They told me what happened. Anything we can do for you family, just ask. I'm with you totally!

Xena and Gabrielle ease their way through the crowd.

**FERGAL**

Y're a good man, Mahon.

**MAHON**

And when they find who did it, my sword stands with yours. I swear it!

Mahon's men lift their weapons and cheer. Fergal's men respond in kind.

**MAHON**

*(Cont'd)*

Pity about your son, Ferge, m'lad. He's a good boy. Maybe next time he'll get the prize, eh?

**FERGAL**

It well may be. Lucky I was to find someone to take his place in the lists.

Mahon reacts in surprise.

**MAHON**

Did you now?

**FERGAL**

I did.

Fergal motions Gabrielle forward, and when she joins him, he puts his arm around her.

**FERGAL**

*(Cont'd)*

This is Gabrielle. It is she who carries our family honor on her shoulders.

Gabrielle's face is a study in hidden anguish.

**FERGAL**

*(Cont'd)*

She and her friend there stepped in and helped  
us defeat the rotten brigands who attacked us.  
She saved Bonnach's life. She is family.

**MAHON**

Ah.

*(beat)*

And a bonny lass she is, as well.  
Tis a great honor to meet you, Gabrielle.

Gabrielle returns his bow, very obviously uncomfortable.

**GABRIELLE**

I really don't think....

Lorcan strides forward.

**LORCAN**

Mahon! It's good you are here.  
Come - The roasts are waiting. Fergal, come!

Everyone starts moving towards the inner part of the stronghold. Gabrielle remains where she is,  
as the men and women walk past her, giving her a curious look. Xena joins her.

**GABRIELLE**

Xena?

**XENA**

Hm?



**GABRIELLE**

I need to talk to you.

**XENA**

All right. Maybe after....

**GABRIELLE**

Now.



Xena takes one look at Gabrielle face, and looks around, spotting a small, square enclosure build against the wall. She takes Gabrielle's arm and leads her towards it.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. STRONGHOLD TACK ROOM - NIGHT**

It is dark inside the storage area. The torchlight barely penetrates. Xena and Gabrielle stand in the shadows, facing each other.

**XENA**

Okay, what's up?

**GABRIELLE**

You shouldn't have done that.

**XENA**

*(frowning)*

Done what? Said you'd take that kid's place? C'mon, Gabrielle.

Gabrielle is angry. She takes a step towards Xena.

**GABRIELLE**

You come on, Xena.

You had no right to tell them I'd do it.

**XENA**

*(warily)*

You don't want to help them?



Gabrielle turns and paces towards the opening in the shed. She puts her hands on either side of the opening and looks out. Her body is tense, and she is breathing hard.

**GABRIELLE**

I can't.

**XENA**

What?

Xena crossed behind her. Gabrielle turns and faces Xena.

**GABRIELLE**

I can't do it. Not anymore.

Xena is confused. She rubs her temples with one hand, trying to understand what Gabrielle's problem is.

**XENA**

Gabrielle, I've heard you tell stories as recently as a half moon ago. What am I missing here?

Gabrielle stares at Xena. Her attitude shifts from anger to sadness as she studies Xena's face.

**GABRIELLE**

I can tell stories.

**XENA**

Okay.

**GABRIELLE**

But I can't create them anymore. The stories I tell, Xena... I'm just repeating old ones.



Xena is stunned.

**GABRIELLE**

*(Cont'd)*

To do this.

Gabrielle turns and looks out at the stronghold, and its busy occupants.

**GABRIELLE**

*(Cont'd)*

To touch these people, I can't just repeat some old tale I have stuck in my saddlebag.

*(pausing, turns)*

I have to be a bard. I have to give them a new dream that will touch their souls, and I don't have that in me anymore.



Xena walks over and puts her hands on Gabrielle's shoulders. She turns Gabrielle to face her.

**XENA**

I don't believe that.

**GABRIELLE**

How would you know?

Stung, Xena removes her hands and lets them drop.



**GABRIELLE**

*(Cont'd)*

It's the price I paid for this.

Gabrielle removes her sai from her boot and holds it up. Her eyes fill with tears, but she keeps speaking.

**GABRIELLE**

*(Cont'd)*

I haven't written anything new in a very long time, Xena. I lost that part of me.

*(taking a breath)*

I've lost those dreams.

**XENA**

*(softly)*

Gabrielle.

**GABRIELLE**

Gods, I miss them.

Xena puts a hand on Gabrielle's shoulder, a little hesitantly. Gabrielle covers it with one of her own, accepting the silent apology.

**GABRIELLE**

*(Cont'd)*

So, I really hope you have a plan B this time, Xena. I really do.



**FADE OUT.**

**END OF ACT ONE**

## ACT TWO

FADE IN:

### INT. STRONGHOLD - COMMON ROOM - NIGHT

Mahon and Fergal sit at table, drinking. Their men surround them, and the hall is full of clansmen and women enjoying the chance to get together.

**MAHON**

I dunno, Fergie, m'boy.  
Trusting a little girl like  
that to take on my Niall?

Mahon's men laugh.

**FERGAL**

She's a feisty one, Mahon.  
I'd put my money on her.

Fergal's men nod in agreement.

**MAHON**

Would you now? How much?

Lorcan enters. He spots The two men and stands in The shadows, listening.

**FERGAL**

How much do y'got?

**MAHON**

I'll go easy on you. Twenty silver.

**FERGAL**

You're on!

Lorcan makes his way over to the table. The two clan chiefs lift their mugs to him respectfully. Lorcan sits down, reaches a hand out. A mug is placed in it. He drinks.

**LORCAN**

Mahon, my boy. I see we're  
still due your tribute.

Mahon drains his mug, and slaps it on the table.

**MAHON**

You'll have it. Before I leave those  
gates, it'll be in your purse.

Mahon gets up and slaps Fergal on the back, and staggers out. The men start up a ribald song. After a moment, Fergal and Lorcan join in.

CUT TO:

**INT. STRONGHOLD - FERGAL'S QUARTERS - NIGHT**

A small area has been set aside for Fergal's family. There are no cots, or niceties. Sleeping rolls are scattered. Off to one side, there is a bend in the wall that creates an alcove. In this small bit of privacy, Xena and Gabrielle have set their sleeping furs up.

Gabrielle is seated on their furs, her arms wrapped around her knees. Xena crosses over to her and sits down, steeling herself for a sensitive chat. Xena takes a breath.

**GABRIELLE**

I know what you're going to say.



Xena shuts her mouth with an audible click of her teeth hitting. Gabrielle looks at her.

**GABRIELLE**

*(Cont'd)*

You think if I wanted to do this badly enough, I could.

**XENA**

No, I don't.

**GABRIELLE**

Yes, you do, Xena, because that's how it works for you. When you want to do something bad enough, you find a way.

Xena fiddles with her bootlace.

**XENA**

At least I'd try.  
I wouldn't just give up.



Gabrielle looks at her.

**GABRIELLE**

I'm not giving up.  
I already know I can't do it.

**XENA**

How? Have you tried?

**GABRIELLE**

Xena.

**XENA**

Have you?

**GABRIELLE**

I don't even know these people.



**XENA**

Maybe that's a plus.  
*(pausing, scowls)*  
Sorry. I think being in  
Britannia's getting to me.

**GABRIELLE**

*(sighing)*  
Yeah. Me, too.

Gabrielle leans against Xena.

**GABRIELLE**

*(Cont'd)*  
We both lost so much here.

They are both quiet for a few moments. They can hear the singing still going on in the hall. For a minute, they listen to it.

**XENA**

*(softly)*  
Gabrielle?

Gabrielle puts her arm over Xena's shoulders.

**GABRIELLE**

I'll spend some time with them.  
That's all I'll promise.

Xena turns her head to look at Gabrielle.

**XENA**

I think you're wrong about yourself.  
You can do this.



Gabrielle looks sad, though grateful for the sentiment.

**GABRIELLE**

Thanks. But don't count on me.

Gabrielle gets up and offers Xena a hand up. They exit the room and head towards the sound of singing.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. STRONGHOLD COMMON ROOM - MORNING**

The common room looks like a giant tromped through it overnight. Tables are overturned, and men sleep off the previous night's ale in the dirty straw.

Gabrielle enters, dressed in her tartan. She pauses in the doorway, spots Fergal and two of his men at a table, and approaches them.

**FERGAL**

Top of the morning, Gabrielle.  
Did you sleep well?

**GABRIELLE**

Fine, thanks.

Gabrielle sits down next to them. She is a little uncomfortable.

**GABRIELLE**

*(Cont'd)*

I... um, thought maybe we could talk.  
I'd like to get to know your people a little better.



**FERGAL**

Why, sure!

Fergal motions over a man with a platter of miscellaneous food, and a brace of ale mugs. He hands Gabrielle a mug, and offers her some food.

**GABRIELLE**

Thanks.

*(picks out least deadly looking food type item)*

So, tell me. What's it like, living in a clan?

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. STRONGHOLD BATTLEMENTS - MORNING**

Xena is prowling around the stronghold. She inspects defenses with a knowledgeable eye, and tests the strength of a few ropes that hold the gates up. She walks up to the gates and looks out, along the road and down past a wooded slope with hills rising beyond. Two men stand outside the gate, idly talking. Xena listens in.



**GUARD #1**

Bad luck for Fergal, eh? Lost two men, and almost his meal ticket.

**GUARD #2**

Yea. Talked to his man last night. Said there were at least a dozen come on 'em.

**GUARD #1**

He'd say that.

Both guards chuckle.

**GUARD #2**

Yeah... he was drunk enough to say one of them had a clan tattoo.

**GUARD #1**

What? He must be daft. Daft as Fergal is to be bringing some stranger gilly in here.

Xena steps back into the shadows, her face thoughtful.



**CUT TO:**

**INT. STRONGHOLD - COMMON ROOM - DAY**

Gabrielle now has four or five clansman gathered around her.

**GABRIELLE**

So, your bards are also your judges?  
How does that work?



**FERGAL**

Bards keep the truth. They hold tight to all that we are, and they know everyone in the clan - who better to pass judgment?

**CLANSMAN #1**

Tis true. We trust the bards. When it's time where we need to change, as now, it's dangerous for all of us.

**FERGAL**

Our Chief bard, see, he's very old, and sickening. That's why we have to pick a new one.

Gabrielle is intrigued.

**GABRIELLE**

Can you take me to see this Chief Bard?  
Can I talk to them?



Fergal thinks.

**FERGAL**

Why, sure.

**CLANSMAN #1**

Fergal, he's sick.

**FERGAL**

And he wouldn't be feeling better  
to see this bonny lassie?

Fergal holds a hand out to Gabrielle. Gabrielle takes it, and he leads her out of the common room.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. STRONGHOLD - CHIEF BARD'S ROOM**

This is a spacious room. It has woven wall hangings, and a large, comfortable bed. Near one side is a desk, with a worn abacus on it. Lying in the bed is an old man, with silver white hair and beard. He is dressed in worn, tan bedclothes and is obviously very ill. This is PADRAIG - the Chief Bard of the clan.

There is a knock at the door. For a moment, the man on the bed does not react. Then, his eyes open.

**PADRAIG**

Come.



The door opens, and Fergal enters with Gabrielle.

**FERGAL**

Padraig, a moment with you?

Padraig nods, then his eyes go past Fergal and fasten on Gabrielle. His bushy, white eyebrows lift.

**PADRAIG**

Bring the likes of her with you, Fergal, you  
old dog, and you can stay the day through.

Gabrielle smiles.

**PADRAIG**

*(Cont'd)*

Is this your outsider bard, then?  
Come over here closer, girl.

Gabrielle walks over and kneels next to the bed. Fergal watches for a moment, then slips out the door, leaving them alone.

**GABRIELLE**

I'm not a girl. My name is Gabrielle.

Padraig hitches himself up in bed a trifle.

**PADRAIG**

Well, Gabrielle, who is not a girl. What got the likes of you involved in the likes of us? I hear you and your friend bailed out old Fergal on the road. True?

**GABRIELLE**

It's true. We heard them being attacked, and we went to help.

**PADRAIG**

Help?

Padraig starts laughing, ending up in a heavy cough.

**GABRIELLE**

Easy there. What's so funny?



**PADRAIG**

A bit of a thing like you, what were you helping with?

Gabrielle reaches beneath the tartan she's wearing and draws a sai, bringing it up into Padraig's view. It catches the candlelight.

**GABRIELLE**

I'm not exactly what I seem.

Padraig stares at her, then slowly smiles.

**PADRAIG**

Now, here is a story I want to know more of.

Gabrielle re-seats her sai, then sits on the ground next to the bed, resting her arm against it.

**GABRIELLE**

All right. If you tell me about your people.



**PADRAIG**

*(laughing)*

And a bargainer to boot. My kind of girl.

*(patting Gabrielle's hand)*

You start.

Gabrielle laughs, knowing she's been topped.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. STRONGHOLD - COURTYARD - DAY**

Xena is on the prowl again. She spots a sparring match, and goes to watch. Two of the clansman are fighting with double-handed broadswords. More men stand around, cheering and or heaping abuse on the fighters.

**MAHON**

Bran, you slow dog!

He'll cut yer arm off next!

The fighter Bran, who wears Mahon's colors, backs off and waves. The other fighter wears Lorcan's colors. As the two men fight, Xena watches them closely, her eyes spotting the tattoo on Bran's right calf. Mahon notices Xena, and walks over to her.

**MAHON**

*(Cont'd)*

Well, well. Our other newcomer.

Xena, was it?

**XENA**

That's right. That your man?



Xena indicates Bran.

**MAHON**

Aye. He's middling. Lucky he is that

Lorcan's best ended in the healer's.

Else he'd be getting his rump wiped.

Xena doesn't think either man is particularly skilled, but she keeps quiet. Mahon notices the sword half hidden under Xena's tartan. His eyebrows lift.

**XENA**

What happened?

**MAHON**

Had a run in with thieves, or so he says.  
*(laughing)*  
Me, I think he was drunk, and went full  
on into a tree. His head's cracked.

Xena looks thoughtful. Mahon gestures to the men fighting.

**MAHON**

*(Cont'd)*

Fergal claims you've got a good weapon  
hand yourself. Care to take a go?

Xena smiles, with a touch of mischief.

**XENA**

Sure.



Mahon slaps her on the back and chortles.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. - STRONGHOLD - CHIEF BARD'S ROOM - DAY**

Gabrielle and Padraig are still talking. Padraig has his hand clasped around Gabrielle's and they both seem very at ease with each other. In a very unlikely place, Gabrielle has found a kindred spirit.



**PADRAIG**

And from a small boy, it was  
all I'd ever wanted. Pah.  
*(snapping fingers)*  
Just like that, it slipped away.

Gabrielle looks sad.

**GABRIELLE**

That's how it happens. Sometimes you don't even realize you've lost something until it's gone.



Padraig studies Gabrielle from the corner of his eye. He clasps Gabrielle's hand again, and lifts it between them.

**PADRAIG**

Unless you hold tight to it, Gabrielle. Like a dream on waking, remembering every detail in all its color.

**GABRIELLE**

Sometimes life takes you down a different path, and you have to let the dream go.

Gabrielle looks around, indicates the room.

**GABRIELLE**

*(Cont'd)*

Like you have. You've moved on.

Padraig looks at her with a half wry, half pained expression. He reaches down and pulls out one of Gabrielle's sais and holds it, turning it in his hand.

**PADRAIG**

Ah, now have I?

*(sighing)*

You should never let go of a dream, Gabrielle. They are precious, and so few do they come to us.

Padraig closes his eyes, obviously exhausted.

**GABRIELLE**

Let me let you get some rest. Maybe we can talk again later.



**PADRAIG**

*(opening an eye)*

I would like that.

*(pausing)*

I would like that indeed.

Padraig closes his eye. Gabrielle reaches for her sai, but his hand holds it firmly. Gabrielle gently covers him with the blanket, and stands, then turns and leaves the room. Her face is very thoughtful.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. STRONGHOLD - CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER**

Gabrielle walks slowly through the dark corridors. She is deep in thought. She passes the entrance to the armory, where the clan keeps all of their weapons. As she walks past the door, shadows jump out of the entrance and attack her.



**FADE OUT.**

**END OF ACT TWO**

## ACT THREE

FADE IN:

### EXT. STRONGHOLD - COURTYARD - DAY

The crowd has increased. They are yelling, and laughing. In the very center of the crowd, two people are fighting. One is Xena, The other is a huge bear of a man in Mahon's colors. They both wield the large, two handed broadswords.

**MAHON**

C'mon, Brax!

Brax swings at Xena. Xena is having an enormous amount of fun, and it shows. She blocks his swing and locks her arms, swinging the big sword in a circle and throwing Brax's attack off. Xena steps in and whacks Brax in the ribs with the broadsword, making him yelp.

**XENA**

Whoops. Sorry.



**BRAX**

Ow!

Fergal lets out a whoop. Brax spits on his hands, then takes a better grip on the sword. He comes after Xena. He takes a swipe at where she should have been, but Xena has already jumped out of the way. Xena stops, then steps forward and leaps over Brax's head, landing behind him and swatting him in the rump with the broad sword.

**BRAX**

*(Cont'd)*

Hey! You're asking for trouble, lassie!

**XENA**

I am trouble.

*(motioning him forward)*

C'mon.



Brax is now mad. He leaps at her, attacking seriously. Xena blocks his downstroke, and for a moment they are nose to nose. Not a pleasant moment for Xena. She gathers herself to shove him back, then abruptly she stops, her attention focused elsewhere as she senses an urgent need.

**BRAX**

Got you now!

**XENA**

Play time's over.

Xena whips her sword sideways, then lashes out and kicks Brax into the crowd. She drops the broadsword and bolts, leaping over the first ranks of the crowd and landing on a table. She jumps from table to table to the end of the room, then runs at full speed down the corridor. The crowd stares after her.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. STRONGHOLD - CORRIDOR - DAY**

Gabrielle is fighting for her life. Six men are after her, the corridor too dark for her to see much of what they look like. The torches on either side of her have been doused.

With her sais, she catches most of their attack, but some hits get through and it's taking its toll.

The fight is eerily silent. The men do not speak. They simply come at her with grim determination.

Gabrielle is grabbed by one of them. She twists free, but two more jump on top of her and bear her to the ground. Her sais are pulled from her hand.

The two men hold her down, and a third stands over her, his sword upraised.

Gabrielle looks up - all she can see is his eyes glinting in the dim light, and the flash as the sword starts to come down. She fights furiously, but the two holding her outweigh her by double and she can't budge them.



The sword comes down - but halfway there, the man wielding it gets hit from behind. He catapults over Gabrielle's body, smashing into the wall on the other side.

A dark figure swirls in, tearing and ripping at the men holding Gabrielle down, emitting a low growl. The sound of a sword being drawn is heard, and both men roll away from Gabrielle frantically, scrambling on their hands and knees away from her.

They get up and run off into the darkness, turning corners and disappearing.

Gabrielle remains still, on her back. She is straddled by a pair of legs. She groans, and pats them with both hands.

**GABRIELLE**

Great timing. Thanks.

Xena sheathes her sword and stares after the men, caught between wanting to chase them and needing to make sure Gabrielle is all right. She drops to her knees and gently feels Gabrielle's body.

**XENA**  
You hurt?



**GABRIELLE**  
No. Just kicked around a little.

Xena sits down and pulls Gabrielle into her arms and hugs her.



**XENA**  
This just got very not funny.

Gabrielle looks up at Xena wryly. For her it has been not funny for a while. Xena looks down.

**XENA**  
*(Cont'd)*  
I shouldn't have volunteered you.  
*(pausing)*  
I made a big mistake. I'm sorry.

Gabrielle is stunned. She remains silent for a moment, surprised at the emotion she's feeling.

**GABRIELLE**  
*(softly)*  
I wonder why it hurts so much more  
to hear you say that then when I do.



Xena frowns at the response.

**XENA**

What?

**GABRIELLE**

I guess it's one thing to tell myself  
I can't do something - it's something  
else hearing it from you.

Xena's expression clears.

**XENA**

No...No, that's not what I meant.  
*(sighing)*

I got us involved in something a  
lot more dangerous than I realized.



**GABRIELLE**

Oh.  
*(thinking)*  
Paybacks, I guess.

**XENA**

Paybacks?

**GABRIELLE**

For all the times I've done that.

Xena chuckles wryly. After a moment, Gabrielle joins her. Gabrielle puts her head down on Xena's shoulder. She is still shaken by the attack.

**GABRIELLE**

*(Cont'd)*  
I met the most amazing man, Xena.  
The old Chief Bard. He told me a lot  
of things about how these people work.

**XENA**

Anything that might explain this?

Gabrielle thinks.

**GABRIELLE**

Yeah. Maybe. The Chief Bard has a lot of power. It's not just about money.



**XENA**

Maybe I should talk to him.  
Did he tell you anything else?

Gabrielle is momentarily silent.

**GABRIELLE**

Yeah. He made me think about a lot of things.

The sound of yelling suddenly echoes through the corridors. A horn is heard, and running feet. Xena gets up, lifting Gabrielle to her feet.

**XENA**

It's coming from that way.

Xena points in the direction Gabrielle came from. Xena and Gabrielle head off in that direction.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. STRONGHOLD - CORRIDOR OUTSIDE CHIEF BARD'S ROOM - DAY**

A crowd is gathered around the door to Padraig's room. Voices are raised in anger. Gabrielle pushes through the men. She reaches the door and looks inside. She is horrified by what she sees.

**GABRIELLE**

No!



Xena looks over her shoulder, to see Lorcan standing over a man lying on the room's bed. The man's arm is outflung, and his eyes are open and staring. It is Padraig. He is dead.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. STRONGHOLD - CHIEF BARD'S ROOM - A SHORT TIME LATER**

Four of the clansmen stand around the bed. Lorcan is pacing nearby. Gabrielle is kneeling at the head of the bed, visibly upset. Xena is examining the old man's body.

**LORCAN**

This is monstrous! Someone will pay for this. I swear it.

**XENA**

He was strangled.



Xena shows the marks on Padraig's neck. There is an impression of fingers. She sets hers against them and it's obvious the hands were larger than her own. Lorcan points at Gabrielle.

**LORCAN**

You! You were the last one with him. Fergal told me!

Xena gives him a disgusted look, then picks up one of Gabrielle's hands and holds it against hers.

**GABRIELLE**

*(angrily)*

He was fine when I left here. He was sleeping.



**LORCAN**

So you say!

Gabrielle holds up Padraig's hand, which is clenched around a dagger. The dagger is covered in almost dried blood.

**GABRIELLE**

He marked whoever did it.

Lorcan stares at the knife. His expression changes to one that is more wary.

**LORCAN**

So he might have.

*(pausing)*

It will wait for the naming of our new Chief Bard then, to discover the truth. Until then, we have no law.

Lorcan motions to his men.

**LORCAN**

*(Cont'd)*

Guard this room.

No one comes or leaves.

Lorcan storms out, shoving men out of his way. The men mutter uneasily, staring into the room at the dead bard. The guards push them back, shutting the door in their faces and leaving Xena and Gabrielle momentarily alone.

Gabrielle is very shaken. She gently folds Padraig's hand over his chest, his fingers still wrapped around the dagger.

**GABRIELLE**

It took death to let you find your dream again, didn't it?



Xena kneels on the other side of the bed, facing Gabrielle.

**XENA**

What does that mean?

Gabrielle gazes at Padraig's face. She lifts her hand and shuts his eyelids.

**GABRIELLE**

All his life, he wanted to fight for his clan. He never could.

Gabrielle bows her head briefly. She lifts her eyes and looks at Xena.

**GABRIELLE**

*(Cont'd)*

I'm not going to wait that long to find my dreams again, Xena. I may not be able to do this, but damned if I'm not going to try.

Xena is troubled, but not surprised.

**XENA**

If they went after him, they want to control who gets his job. You'll be a target.

**GABRIELLE**

I know. But I've got you. I'm not worried.

Now Xena is surprised, but very pleased with the words. She hides the reaction, however, and merely nods.



**XENA**

All right. Why don't you go back to Fergal's quarters and think about what you're gonna tell them, and I'll see if I can find out what The Hades is going on?

Gabrielle nods. She covers Pdraig's body with the blood stained blanket, and closes her eyes for a moment. Then she stands and joins Xena at The door.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. STRONGHOLD - COMMON ROOM - AFTERNOON**

The atmosphere is now strained. The clansmen and women gather in their family groups, and voices are low. Pdraig's death has shaken the clan.

Mahon walks over and sits down next to Fergal.

**MAHON**

Tis a bad thing, man.

**FERGAL**

Aye.

Mahon leans closer.

**MAHON**

Fergal, tis no time for strangers here. Pull your entry. Let's get the clan settled.

**FERGAL**

What?

**MAHON**

Come on, man. You know you haven't a chance. Don't throw away your honor on that outsider!

**FERGAL**

If you're so sure of yourself, what harm is it?

**MAHON**

Your honor, Fergal. You'll be a laughing stock.

Fergal gets up and shoves his chair into the table. He turns and leaves the common room.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. STRONGHOLD - FERGAL'S QUARTERS - AFTERNOON**

Gabrielle is sitting on her and Xena's sleeping furs. She has a quill in her fingers, but she is not writing with it. She turns it over and over in her hands, seemingly lost in thought. She folds her hands and rests her forehead against them, her body tense with effort.



After a few minutes, she gets up and throws the quill across the space, hitting the opposite wall. She walks over and stares at the quill, then slams her fist into the wood.

Gabrielle shakes her head, then she returns to the furs and collapses onto them, a look of defeat on her face.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. STRONGHOLD - CORRIDOR**

A man slowly inches down the corridor, listening intently. In his hands, he holds a crossbow. He pauses outside Fergal's area. He hears footsteps, and he ducks behind a corner.

Two of Fergal's men walk by, talking to each other.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. STRONGHOLD GATES - AFTERNOON**

Xena strides along the wall. She singles out one of the clansmen, and points a finger at him, crooking it. The man looks around, then approaches her, wiping his hands, a look of anticipation on his face.



Xena puts her arm around his shoulders and leads him into the storage shed. The men around them chuckle knowingly.

**CUT TO:**

## INT. STRONGHOLD - FERGAL'S QUARTERS - MOMENTS LATER

Gabrielle pulls her bag over to her. The top opens, and things fall out. Gabrielle sighs. She shoves the items back in, and stops, lifting one up and looking at it. It is a bit of cloth. Once, it might have been a piece of a baby's blanket.

### GABRIELLE

How can I recapture my dreams, if  
I still hold on to my nightmares?

Gabrielle studies the piece of cloth intently. She gets up and walks to the wall torch, hesitates, then in one quick motion, she puts the cloth to the flame.

It does not catch. Then it does, in an angry burst of flame that almost consumes Gabrielle's fingers. She gasps and releases the fabric. The sparks rise up, dancing in front of her, then just as quickly turn to dust.

It is a very private moment. Gabrielle stares at the space where the sparks were, then she returns to the furs and sits down. She closes her eyes.



CUT TO:

## INT. STRONGHOLD - CORRIDOR - A SHORT TIME LATER

The crossbowman sticks his head out, sees no one, then he creeps out again, and flattens himself against the wall. He eases around the corner of Fergal's area and stops, spotting Gabrielle.

Gabrielle is pacing back and forth, her hands moving in slight gestures as she whispers.

The crossbowman watches. He lifts his weapon and takes aim, waiting for her to cross his sights.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

## ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

### INT. STRONGHOLD - CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

The crossbowman lifts his bow and aims carefully.

Fergal enters his quarters, and walks over to Gabrielle. He stands watching her for several minutes as she continues to work. His back is to the opening to the corridor.

The bowman shifts around, but he cannot get a shot past Fergal. He lowers his bow in frustration, and fades back into the shadows.

CUT TO:

### INT. STRONGHOLD - ARMORY - AFTERNOON

Xena enters the armory. It is a square room filled with weapons. Xena roams between the stacks of blades and other implements of war. Each clan chief has stacks of arrows fletched in their colors. Xena selects an arrow from each pile, and she also picks up two different types of daggers. She slides them into her kilts and leaves.



CUT TO:

### INT. STRONGHOLD - FERGAL'S QUARTERS - AFTERNOON

Gabrielle is leaning against the wall. She lifts her head and turns, facing Fergal as she falls back against the wood. She is sweating, and exhausted, but at peace.

**FERGAL**

Are you ready, lass?

Gabrielle nods.

**GABRIELLE**

I'm ready.

**FERGAL**

Good. We'll walk over then with you.

Gabrielle looks over at Fergal. He has his men standing behind him, and they all have weapons. Their faces are serious.

**GABRIELLE**

All right. Let's go.

CUT TO:

## INT. STRONGHOLD - COMMON ROOM - EVENING

The entire clan is gathered in the common room. It is crowded, smoky, and tense. At one end of the room, a small area has been marked off with kegs, and two boards run across them, making a primitive stage. Lorcan holds court at the far end seated at a large table, his men and women surrounding him. He is the chieftain, and is making sure everyone remembers that.

Mahon enters with his family. Many of the people gathered call out to him. He raises a hand. His other arm is around a tall, equally red haired younger man dressed proudly in Mahon's colors.

Fergal enters from the other side of the room, to a much smaller greeting. Gabrielle stands in the middle of his men.

**GABRIELLE**

Lot of people in here.



**FERGAL**

All the clan, lass.  
This means a lot to all of us.

Gabrielle squares her shoulders. She realizes everyone is looking at her. She looks around, searching for something, but does not find it.

**LORCAN**

All right! Settle down, you lot! We've got serious business to settle here.

The clan quiets down, but not completely.

**LORCAN**

*(Cont'd)*

First thing. A moment to bow your heads, in memory of the great, good friend of our clan, our treasure, our lost Chief Bard, Padraig.

Now it is completely silent. The sound of the fire crackling can be clearly heard. The wood creaking overhead can be heard.

A low muttering rises.

**LORCAN**

*(Cont'd)*

Choose his successor well, clansmen.

Mahon pushes his way through the crowd, and confronts Fergal.

**MAHON**

My coin or yours, friend?

Fergal produces a coin. He tosses it in the air.

**MAHON**  
(Cont'd)  
Plank!

Fergal catches the coin, and slaps it on his wrist. He holds it out to Mahon, without looking at it.

**MAHON**  
(Cont'd)  
Ah! Save the best for first! We lead!

Mahon's people cheer, and the tall redheaded young man raises his hands in acknowledgement. Fergal retreats to his table.

Xena enters, makes her way through the crowd and ends up behind Gabrielle. She puts her hands on Gabrielle's shoulders.

Gabrielle turns.

**GABRIELLE**  
There you are.

**XENA**  
Here I am.

Gabrielle indicates the room.

**GABRIELLE**  
Tough crowd.

Xena reviews the room, and shrugs.

**XENA**  
I remember the night you recited your first poem to me. This any tougher?



Gabrielle turns around and looks up at Xena with a smile.

**GABRIELLE**  
Now that you mention it....

Xena lowers her voice, and ducks her head closer to Gabrielle.

**XENA**  
You ready for this?

**GABRIELLE**  
I'm ready.  
Did you find out what was going on?



Xena glances around. Mahon's son is approaching the makeshift stage.

**XENA**  
Not entirely. But I will.

Xena pats Gabrielle on the side. She looks around, then she leans over and kisses Gabrielle soundly.

**XENA**  
*(Cont'd)*  
Good luck.



Xena slips off into the crowd, leaving Gabrielle the center of interested attention. Gabrielle decides to study the floor until her blush fades.

**CUT TO:**

### **INT. STRONGHOLD - COMMON ROOM - PLATFORM**

Mahon's son, **RORY** stands on the platform. He is good looking. He has a sprinkling of freckles across his face and an air of open good nature.

**RORY**  
Today I will tell you a story  
of the valor of our clan!

The crowd roars approval. Mahon smiles.

**CUT TO:**

## INT. STRONGHOLD - INFIRMARY - NIGHT

Xena slips into the infirmary. It is empty with the exception of three pallets. One holds a man with his head swathed in bandages. Xena studies him. She suddenly kneels down and taps his shoulder. His eyes pop open and see her. He reacts, putting a hand up protectively and squirming away. Xena smiles grimly. She stands and moves on.



The next man has a broken leg. Xena passes him by. The third is Bonnach.

Bonnach is sleeping. He is bare to the waist, and his chest is swathed in bandages. Xena kneels, and draws her breast dagger.

**CUT TO:**

## INT. STRONGHOLD - COMMON ROOM - NIGHT

Gabrielle sits with Fergal's family, watching Rory perform. He is very good.

**FERGAL**

*(whispering)*

He picked a good tale.

Gabrielle looks around. The men are celebrating the tale of clan war Rory is telling.

**GABRIELLE**

He knew his audience.



Fergal looks at Gabrielle curiously. Behind them, there is a subtle shifting of bodies as men ease into the room and stand behind Fergal's group. There is a glint of torchlight on steel.

**CUT TO:**

## INT. STRONGHOLD - INFIRMARY - NIGHT

The sound of cloth being cut wakes Bonnach. He gasps, seeing a backlit figure crouched over him. Xena claps a hand over his mouth.

**XENA**

Shh. I'm not here to hurt ya.

He is frightened, but he nods. Xena releases him.

**BONNACH**

What are you doing?

**XENA**

Hunting.



Xena uncovers the ugly knife wound in Bonnach's side. She removes one of the two daggers she took from the armory, and holds it to the wound.

**CUT TO:**

## INT. STRONGHOLD - COMMON ROOM - NIGHT

Rory finishes his tale. The room roars with approval. Gabrielle clenches her hands as she waits her turn to go up. Fergal claps her on the back and the rest of his family also reaches out to touch her, as though for luck.

**FERGAL**

Up to you now, Gabrielle.

Gabrielle nods, puts her shoulders back, and heads for the platform. As she passes through the crowd, she is watched closely. She can hear doubtful words directed at her.



Just short of the platform she stops, staring at it as the murmuring around her increases.

**CUT TO:**

## INT. STRONGHOLD - CHIEF BARD'S ROOM

Xena enters the very quiet room. Behind her, two guards are slumped on the ground. She passes by Pdraig's covered body and heads for his worktable. She pulls out a drawer, which has shallow trays made of wood on its surface. They are filled with stones. Xena stares at them, her brow creasing in puzzlement.

CUT TO:

## INT. STRONGHOLD - COMMON ROOM - PLATFORM - NIGHT

Gabrielle takes the last few steps and leaps, rather than climbs, up onto the platform. She turns to face the room, and from her perspective she sees a sea of strange faces, with many eyes pinned on her.

Everyone is talking. Gabrielle waits, letting her eyes travel over the crowd. Gabrielle sees there are armed men near the back of the room.

After a moment, the crowd quiets down.

**GABRIELLE**

Sometimes the greatest battles are fought...

**MAHON**

Copycat!

The crowd laughs. Gabrielle waits.

**GABRIELLE**

.... Fought not with swords, but with words.



The crowd murmurs, unsure of what she means.

**GABRIELLE**

*(Cont'd)*

It takes a special kind of warrior to win the battle for hearts and minds. Pdraig was such a warrior.

Now it is quiet again.

**GABRIELLE**

*(Cont'd)*

This is his story. A story of lost dreams, and finding the heart to recapture them.

Lorcan watches Gabrielle, his face still. Slowly, his head turns and looks at a man nearby. The man nods, and slips away.

CUT TO:

**INT. STRONGHOLD - CHIEF BARD'S ROOM - NIGHT**

Xena studies the stones. Abruptly, she pulls out the arrows she'd taken from the armory and throws them on the desk. She matches the fletching colors to the colors stained on the rocks. Her eyes widen. With a muffled curse, she leaps over the desk and bolts for the door.

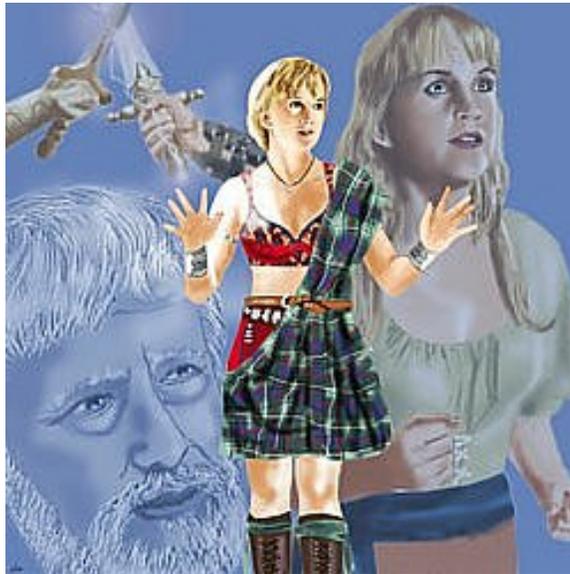
**CUT TO:**

**INT. STRONGHOLD - COMMON ROOM - PLATFORM - NIGHT**

Gabrielle stands on the platform. She is sweating, and her voice is growing hoarse, but the crowd is riveted on her.

**GABRIELLE**

But he never let go of that dream. His warrior's heart remembered it, cherished it, and when someone came to rip the life from him, that dream spoke at last.



**CUT TO:**

**INT. STRONGHOLD - COMMON ROOM - NIGHT**

Lorcan folds his arms. He watches Gabrielle, but his eyes flick around the room, watching the rest of the clan. Gabrielle's passion has captured them. Even Mahon sits raptly listening.

Lorcan looks off to his left. He nods slightly. He looks to his right. He nods again.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. STRONGHOLD - COMMON ROOM - PLATFORM - MOMENTS LATER**

Gabrielle comes to the end of her tale. She senses the crowd's approval.

**GABRIELLE**

He spoke his dreams. He guarded yours with honor.  
He taught the value of a bold heart, and in his  
ending hours, he gave me his story as a great gift.

*(pausing)*

A gift I now give to you.



For a moment, the crowd is silent, then a great noise erupts as they react. They begin pounding on the tables. It sounds like thunder, and blocks out almost everything else.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. STRONGHOLD - COMMON ROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS**

Lorcan lifts a hand. His fingers start to curl.

**XENA**

Move, and I'll gut you like a pig.

Lorcan freezes, and looks down. Xena stands close by his side, her sword point pressed into his flesh. Around them, the crowd is still going wild.

**LORCAN**

What do you think you're doing?

**XENA**

Ending your story.  
The hard way if I have to.



Very slowly, Lorcan lowers his arm. Fergal's family rushes to the platform. They lift Gabrielle on their shoulders and dance with her.

Suddenly Lorcan breaks and runs for it. He shoves people out of the way and leaps for the door. Men and women scream, and scramble out of his way. Xena whips her chakram out and lets it loose. It sizzles through the air and chops through the ropes holding the torch posterns up. With a cracking sound, they fold inwardly, blocking the door Lorcan is racing for. He pulls up and leaps backwards, almost set on fire by them.

Xena catches her chakram. Lorcan is in a small open space by the door.

The clan mills around in confusion, unsure of what is going on. Mahon decides to take charge.

**MAHON**

What is the meaning of this?

Xena points towards Lorcan with her sword.

**XENA**

You've got a weasel in your midst.  
His men attacked Fergal's family.

**LORCAN**

You lie! Outsider!  
It was you who attacked them!

The crowd glances between them, not sure of who to believe.

**XENA**

Bring your man with the broken skull in here.  
*(pausing)*  
I'll show you how I broke it. Then you  
can explain why your family dagger  
matches the hole in Bonnach's side.

Lorcan starts to back away towards the torches.

**LORCAN**

Demon!

**XENA**

Only when I have to be.



Lorcan points.

**LORCAN**

Take her!

Xena steps forward and carves a slash in the air with her sword, slicing through Lorcan's kilts and exposing his right thigh. Everyone freezes. There is a bandage there. Xena cuts through it, and reveals a sai wound.

**XENA**

One thing about sais.  
They make a real distinctive hole.

The clan turns on Lorcan. Even his men back away from him. Men surround him with drawn weapons and he is hidden from view. He is dragged out. Xena lets her sword rest on her shoulder. She looks over at Gabrielle, still being carried on Fergal's shoulders. Their eyes meet.

Cheers start to go up again, and the celebration begins.

**FADE OUT.**

**END OF ACT FOUR**

**TAG**

**FADE IN:**

**EXT. STRONGHOLD WALLS - MORNING**

Gabrielle sits on the wall, her diary in her lap. She is still wearing her tartan. It is sunny out.

**GABRIELLE**

*(VO)*

I thought there was a part of me that I lost forever  
somewhere on the road we've been traveling.

Gabrielle looks out over the wooded landscape.

**GABRIELLE**

*(VO)*

*(Cont'd)*

The last place on earth I expected  
to find it again was here.



A gust of wind ruffles Gabrielle's hair, and she dips her quill in ink again.

**GABRIELLE**

*(VO)*

*(Cont'd)*

It's wonderful to see how these  
folks cherish people like Padraig.  
*(pausing thoughtfully)*  
People like me.

Xena emerges from the stronghold and walks over to her. She leans against the wall, tossing a small rock on one hand.

Gabrielle closes her diary and smiles at Xena.

**GABRIELLE**

*(Cont'd)*

It's hard to believe Lorcan thought  
he would get away with it.

Xena shakes her head.

**XENA**

He gambled away most of the clans  
assets. He had to control whoever was  
in that office, and he had Mahon over  
a barrel for two year's worth of tributes.

**GABRIELLE**

But why kill Padraig?  
He was dying anyway, Xena.

**XENA**

He figured it out. You must have given him the  
final clue when you told him about the attack.



Gabrielle sighs.

**GABRIELLE**

Poor Padraig. I really liked him.

Fergal emerges from the stronghold, supporting Bonnach. They walk slowly over to where Xena and Gabrielle are. Bonnach holds a hand out to Gabrielle.

**BONNACH**

I wanted to say thank you before you left. I don't know  
if I can live up to your example, but I'll surely try.

Gabrielle takes his hand, and grips it.

**GABRIELLE**

Don't thank me yet. Sounds like you've  
got a tough job ahead of you.

Fergal chuckles.

**FERGAL**

You're both welcome to stay, if you like. We  
always need strong hands, and strong hearts.

Xena and Gabrielle exchange glances.

**XENA**

Thanks. But we've got some traveling to do.

**GABRIELLE**

Maybe we'll come back and visit sometime, though.



Fergal nods. He gives Gabrielle a pat on the back, then he helps Bonnach back towards the strong hold. Xena and Gabrielle watch them until they disappear. Xena leans against the wall and looks out at the forest.

**GABRIELLE**

*(Cont'd)*

Hey, Xena... Thanks.

**XENA**

For what?

**GABRIELLE**

For believing in me.



Xena studies Gabrielle's face briefly. She smiles at Gabrielle.

**XENA**

Right back atcha.



Gabrielle leans over and gives Xena a kiss. She opens her diary again.

**GABRIELLE**

*(VO)*

I look around now, and this place no longer  
Holds so much horror for me. There's a lot  
of beauty here, and you get a feeling there  
might be a story behind almost every tree.

Xena puts an arm around Gabrielle.

**GABRIELLE**

*(VO)*

*(Cont'd)*

Maybe we can stop and listen  
to a few of them on our way.

Gabrielle closes her diary and puts her quill in its case.

**GABRIELLE**

*(Cont'd)*

So, have you figured it out yet?

Xena looks at her.

**XENA**

Figured what out?

**GABRIELLE**

Something that isn't animal, vegetable, or mineral?

Xena chuckles.

**GABRIELLE**

*(Cont'd)*

Gotcha.

They walk off down the road together.

**XENA**

That's an easy one.

**GABRIELLE**

Oh yeah? Name it.

**XENA**

Dreams.

Gabrielle looks at her. Xena smiles back.



**FADE OUT.**

**DISCLAIMER**

No dreams were harmed in the making of this motion picture,  
but several nightmares lost their lives in a very good cause.