

Xena: Warrior Princess - Subtext Virtual Season 8



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WRITTEN BY

Melissa Good

SCREENGRABS

Judi Mair

PRODUCED BY

Carol Stephens

ARTWORK

Lucia

DIRECTED BY

Denise Byrd

TITLE GRAPHIC

Linda (Calli)

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TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. COZY LAKESIDE CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Xena and Gabrielle sit on their bedroll. Their campsite is arranged around them, neat and tidy. A lake nearby reflects the sunset. A pot of something is bubbling on the fire. Argo stands off to one side, nibbling on grass. Everything looks inviting and as comfortable as an outdoor bedroom could possibly look.

However, Xena is sharpening her sword in a decidedly aggravated manner.



XENA

Son of a Bacchae.

Gabrielle gives the pot a stir. She looks over her shoulder at Xena with an amused expression.

GABRIELLE

C'mon, Xena, lighten up.

Xena glares at her.

XENA

Lighten up? Gabrielle, do you realize what him taking my chakram means?

Gabrielle gives the pot another stir, pulling the spoon out and tasting her creation. She licks her lips in approval.

GABRIELLE

Sure I realize.



XENA

Good.

GABRIELLE

It means he wants something.

(beat)

Again.

(under breath)

Other than you, that is.

Xena rolls her eyes.

XENA

Don't start. I don't think
that's it this time.



Gabrielle rolls HER eyes.

GABRIELLE

Xena, get real. It's always that.

Maybe it's something PLUS
that, but it's never NOT that.

Xena shoves her sword into its scabbard and tosses it to one side.

XENA

I almost had it back.

Son of a Bacchae!!!

Gabrielle shakes her head, and gets up onto her knees, crawling over to where Xena is sitting.

GABRIELLE

Lie down. Let's see if a backrub
will get you to quit being so grumpy.

Xena looks at Gabrielle in some outrage.

XENA

I am not grumpy!

Gabrielle crossed her arms over her chest.

GABRIELLE

So you don't want a backrub?

XENA

I didn't say that.

Gabrielle points at the bedroll. Reluctantly, Xena lies down on her stomach and rests her chin on her forearm as Gabrielle straddles her and begins to give her a massage.

FADE TO:

EXT. DUSTY ROAD - DAY

Xena and Gabrielle walk along the road, with Argo walking behind them. Xena kicks rocks ahead of her as she walks in some kind of mysterious pattern.

Gabrielle watches Xena, her lips moving as she tries to figure out what rhythm Xena is using.

XENA

Maybe it's not me this time.
Maybe it is the chakram he's after.



GABRIELLE

Huh?

(looking up)

Oh. Ares. Right.

(frowning)

Why would he want it?

Xena continues kicking rocks.

XENA

Maybe he wants it back.

GABRIELLE

Back?

XENA

He's the one who gave it to me
to start with. He said it was a
weapon that suited my nature.

GABRIELLE

What, circular?

(smiling)

Xena, even if he wanted to claim it back after all this time - that's not the chakram he gave you.

Xena looks thoughtful.

GABRIELLE

(Cont'd)

It's grown as much as you have.

Xena turns and looks at Gabrielle.

XENA

As we both have.

(smiling)

Yeah, good point. Maybe he'll get more than he's bargained for.

GABRIELLE

He'll probably be back here throwing it back at you any time now.



Gabrielle links her arm with Xena's, and they head off down the road.

FADE TO:

INT. ARES' TEMPLE - DAY

The interior of this stone building is in shambles. Parts of the wall itself are missing, and sun pours in holes in the roof. The altar is cracked, and lying in pieces, and the imposing statuary lies in tiny shards of marble on the floor. Ares strolls in, dressed in his customary leather and chain metal number. He stops in the middle of the floor and turns around slowly, examining the destruction.

Walking to the altar, he picks up a birds nest from one of the cracks and turns it over, dumping the eggs into his hand. One by one, he releases the eggs, to crack into smithereens on the floor.

He dusts his hands off and puts them on his hips. As he turns, the sun glints off the chakram hanging from his belt - eerily in the same spot Xena usually carries it.

ARES

First things first.



Ares pulls a leather glove from his belt and puts it on his hand, then he takes the chakram up in his fist, and holds it up in front of him. It reflects the sun into his eyes, and he laughs.

ARES

(Cont'd)

You've been spending too much
time around her. I need to
get you back to basics.

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. LARGE TOWN - DAY

Xena and Gabrielle enter the town. Their appearance doesn't seem to attract any attention from the inhabitants, who are busy attending a big market festival that winds all the way through the streets and around the buildings. The town appears very prosperous. The villagers appear cheerful and they welcome Xena and Gabrielle with friendly faces and smiles as the two women wander through the festivities.

GABRIELLE

Nice to see people
happy for a change.

XENA

Ummhmm.

Two women with baskets of flower necklaces dance past. They stop and offer Xena and Gabrielle one each, placing them around their necks before they run on, giggling. Xena examines one of the flowers, then sniffs it experimentally.

GABRIELLE

Sure beats getting hit
over the head with a brick.



They enter the main marketplace. Near one end, two men are selling flasks of some herbal concoction, and next to them a potter displays a wooden table full of well made jars and pots.

XENA

Want to do some shopping?

Gabrielle studies the table. She shrugs.

GABRIELLE

No.

Xena looks at her in surprise.

GABRIELLE

(Cont'd)

It finally dawned on me that the more stuff I buy, the more stuff I have to carry. Let's go.

Gabrielle leads the way through the marketplace and they arrive at the town inn. The innkeeper, a middle aged man wearing a leather apron, stands outside sweeping the ground in front of the inn with a straw broom.

XENA

Evening.

The innkeeper looks them over, then smiles.

INNKEEPER

Evening, ladies. Can I interest you in a room, a bath, and a good meal?

GABRIELLE

(smiling)

Why? Does it look like we need them?

The innkeeper reacts, a bit embarrassed.

INNKEEPER

No... No! No... Just a turn of speech, you know!

XENA

(dryly)

We'll take all three. How much?



The innkeeper sizes them up again.

INNKEEPER

Five dinars.

Xena looks at him sternly.

INNKEEPER

(Cont'd)

With dinner.

Xena looks at him even more sternly.

INNKEEPER

(Cont'd)

And stabling for your lovely horse.

Xena smiles. Gabrielle hides a grin.

GABRIELLE

Nice festival you've got going on.

The innkeeper nods.

INNKEEPER

Been a good year, it has. Things
have been a lot better since
those leeches from Olympus left.

Xena and Gabrielle exchange significant glances.

GABRIELLE

Really? Why don't you sit down
with us and tell us more about that?



Xena takes one arm, and Gabrielle takes the other arm, and they escort the innkeeper inside the inn before he can protest. The broom falls to the ground, forgotten.

FADE TO:

INT. ARES' TEMPLE - NIGHT

The inside of the temple looks, if anything, more disrupted than it did before. Ares is sitting on the broken altar, pounding the chakram against the stone with a very irritated look on his face.

ARES

Stupid piece of....

In frustration, Ares throws the chakram across the temple and it smacks into the wall. Instead of returning to him, it falls to the ground with a clatter.

ARES

(Cont'd)

I waited too long.

Ares gets up and paces.

ARES

(Cont'd)

Xena... Xena... Xena....

(beat)

Why do you always have
to screw me up?

Ares lifts his hands and lets them drop to his sides.

ARES

(Cont'd)

But never screw me?

He laughs bitterly.

ARES

(Cont'd)

Who knew the power I'd need to
bring back my glory days would be
locked up in a present I gave to you?



Ares walks over and kicks the chakram. Then he picks the chakram up and looks at it speculatively.

ARES

(Cont'd)

I need to get her out of you, don't I?
Then you and me can have some real fun.

Ares flips the chakram, then twirls it on his finger as he thinks. He smiles, returns the chakram to his hip, then pops out in a flash of blue impatience.

CUT TO:

INT. TOWN INN - NIGHT

Xena and Gabrielle sit at a table with the remains of a good dinner in front of them. They both hold mugs of ale, as they listen to the innkeeper talk.

INNKEEPER

So... That's the story! Used to be, half our harvest went to the gods. Field of wheat to this one, herd of pigs to that one... Pah!

GABRIELLE

So, now you get to keep it all.



INNKEEPER

Right you are, and good riddance! They weren't worth a dinar. Look, we're still here, ain't we? Haven't fallen off the world without 'em?

The innkeeper stands up and slaps the table.

INNKEEPER

(Cont'd)

Well, it's been nice talking to you, but I've got an inn to run. You ladies have a beautiful, godless night.

Xena waves her hand at him as he leaves. They drain their mugs, then push back from the table and leave the room which is getting steadily more crowded.

CUT TO:

INT. RUINS OF OLYMPUS – ARES' – TIME IRRELEVANT

A low mist swirls around the floor of a large room. There is a window on one side of it, but outside the window is a blank darkness. The walls are draped with velvet, and the floor is covered in animal skin rugs. There is a huge, huge bed in the center of the room piled with pillows. A mirror hangs over it.

The room has an air of abandonment. There seems to be a layer of dust over everything, and though the bed linens are mussed, they lay over the side and droop on the floor. Near the door is a wooden dog bowl with three dishes, overturned.

Ares enters. He stares at the bowl, then kicks it out of his way and goes to a chest near the window. He throws the top open and starts pulling items out of it and tossing them over his shoulder. Most of the items are unidentifiable, but whips, chains, and things with points on them are prominently featured.

ARES

Where are you? Hmm?

Ares pulls out a silk robe. He stares at it, then sniffs it, grimacing before he tosses it aside. He then removes an old, ceramic case, square and very dusty.

ARES

(Cont'd)

Ah!

Ares takes the case and sits on the bed. He opens the case, then removes the chakram from his hip and places it inside. It fits into the round depression in the center. On the outside of the case are prominent, Egyptian hieroglyphs. Ares studies the sigils, turning the case over, and then upside down to read them.

ARES

(Cont'd)

Figures. I hate sand.



Ares gets up and puts the case under his arm. He snaps his fingers and disappears.

CUT TO:

INT. INN ROOM – NIGHT

Xena is lying on the bed on her back with her hands behind her head. She is dressed in a plain nightgown, and her hair is damp. Gabrielle stands near the window wrapped in just a towel, brushing her also damp hair out.

XENA

I never really thought about it.



Gabrielle stops and looks at her.

GABRIELLE

About how it would affect
everyone else after all this time?

Xena sighs. Gabrielle puts the brush down and goes to the bed, lying down on her side next to Xena.

GABRIELLE

(Cont'd)

We fought the gods because
we had to. It's nice to see that
good things came out of that.

Xena brushes the backs of her fingers against Gabrielle's cheek.

XENA

So where does that leave Ares?
What's a god without followers?

Gabrielle thinks about that.

GABRIELLE

I don't know.

Gabrielle turns her head slightly and kisses Xena's fingers. Xena smiles. She rolls onto her side and they kiss each other with a warm, familiar passion. Xena rests her forehead against Gabrielle's.



XENA

If I were Ares, I'd be looking for
a way to rebuild my empire.

Gabrielle nibbles the end of Xena's nose.

GABRIELLE

Where does the chakram fit into that?

XENA
I don't know.

Xena loosens the towel and pulls Gabrielle into an embrace.

XENA
(Cont'd)
But I bet we're gonna find out.

Gabrielle pulls the covers over them.

GABRIELLE
Maybe, but I bet it'll
wait till tomorrow.

XENA
No bet.

Xena pulls a dagger from nowhere and whips it over Gabrielle's head. It slices the candle in two and sends the lit end to the floor, dousing it. The room goes dark, but not silent.



FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

EXT. TOWN - WHARF - DAY

Xena and Gabrielle walk along the docks in the early morning hours. It is quiet, though there are men working around the boats and a few wagons roll by taking cargo from them.

Xena leads Argo, and it is obvious they are headed out of town.

GABRIELLE

You think he'll contact us?



Xena shrugs. She appears preoccupied.

GABRIELLE

(Cont'd)

What if he doesn't?

Xena shrugs again. Gabrielle watches her in some concern.

GABRIELLE

(Cont'd)

Xena, you know as well as I do he must have some stupid plot in mind that has you as a part of it. He always does.

Xena slows to a stop and leans against the seawall, watching a small boat cruise past. The front of the boat has a lurid dragon's head painted on it.

XENA

Yes, he does.

She shakes her head.

XENA

(Cont'd)

And there isn't a damn thing I can do about it.

Gabrielle leans next to her.

GABRIELLE

Not now, no.

Xena looks at Gabrielle, but Gabrielle keeps looking out over the water.

XENA

I don't know if I could
have killed him.



GABRIELLE

No. I don't think you
could have either.

Gabrielle starts to walk off. After a second, Argo ambles after her. Xena watches them go, then pushes off the wall and jogs to catch up.

XENA

Gabrielle....

Gabrielle turns and looks at Xena.

GABRIELLE

I know. A lot of things happened.
(smiling briefly)

So where do we go from here?
Wait for him to show his hand?

Xena indicates a small bench near the water. She goes over to it, and they sit down together. Argo finds a trough of water and stops for a drink a little distance away.

XENA

Gabrielle, no one wants to find him
more than I do. He's got a piece
of me, and I'm not happy about it.

GABRIELLE

Can't you just... Call him?



XENA

Sure, if I had the Eye of Hephaestus.
But that went down with the rest of Olympus.

Xena stares at the ground. She does not see Gabrielle sit up and look at her with a strange expression.

GABRIELLE

The Eye of Hephaestus?

XENA

Zeus' leash.

(sighing)

Let's get out of here. The smell
of dead fish is getting to me.

Xena stands up. Gabrielle grabs the skirt of her leathers and holds on.

GABRIELLE

I know where that is.

XENA

What?



Gabrielle gets up and tugs Xena along after her.

GABRIELLE

C'mon.

CUT TO:

INT. EGYPTIAN TEMPLE - INDETERMINITE TIME

This room appears to be inside a pyramid. There are oil pots flickering in sconces on walls that slant up to a point overhead. On one side is a throne, where Anubis, a tall human figure with the head of a jackal is seated. Next to him, a beautiful woman reclines on a couch, fanning him with a palm frond.

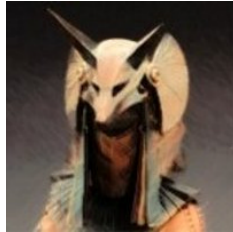
A male attendant enters with a pot of incense. He bows and touches his head to the floor in front of the jackal headed man, then gets up and circles the room, spreading the scent.

A cat enters and walks to the throne, leaping up to the arm and stretching itself out. The jackal headed man strokes it.

A blue flash erupts in the center of the room, fading quickly to reveal Ares. He appears extremely out of place. The cat spits at him.

ANUBIS

Who are you to dare enter
this sacred space?



Ares looks around.

ARES

You call this sacred? You don't
even have a view of the Nile.

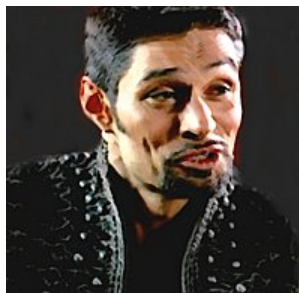
WOMAN

May the holy cats eat your tongue
for speaking so to the great Anubis!

Ares sticks his tongue out at her and waggles it.

ARES

Take a hike, babe. Me and
puppy head need to have some
god to god communication.



The woman looks at Anubis. He lifts his hand and flicks his elegant fingers at her. Reluctantly, she gets up and walks out. Ares goes to the couch and sits on it, extending his boots out on the woven rug.

ANUBIS

I have nothing to say to rag
tag has been war godlings
from the barbarian outlands.

Ares leans toward him. The cat rears up and hisses.

ARES

Ah ah ah.... Don't be so nasty to someone who's here to do you a favor.

ANUBIS

I need no favors from you.

ARES

Let's talk your decline.
You want this cushy....

Ares looks around and shrugs.

ARES

(Cont'd)

...place for eternity? Or you want to end up at the bottom of a dust bowl.

Ares now has Anubis' attention. The jackal headed god gets up and paces, his golden skirt clashes as he moves with a musical sound.

ANUBIS

I don't know what you're talking about.

ARES

Sure you do. It happened to us.
It can happen to you. I can stop it.



Anubis stops by the wall and examines the many cartouches engraved there.

ARES

(Cont'd)

For a price.

Anubis does not turn around.

ANUBIS

The waters of life have told me of this danger.
A prophecy of inner destruction brought on
by a mortal woman. You can prevent this?

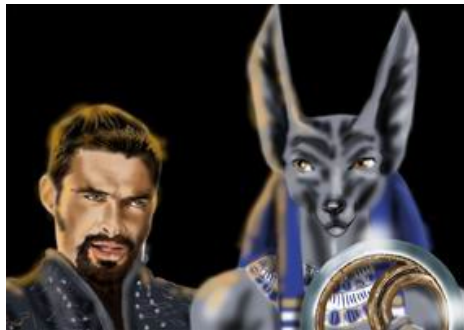
ARES
(confidently)
Oh yeah. For a price.

ANUBIS
What is your price?

Ares grins.

ARES
Now we're talking. C'mere, Rover.
I'll show you what I need.

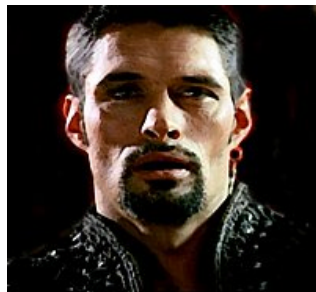
Ares takes the chakram off his hip and tosses it onto the throne. Anubis walks over and picks it up, studying it curiously.



ANUBIS
This... has great power.

Ares nods.

ARES
Yeah. And I want it.
I just don't want all of it.



ANUBIS
(thoughtfully)
I see.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHIP'S DOCK - DAY

A large ship is getting ready to sail. The men coil up her lines, and look at the gangplank. Their captain stands talking to Xena and Gabrielle, obviously impatient.

CAPTAIN

Look, make up your mind. You want on?
Twenty dinars each for passage or
thirty if you don't want to help sail her.

The man turns and stomps up the gangplank. Xena look at Gabrielle.

XENA

You're sure?

GABRIELLE

I'm sure. Sure enough to
actually get on a boat again.

XENA

Gabrielle, you're sure it's the Eye of
Hephaestus that you saw? In Egypt?

GABRIELLE

I'm sure. It was drawn on a piece
of papyrus I saw when I was there.

XENA

All right. I don't get it,
but if you say so....

Xena pulls out a small bag. It jingles, but not very much. Gabrielle digs out hers, and it sounds the same.

XENA

(Cont'd)

Guess we'll be manning the oars.

They walk up the gangplank together.

GABRIELLE

How about you man the oars,
and I'll man the galley?



Xena chuckles, and they go on board the ship. Xena hands the ship captain the dinars, and the sailors cast off the lines and raise the sails.

FADE TO:

EXT. SHIP - NIGHT

The ship sails on over a dark sea. Stars stretch overhead, and the sails flutter slightly in the breeze. The water can be heard slapping against the wooden hull.

On the very front of the bow, Xena and Gabrielle sit with their backs against part of the wooden deck. Xena is flexing her hands and examining the palms of them.

XENA

Glad the wind picked up. I've
got more of that oar under
my skin than I put in the water.

GABRIELLE

Here, let me see.

Gabrielle sets Xena's hand on her thigh palm up, and begins to remove splinters from it.

GABRIELLE

(Cont'd)

It's strange to think
about going back there.



XENA

To Egypt?

Gabrielle nods. She continues to work out splinters.

GABRIELLE

I was thinking about my last trip there.
How I'd watch the stars at night
changing positions, and think about
how far from home I really was.

Xena watches her in silence.

GABRIELLE

(Cont'd)

(softly)

How alone I really was in the world.

XENA

I know.

They are both quiet for a while.

XENA

(Cont'd)

I heard your dreams when you slept.

You were reliving Hades every night.

Gabrielle stops what she is doing and looks up, a puzzled expression on her face.

GABRIELLE

Dreams? I don't reme....

XENA

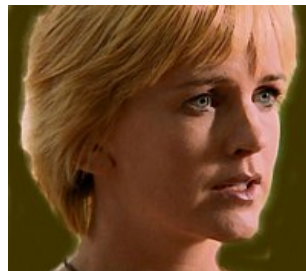
No. I made sure you didn't.



Gabrielle turns folds her hand over Xena's. She has been caught unaware, and it shows. Xena merely looks out over the water with a pensive expression.

GABRIELLE

It wasn't easy for you.



XENA

(shaking head)

No. Ghosts don't sleep. I had plenty of time to listen to your soul crying and think about my life.

She gives a bitter snort.

XENA

(Cont'd)

Made Tartarus look like
a piece of baklava.

Gabrielle lays her head on Xena's shoulder.

GABRIELLE

Thanks.

Xena smiles slightly.

GABRIELLE

(Cont'd)

I was so wrapped up in what was
going on inside me, I didn't think about
what it must have been like for you.

Xena shrugs, but her expression softens. She rests her cheek against Gabrielle's head and closes her eyes.

Gabrielle looks up at the stars, searching among them for a while before she finds what she is looking for.

FADE TO:

INT. EGYPTIAN TEMPLE - INDETERMINENT TIME

Ares lies on a padded couch with his boots up. A beautiful Egyptian goddess sits next to him, feeding him figs.

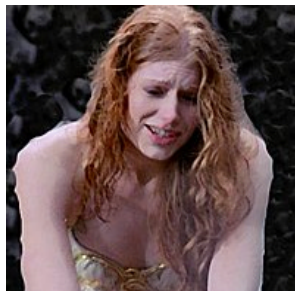
ARES

So, what's your name, beautiful?

The goddess seems very pleased at the compliment.

QETESH

I am Qetesh. I am the
goddess of love.



Ares laughs. Qetesh draws back, unsettled.

ARES

How lucky can I get? Not to mention you're cuter than my sister.

QETESH

(bewildered)

Your sister?

Anubis enters. He walks in a glide that is quite alien in appearance. He is not pleased to see Ares and Qetesh so close.

ANUBIS

Qetesh. Leave us.

Qetesh gets up quickly and glides out. She pauses at the door, however, and Ares waggles his fingers at her and smiles. She blushes and disappears.

ANUBIS

(Cont'd)

I have mediated long.

ARES

I noticed.

ANUBIS

It will be difficult. The power of the chakram has become one. To take away the good energy may shatter it.

ARES

Ah ah. That's not our deal.

Ares gets up and faces Anubis.

ARES

(Cont'd)

The deal is, you give me one, whole chakram without any of the goodie two shoes stuff, and I use it to snare the gal who's gonna take you down.

ANUBIS

And you can do this?

ARES

Baby, she's mine.



Anubis folds his hands, his jackal eyes regarding Ares coolly.

ANUBIS

Very well. Then it will be done.

Anubis goes to the altar behind his throne, where the chakram is resting. He lays his hands on it, and begins to chant.

Ares smiles. He spreads his hands out to either side, tips his head back, and laughs.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

EXT. EGYPTIAN CITY - DAY

Xena and Gabrielle walk through the streets of a busy Egyptian city, dressed in robes to blend in. Even so, they receive wary looks from the natives.

GABRIELLE

Do you get the feeling
we're being watched?



Xena sidesteps a camel who tries to bite her.

XENA

Yeah.

In the distance, a huge pyramid can be seen. There are many people in the city. It is loud and chaotic and both Xena and Gabrielle are jostled often.

GABRIELLE

You think we look too different?

Xena observes two native women in demure dress with covered faces dipping water from a covered, guarded well. In contrast, her robes and Gabrielle's are almost flamboyant, and they both bear visible weapons.

XENA

Nah.

Gabrielle pauses to watch as a number of beautifully gowned men cross before them, heading towards a large structure at the top of a nearby hill.

GABRIELLE

I think they're headed for the temple,
Xena. That's where we'll have to go.

XENA

You sure that's where the Eye is?



Gabrielle does not look entirely sure.

GABRIELLE

The tablets showed one of their goddesses
with it around her waist, like a girdle.

XENA

If it's the same thing.

Xena and Gabrielle are forced to stop as a train of camels cross before them, bearing men dressed in desert robes not unlike theirs.

GABRIELLE

I can't believe there would be
two talismans that ugly.

XENA

Mm. Good point.

The camels pass and Xena and Gabrielle cross the open space and follow a steady stream of natives towards the towering structure on the hill.

GABRIELLE

Xena?

Gabrielle is looking at the lines of guards near the building, all of them carrying huge, curved sabers. Xena seems more interested in the narrow, crooked alleys they keep passing.

GABRIELLE

(Cont'd)

We're not just going to walk in there
and ask to talk to their goddess, are we?



Xena pulls Gabrielle to one side of the road, a little out of the crowd.

XENA

No.

Gabrielle appears relieved.

XENA

(Cont'd)

We're not gonna ask. C'mon.
I think I know a shortcut.

Xena tugs Gabrielle down an alleyway, just as some of the suspicious natives begin to move towards them.

GABRIELLE

(V.O.)

Oh no. Not a shortcut.

CUT TO:

INT. EGYPTIAN TEMPLE - INDETERMINENT TIME

Anubis kneels in front of an altar. On it rests the chakram. Anubis' eyes are closed and both hands are raised to either side in a classic pose. He is apparently intently concentrating on something.

He is alone in the room, and yet voices whisper around him, words in a language unknown.

The chakram begins to glow, and then, inexplicably, it stops and returns to normal.

Anubis lets his hands fall to the altar. He opens his eyes and looks at the chakram with something close to amazement.

Ares enters, with Qetesh in tow. He saunters to the altar, peering at the chakram with a frown.

ARES

I'm not sensing anything
un-goodie two shoes here.

Anubis folds his hands together in a pose of restraint.

ANUBIS

As I told you, this is
a complex problem.

ARES

No, it's not.

Ares holds his fists out next to each other. He raises one.

ARES
(Cont'd)
Good.

He raises the other.

ARES
(Cont'd)
Bad.

He separates his hands and opens them into an exaggerated shrug.

ARES
(Cont'd)
Where's the problem?



Anubis' eyes narrow, and his canine lips lift into a slight snarl. He gets up and deliberately walks away from Ares, going to a fountain built into the wall where water trickles from the mouth of a sphinx into a stone bowl.

Anubis studies the water, cocking his head to one side as if listening to its voice.

QETESH
What is that?

Ares points at the chakram.

ARES
That? A big round pain in my ass.
(beat)
Just like it's usual owner.

Anubis leans over, tucking his hands into his robe arms and delicately laps at the water.

QETESH
Who owns it? I thought it was yours.

Anubis straightens and turns.

ANUBIS

No, it is not his. There is a power here, a strength in this that is far beyond his feeble decrepitude.

ARES

Hey!

(pointing)

I'm not the one drinking from a dog dish, here.

Anubis goes back to the altar and kneels.

ANUBIS

Qetesh would understand the power of this. Love binds it.

Anubis closes his eyes, and resumes concentrating. Ares rolls his eyes and leans on the altar.

ARES

Love. Give me a break.



Qetesh looks at him in surprised horror.

QETESH

You mock me!

Qetesh rushes out. Ares turns to watch Anubis, who is kneeling in utter silence. After a moment, Ares waves his hand in front of Anubis' muzzle. There is no reaction. With a disgusted shake of his head, Ares leaves.

A moment later, the chakram begins to glow once again. This time, it doesn't go dim.

CUT TO:

EXT. EGYPTIAN TEMPLE - BACK ALLEY - DAY

This is a dirty, scrungy space full of temple garbage and refuse. A stairwell leads down from the street level, to what appears to be catacombs below.

Xena pokes her head around the corner, then moves towards the stairs as Gabrielle picks her way carefully through the garbage after her.

GABRIELLE

Xena, where are we?

Xena looks around at the dirty space. She smiles at the memory of the last time she saw it.

XENA

We can get into the temple
without being seen this way.
C'mon. The only down side....

GABRIELLE

Beside the smell?

XENA

Hope you like rats.



Gabrielle tugs the wraps tighter on her robes as she follows Xena down the stone steps.

GABRIELLE

You're the one with the rat hang-up.

XENA

It's not a hang-up. I just hate them.

Xena and Gabrielle disappear down the steps. Just as they vanish, several men race into the alleyway, looking all around. After a moment, they run off past the steps and vanish.

CUT TO:

INT. EGYPTIAN TEMPLE - INDETERMINITE TIME

Anubis lifts his hands up and the chakram slowly rises and begins to spin.

Anubis begins to chant, and the chakram spins faster.

CUT TO:

INT. EGYPTIAN CATACOMBS - DAY

Xena and Gabrielle struggle through a corridor that is mostly dark. Xena carries a torch, and the light from it reflects off alcoves that have bodies lying quietly in them. There is a great deal of dust around, and it puffs up as they walk. Gabrielle has drawn a fold of her robes around to cover her mouth.

Rats scurry everywhere. Xena carefully avoids stepping on them as she shoves aside fallen bits of stone and wood. They pass sarcophagus casings with elegant carvings on them, and Gabrielle pauses to touch one.

GABRIELLE

It's beautiful.

Xena looks at the carving. She shrugs and keeps going, finding her way from her one memory of this place.

XENA

Waste of a lotta good whittling.
No one can see it down here.

Gabrielle puts her hand on the sarcophagus, then she turns and follows Xena.

GABRIELLE

Yeah, I've never really been into coffin art.
(under her breath)
Especially yours.



Xena glances back, hearing her. She stops and waits for Gabrielle to catch up with her.

XENA

You okay?

Gabrielle runs her fingers through her hair.

GABRIELLE

Yeah. You hate rats.
I hate funeral pyres. C'mon.

Xena stops and puts her arm around Gabrielle, pulling her close and giving her a simple kiss on the top of her head. Gabrielle remains still for a moment, then she returns the hug.

XENA
We're almost out.

Gabrielle smiles.

XENA
(*Cont'd*)
OUCH!

Gabrielle jumps. Xena kicks a rat off her foot, and they start moving again.

Xena and Gabrielle walk through a arched doorway and find a huge, stone block filling the corridor, blocking their way. There is no other exit from the room save the one they just came in.

Xena turns to look back the way they came. In the darkness, an entire field of glowing red eyes looks back at her.

XENA
(*Cont'd*)
That answers that question.



Xena hands Gabrielle the torch, and starts to look for a way to move the rock.

FADE TO:

INT. EGYPTIAN TEMPLE - INNER CHAMBER - DAY

Ares is pacing. He is alone in the chamber, and he ignores the table full of food and wine that lines one side of the room.

Suddenly, a ringing sound is heard. Ares stops and cocks his head, listening.

Ares smiles.

ARES
Ahh... Now that's music to my ears.

Ares rushes to the inner door and opens it, peeking inside. Over his shoulder can be seen Anubis' form, eyes closed, hands outstretched.

Over the altar, the chakram is spinning rapidly, obviously building up to something.

Ares pumps his fist in the air.

ARES
(Cont'd)
Yes!

CUT TO:

INT. EGYPTIAN TEMPLE - CATACOMBS - PORTAL CHAMBER

It is an octagonal chamber. One side is the entrance to the lower catacombs, now filled with stone rubble. Xena is emerging from the rubble, dusting her hands off as she kicks parts of the stone tablet out of her way.

Gabrielle emerges behind her. They cross the inner chamber and come to a large, ornate door. It is locked - but from the inside.

Xena puts her hand on the locking bar and starts to lift it, then she stops and leans against the door.

GABRIELLE
Xena?

Xena remains still for a brief moment.

XENA
Ares is here.



GABRIELLE
Oh. Great.
(pausing)
That simplifies things.

Xena looks at her.

XENA
Does it?

Xena unlocks the door and pulls it open. Inside, a lofty, ornate hallway can be seen, well lit and immaculately kept up a half flight of stairs.

Gabrielle starts to move past her, and Xena grabs her arm.

GABRIELLE

What?

XENA

Go find the Eye. I'm going to find Ares, and see if I can....

GABRIELLE

Okay.

Gabrielle turns and walks up the steps without another word. Xena watches her go, aware that something is not quite right.

XENA

No time for that right now.

Xena takes the steps two at a time and goes off in the opposite direction, following her instincts.

CUT TO:

INT. EGYPTIAN TEMPLE – CORRIDOR – MOMENTS LATER

Gabrielle walks down the corridor, pausing cautiously at each intersection and listening for possible danger.

GABRIELLE

(muttering)

Go find the Eye. Like I'm supposed to know where in this damn mausoleum.

Gabrielle hears voices approaching. She ducks into a doorway alcove and presses her body against the stone.



Two men walk past, talking in low voices. They do not see Gabrielle.

MAN

The pharaoh sees shadows in every corner. Now he asks us to find outsider women. Will it never end?

OLDER MAN

It is the prophecy, Ekmet. Hush.

The men pass out of hearing range. Gabrielle eases out into the hallway again.

GABRIELLE

Great. Coincidence. We show up,
they want us. Story of my life.

Gabrielle continues down the hall. More voices approach. This time, there are many of them. Gabrielle looks around for a hiding spot, but sees only a large, ornate doorway without an alcove.

She tries the door, and it opens. Relieved, she goes inside and closes the door just as a dozen armed men troop down the hallway past it.

CUT TO:

INT. EGYPTIAN TEMPLE - QETESH'S ALTAR ROOM.

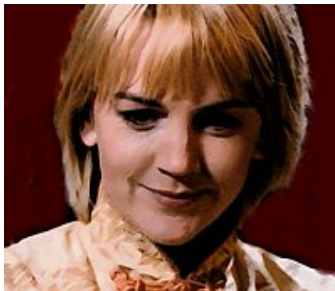
Gabrielle stops short. She looks around at the room she is in with great surprise. It is furnished lavishly. There is an altar at one end, but the walls are hung with fine cloths in bright colors. There are large jars of fragrant oils everywhere, and the scent of incense is almost overpowering.

Gabrielle walks to the altar. It has many offerings on it... beautiful carvings, golden trinkets, and flowers.

There is a sense of peace in the room that Gabrielle has not felt elsewhere in the temple.

GABRIELLE

Now this is beautiful.



Gabrielle studies the walls, which have hieroglyphs and intricately carved images on them.

GABRIELLE

(Cont'd)

What kind of god
lives here, I wonder?

Qetesh appears behind Gabrielle, who does not see her. Qetesh slowly walks around Gabrielle and studies her with great curiosity.

Gabrielle walks over to the wall and traces one of the images, which seems to be of a beautiful woman with many people bowing to her, and offering up gifts to her.

GABRIELLE

(Cont'd)

A loved one, I think.

Qetesh seems charmed by this. She walks around to face Gabrielle and waves her fingers, becoming visible to her.

QETESH

Who are you?

Gabrielle blinks in surprise, but having been around gods quite a bit in her lifetime, is not alarmed.

GABRIELLE

My name is Gabrielle.

Qetesh leans against her altar.

QETESH

That is a strange name. Why have you come here? You approach my altar empty handed.

Gabrielle walks around to the other side of the altar and examines the offerings.

GABRIELLE

What are they asking you for, those that come here?

QETESH

For love.

Gabrielle smiles.

GABRIELLE

I already have it. But I'd like to talk to you about something I am looking for.



Qetesh seems surprised by that. She gets up and touches the wall near the altar. It opens at her fingertips and reveals a huge treasury of gifts.

QETESH

If you have love, then why
come here? See, these are the
things given to me in return for my
attention. Aren't they beautiful?

Gabrielle's eyes are drawn to a basket in the center of the treasury, from which a chain drapes loosely. It is attached to the Eye of Hephaestus.

GABRIELLE

They sure are.

Qetesh is very pleased by the answer.

QETESH

For each one, I granted a love
of the heart, if that heart was true.

GABRIELLE

And if it wasn't?

Qetesh laughs.

QETESH

Then I got a beautiful gift.

Gabrielle slowly approaches. She points at a golden trinket.

GABRIELLE

Who gave you that one?
It's very pretty.

The goddess picks it up.

QETESH

A great man in the court of
the 2nd dynasty. He wished
a wife to bear him a son.

GABRIELLE

Did he get his wish?



QETESH

He did.

GABRIELLE

You must be very powerful
then. What about this one?

Gabrielle touches the Eye. Qetesh moves away, suddenly evasive. She turns and motions, and the cabinet closes almost shutting itself on Gabrielle's hands.

QETESH

Tell me more about you,
Gabrielle of the strange
name. Why are you here,
if it is not love you seek?

Gabrielle is in a minor quandary.

GABRIELLE

Well, it's like this. I'm here
looking for a gift, for
a friend of mine.

QETESH

A gift?

Gabrielle goes to the altar and picks up one of the offerings, setting it on her hand and holding it out. It is a small statue of a camel, in gold.

GABRIELLE

Just like this. People give you a
gift, and you give them one back.

QETESH

If they are worthy.

Gabrielle sets the gift down.

GABRIELLE

Well, I have a friend who
gave me a great gift, and
I want to give them
something back. For
instance, that thing in there.

QETESH

In there?

GABRIELLE

In your wonderful collection. My friend would really like it. Could I trade you something for it?



Qetesh is discomfited. She is not used to mortals making deals with her. She goes over to the closet and opens it, removing the Eye.

QETESH

This is not something I would trade. It was given to me by a very great man, very great. A god. He said it would protect me. Why should I give it up?

GABRIELLE

But....

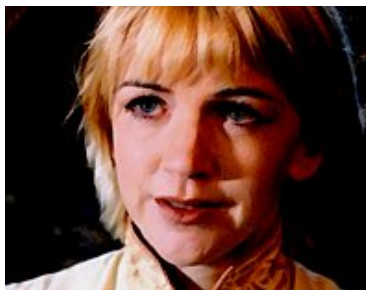
QETESH

Besides, what do you have to give to me? Your hands are empty.

Gabrielle hesitates. She does not have anything other than her weapons, and the clothes on her back. Her expression clears suddenly, and she smiles.

GABRIELLE

But my heart is full. I think I have something I could trade you for it.



QETESH

Is it powerful? This....

She holds up the Eye.

QETESH

(Cont'd)

Gives me great power.
Can your gift do the same?

Gabrielle straightens, and starts to untie the belt holding her robes closed.

GABRIELLE

I think it can.
Why don't we find out?

CUT TO:

INT. EGYPTIAN TEMPLE - INNER CHAMBER – SHORT TIME LATER

Ares is standing in the doorway, watching what is going on in the altar room.

The door behind him opens, and he turns, not at all apparently surprised to see Xena there.

ARES

Well, well. Took ya long enough.
(laughing)
You're slowing down, Xena.
Getting old.

Xena ignores him. She walks to the door and looks inside, her eyes widening as she sees the god, and the spinning chakram.

XENA

What's he doing?

Ares gets in front of her and shuts the door.

ARES

You'll find out soon enough.

Now Xena turns to look at Ares.

XENA

What are you up to now?
Stooping to stealing, Ares?

Ares laughs. He walks over to her and puts his arm around her shoulder.

ARES

I'm fixing your problem, Xena.

XENA

My problem? Ares, right now you are my problem. Can you fix that?



ARES

Xena, Xena, Xena.

(clucking)

Things started going downhill for you when you put all that nice... Stuff... into my pretty gift.

Ares reaches over and grasps her jaw.

ARES

(Cont'd)

I'm taking it out.

(chuckling)

It'll make a world of difference. I promise you.

Xena pulls free and shoves Ares back.

XENA

You're nuts.

Ares looks down.

ARES

Are they showing?

(looking at Xena)

Maybe I was wrong, hard as that is to believe. Get lost, Xena. I don't need your preaching.

XENA

The world doesn't need your meddling.

A loud crack sounds, reverberating through the walls. Ares turns to look at the closed door, and laughs.

ARES

Guess we'll find out, won't we?

Ares snaps his fingers and disappears. Xena lunges for him and grabs for his shadow, but the only thing that remains is his laughter echoing through the room.

XENA

Bastard!

Xena goes to the door and tries to open it, but it is locked fast, the edges lined with metal and so firmly fastened it doesn't even budge when she yanks with all her strength.

XENA

(Cont'd)

ARES!!!!!!

Ares' laugh still echoes.

ARES

(V.O.)

It's mine, Xena. I've taken it back.

(laughing)

Once you feel that... you'll come
crawling back too. Just wait.

The echoes fade. Xena thumps her fists against the door. She leans against it, and tilts her head in a listening attitude, as though she can feel something through the door.

XENA

No.



Xena's eyes close, as she feels the chakram separate.

XENA

(Cont'd)

(whispering)

No.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. EGYPTIAN TEMPLE - INNER CHAMBER - SHORT TIME LATER

The room is in an absolute shambles. It is obvious that Xena has attempted to use every single piece of furniture or wall decoration to try and open the door.

Xena lifts a marble statue and walks over, hurling it against the door in an act of utter frustration. It smashes to bits with a huge noise but the portal remains untouched.

XENA
(yelling)
Son of a Bacchae.

Gabrielle enters.

GABRIELLE
Thanks. I was having a
little trouble finding you.



Xena turns and picks up a goblet, flinging it against the far wall. It bounces off and lands with a clatter.

XENA
Damn it.

Gabrielle walks to her and removes the Eye of Hephaestus from under her robes.

GABRIELLE
Got it.

Xena stares at the Eye.

GABRIELLE
(Cont'd)
Did you find Ares?

XENA
Oh, I found him all right. He's got
some guy with a dog's head
breaking up the chakram in THERE!

Gabrielle looks at the door.

GABRIELLE

In there? What do you
mean, breaking it?

Xena sits down in the one remaining chair. She is visibly upset.

XENA

He's splitting it up into its
dark and light sides.
(beat, disgustedly)
Guess which one he wants.

Gabrielle walks to the inner door and studies it.

GABRIELLE

To draw you back to him?

XENA

Something like that.



Gabrielle shakes her head.

GABRIELLE

Same old, same old.
(sighing)
Well, we've got the Eye.
Let's go use it.

Xena gets up and walks over to Gabrielle. She takes the Eye from her, and looks at it.

XENA

You got it. Their goddess
just gave it up?

GABRIELLE

No. Qetesh had it. She's
their goddess of love.

XENA

And?

GABRIELLE

(coolly)

I gave her something
she valued in return.

Xena stares at Gabrielle. Gabrielle looks evenly back at her. After a minute, Xena's eyes drop.

XENA

All right. Let's go.

Xena and Gabrielle turn to leave, when they hear running footsteps approaching.

GABRIELLE

Uh oh.

XENA

Yeah. C'mon.

Xena pulls Gabrielle behind the door in the room and holds her tightly as the door bursts open and a squad of Egyptian guards rushes in. They look at the destruction in the room.

The leader of the guards tries the inner door, then turns around, apparently satisfied.

GUARD CAPTAIN

That way! They must be
headed for the treasury!

The guards rush out. After a moment of quiet, Xena swings the door open and releases Gabrielle. They peer out the door cautiously, then leave at a run.

CUT TO:

INT. ARES' TEMPLE - NIGHT

Ares stands in the center of his temple. He is surrounded by a dark purple glow, which outlines his body and lights up the inside of the temple.

ARES

Mmm..... How could I have let this go?



He slowly begins to turn. As he does, light extends out and touches the interior of the temple. Where it touches, the temple transforms from a beaten up, rubble filled room to a seductive palace.

The broken altar is remade, and the walls close in and become whole and draped with scarlet and black velvet.

Ares holds the Dark Chakram up. It is a familiar perfect circle, with glowing stones in its rim, simple and glittering with power.

ARES

(Cont'd)

Now for the fun part.

Ares closes his eyes and outside a rumble of thunder is heard.

CUT TO:

INT/ EGYPTIAN TEMPLE - CATACOMBS - NIGHT

Xena and Gabrielle run down the hallway towards an open door, with the squad of soldiers pelting after them. They raced into the room and in perfect synchronicity, draw their weapons, turn to face their pursuers, and let out yells at the top of their voices.

XENA AND GABRIELLE

YEAHHHHHH!!!!!!!!!

The guards find themselves in a fight for their lives. They battle Xena and Gabrielle, but it soon becomes obvious they are way overmatched.

Xena engages the closest one, trading slashes between her sword and his curved ax like weapon. He tries to hack her hand off, but Xena whirls and hooks the axe on her sword blade, pulling the man over her shoulder and dumping him on the floor.

Gabrielle catches another man's curved, sharp hook on her sais, booting him in the groin as they struggle to overcome each other. The man bends over, and Gabrielle pulls her sais loose and slams the hilts of them on the top of his head. He falls.

Two other men attack in a group, two of them attempting to spit Gabrielle and Xena on their spears, while the others stab at them with swords.

Working as a team, Xena and Gabrielle disarm them one after the other, Xena grabbing one man's sword arm while Gabrielle kicks the sword out of his hand, then Gabrielle letting a spear go past her and catching hold of it as Xena leaps into the air and turns in a flip, catching them man around the neck with both feet and sending him to the ground.

GUARD CAPTAIN

They are demons!



XENA
Not this time.

Xena slugs a guard, who flips backwards over Gabrielle's kneeling form. Gabrielle nails him in the jaw with her elbow as he falls.

The last man turns and runs, calling for help.

Xena dusts her hands off, and sheathes her sword. She grabs Gabrielle's arm and they run down the steps into the catacombs.

CUT TO:

EXT. ARES' TEMPLE - MORNING

The sun rises over Ares restored temple. He walks outside and stretches, admiring his handiwork. In front of the temple is a road, and as he looks down the road, we can see towns in the distance.

There is a gong outside. Ares picks up the ringer next to it and lets fly, making the gong ring out with a hideous noise.

The echoes flow down the road. Far off, moving figures stop, and look up towards the temple.

Ares looks behind him. The restored temple glows with a red/gold light, throbbing against the clouds. He laughs. He beats the gong again and again, sending out a call the people below seem to hear, and begin to obey.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHIP - AT SEA - EVENING

Gabrielle sits near the bow. It is overcast, and a spray comes over the boat's rail from the stormy seas. Gabrielle's face is roughly the same color as the water, and she looks miserable.



Xena appears and sits down next to her. She holds a cup, and after swirling it in her hands, she offers it to Gabrielle.

XENA
This should help.

Gabrielle takes the cup. She drinks from it, then sets it down and looks out at the clouds.

GABRIELLE

I'm sorry now we ran for the boat.

XENA

It was the last one back home,
Gabrielle. You rather walk?

GABRIELLE

Let me get back to you on that.

They sit quietly together for a while.

XENA

I've been thinking.

GABRIELLE

Mm.

XENA

This time it has to be for good,
Gabrielle. We can't just... bust up
whatever game Ares is playing this time.

Gabrielle shifts and looks at Xena.

GABRIELLE

Ah. For the greater good, right?

Xena rests her arm on her knee and shakes her head.

XENA

No. For us.



GABRIELLE

Us?

XENA

As long as he's out there, he'll
want me. As long as he wants me,
you and I will never have peace.

Gabrielle seems speechless. Xena doesn't look at her. She studies the endless sea.



XENA
(Cont'd)
I want peace.
(nodding)
For us.

Gabrielle turns and faces Xena.

GABRIELLE
Xena, I'm going to ask you
something, and I want you to tell
me the truth, no matter what it is.

Xena waits.

GABRIELLE
(Cont'd)
Is he your father?



Xena seems almost relieved at the question, as though she had been expecting something else.

XENA
No.

GABRIELLE
Even though he....

XENA
Even though he said so. He lied.

Gabrielle nods.

XENA

(Cont'd)

Now, I'm gonna ask you
something, and I want the truth.

Gabrielle waits.

XENA

(Cont'd)

About the Eye....

GABRIELLE

It was given to Qetesh as
protection, from Set,
the god of lust.

XENA

Yeah, but....

GABRIELLE

I traded her one
protection for another.

Xena frowns, then her eyes go from Gabrielle's face to her back, hidden under her cloak.
She looks back at Gabrielle's face in question. Gabrielle smiles.

XENA

You gave up the dragon?
Gabrielle, that....

GABRIELLE

That was meant... to replace you.

Gabrielle looks out over the sea.

GABRIELLE

(Cont'd)

You had them give it to me because
you knew you wouldn't be around any
more and you thought it would help me.

Xena is silent.

GABRIELLE

(Cont'd)

I hated it.

Xena nods in understanding.

XENA

This is not going to be easy.
By the time we get back, he'll have
had time to build up a following.



GABRIELLE

Whatever it takes, we'll do it.

Gabrielle puts her hand on Xena's cheek, then she leans forward and kisses her passionately. They part.

XENA

Feeling better?

Gabrielle smiles.

GABRIELLE

Much. You?

Xena nods, and also smiles. The ship pitches up suddenly, and crashes down and a wave sweeps over the bow and drenches them.

CUT TO:

EXT. ARES' TEMPLE - WEEKS LATER - NIGHT

The scene is totally different now. Outside Ares' temple is a huge camp, full of hundreds of men and women. Ares' banner flies over the tent, and it is obvious these are his new acolytes.

It is a camp of war, with weapons stacked everywhere, and men sparring in every corner, hoping to attract Ares eye. But there are women here also. Fighting, and as servants. They cook and clean around the fighters, wearing Ares' red colors tied to their upper arms proudly.

Ares' Temple is now a magnificent edifice. Gold panels line the front, and the steps have been laid with marble slabs. Torches line the entrance, and a line of guards stands before the temple, weapons shined to an almost painful glare.

Ares appears on the roof of his temple, laying down on his side and reviewing his new worshippers with a big, sexy grin.

ARES

Now this is more like it.



A group of six men march up the steps, bearing a chest. They walk inside the temple.

ARES

(Cont'd)

Oo... Wonder if there's
a virgin in there.

Ares laughs, then he rolls over and looks up at the stars, putting his hands behind his head.

ARES

(Cont'd)

Perfect.

(pausing)

Almost.

Ares sits up and dangles his legs off the edge of the roof. He looks out into the darkness...
past the crowd, past the torches.

ARES

(Cont'd)

Where are you, Xena? I can
feel you out there... I know
you can feel me calling you.



Ares lifts the Dark Chakram and looks up at the moon through it.

ARES

(Cont'd)

You can feel this. You want it.

You always have.

(pausing)

Come to me.

Ares closes his eyes, and the chakram glows.

CUT TO:

WOODS OUTSIDE ARES' TEMPLE - NIGHT - SAME TIME

A bar of moonlight outlines Xena's eyes. She stands in the shadows of the trees, looking out over Ares' new temple, and the crowd around it.

Gabrielle steps up next to her.

GABRIELLE

Look at them.



XENA

Fools.

Gabrielle hesitantly shakes her head.

GABRIELLE

Are they? Maybe some people do
need something to believe in, Xena.

Xena turns and looks at her as though she has lost her mind.

XENA

What?

Gabrielle smiles briefly.

GABRIELLE

I don't mean him. In general. I used
to think somewhere out there, I'd
find something I could put my faith in.
That I could believe in and have
that make my life make sense.

Xena's lips tense.

XENA

Guess you know better now, huh?



Gabrielle smiles and looks at Xena, though Xena can't see her in the dark.

GABRIELLE

Something like that, yeah.

Xena's eyes drop briefly, then she turns and puts a hand on Gabrielle's shoulder.

XENA

Are we ready?

Gabrielle sobers.

GABRIELLE

As we'll ever be.

XENA

All right. Let's go.

Gabrielle reaches up and catches Xena's face, drawing it down to kiss her. They kiss for a long moment, then part.

GABRIELLE

Be careful.

XENA

You too.

They nod, then turn and disappear into the darkness.

CUT TO:

INT. ARES' TEMPLE - NIGHT - LATER

Ares sits in his newly, and magnificently rebuilt throne chair above a huge, marble slab altar. The altar is stained with blood, and there are offerings draped over it.

A naked woman dances seductively on the steps, and Ares slowly swirls a cup of wine as he watches her. He hums along with the music from two other scantily clad women near the wall, who are playing instruments for the dance.

ARES

It just doesn't get any
better than this.

The door opens suddenly, and Xena and Gabrielle enter.

ARES

(Cont'd)

Ah.... Maybe it does.
About time you got here.



Xena strolls around the temple, skirting the musicians with disdain.

XENA

Suckers born every minute....
And you've got a year's
worth here, dontcha?

Gabrielle walks over to the altar. The naked woman looks at her. Gabrielle looks back, gives her a sweet smile, and shakes her head slightly. She puts a finger on the altar, then looks at the rusty stain on it.

GABRIELLE

Classy.

Ares gets up and puts his cup down.

ARES

Whoa, whoa, whoa.

He puts hands on hips.

ARES

(Cont'd)

This... is MY temple.

GABRIELLE

That's for sure.



Ares points.

ARES

Shut up, shortie. In fact, I've got business with your better half, so why don't you go outside and pick your navel, huh?

Xena completes her inspection. She ends up near the foot of the altar. She puts her hands on the marble and leans on it.

XENA

You know what your problem is, Ares?

ARES

Baby, I have no problems, not anymore.

Ares steps down and brushes by Gabrielle, stopping when he reaches Xena. He turns her around to face him.

ARES

(Cont'd)

Now that you're here.

Behind his back, Gabrielle rolls her eyes. Xena looks Ares up and down, and strikes a seductive pose.

XENA

What makes you think I'm here for you?

Ares laughs.

ARES

Baby, you know you are. You've always had it for me, right here.

Ares slaps Xena just below her navel. Xena's eyes narrow.

XENA

You've always thought that, haven't you?



ARES

That you've got a love thing for me? Sure.

Ares reaches to pull Xena into an embrace. Xena evades him neatly, stepping around him to end up next to Gabrielle.

XENA

Like I said, know what your problem is, Ares? You never really did get a handle on love.



Ares snorts. Xena turns to Gabrielle and holds her hand out. Gabrielle accepts it, and allows herself to be drawn over to Xena. She tilts her head and waits, watching Xena's face.

XENA

(Cont'd)

See that, Ares? Love is the look in her eyes.

Ares rolls his. Xena cups Gabrielle's face.

XENA

(Cont'd)

Love is equal, Ares. Love is two people sharing.... Everything.

ARES

Xena, you're killing me here.

Xena pulls Gabrielle closer and they slide into a passionate kiss, their bodies melding together for so long it leaves Ares cross-legged. They finally stop for breath, and Xena smiles.



XENA

Love is a miracle.

Xena looks at Ares, her eyes still full of the passion she feels for Gabrielle.

XENA

(Cont'd)

I never loved you.

As the words penetrate, Ares face writhes into an ugly snarl. Xena lashes out, kicking him in the gut with her boot and then releases Gabrielle. Ares reaches for the dark chakram, and Xena jumps off the altar, gently tossing Gabrielle in the opposite direction. The naked woman and the musicians scream and run off.

ARES

You bitch.



Gabrielle catches him in the pants with her own well-timed kick.

GABRIELLE

No, my bitch. How's that
for a kick in the ego?

Infuriated, Ares lets loose the dark chakkie at Gabrielle. Gabrielle dives for the dirt, or more accurately, the stone floor and tucks into a roll out of the way.

Xena pulls her sword and also ducks, letting the dark chakram go over her head but not trying to catch it. She attacks Ares without hesitation, and he is forced to snatch the chakram and draw his sword to defend himself.

ARES

Xena! Stop, or I'll....

XENA

You'll what, kill me? Been tried by
better men than you, Ares. C'mon!



Ares lunges after Xena, and they begin a sword fight. Ares jumps over the altar and nearly slices Xena in half, but Xena manages to move out of the way in time.

Ares swings the sword of war right at Xena's head, and misses. The sword impacts the altar, and a thunderclap rings through the room.

The altar tips over, falling with a crash to reveal a set of steps underneath. Ares slams his sword against Xena's, and Xena backs up a step under the force.

Ares attacks again, forcing Xena back again, this time down the first of the steps.

ARES

You want to mess with me? All right,
Xena. You've got what you wanted.
I'm finally going to KICK YOUR ASS!

Ares jumps to the top step, then he leaps up and kicks out, kicking Xena down the stairs. With a laugh, Ares follows her.

Gabrielle scrambles out from where she'd hidden and goes after them, disappearing from site as the sound of sword clashes rings out, as well as a scream.

CUT TO:

INT. ARES' TEMPLE - UNDERGROUND - NIGHT

Xena and Ares fight. They are in a central chamber. To one side is a large opening, and inside appears to be a tomb like room that has no sarcophagus.

Xena is taking the worst of the fight. She is holding her own, but Ares is getting the better of her and she is starting to look battered. A bruise covers one side of her face.

ARES

You aren't worth my attention, Xena.

Xena ducks under a blow, then she turns and engages Ares with her sword, trading cuts with him. He swivels, putting his back to the opening, and thrusts at her, nearly catching her before she jumps back.

ARES

(Cont'd)

You're getting old. Slowing down.

Gabrielle races behind Ares into the room.

XENA

You're older than I am.



Xena suddenly leaps over Ares head and spins, then kicks him in the back. Ares just keeps himself from crashing into the wall, and picks up a chair, throwing it at Xena and hitting her in the chest.

XENA

(Cont'd)

Temper, temper.

CUT TO:

INT. ARES' TEMPLE - TOMB CHAMBER - SAME TIME

Gabrielle bolts inside and looks desperately around. She doesn't see what she's looking for, so she runs through the chamber, looking everywhere.

Finally she spots a ceramic case, just the right size for a chakram. She opens it, and inside the good chakram lays, gleaming in the torchlight.

Gabrielle reaches for it, then pauses, suddenly uncertain.

GABRIELLE

It takes a certain kind of
person to touch this.
(*exhaling*)
I don't think I qualify anymore.



Outside, Xena lets out a cry, and Ares laughs. Gabrielle looks over her shoulder, seeing Ares holding Xena against the wall, his sword raised.

Gabrielle looks at them, then she turns and screwing her face up in anticipation, she puts her hand into the case and closes her fingers around the good chakram, lifting it out in one quick motion.

CUT TO:

INT. ARES' TEMPLE - UNDERGROUND - MOMENTS LATER

Xena moves her head just as Ares sword hilt clangs against the rock. Xena heaves with all her strength and throws Ares back, then she ducks under his swing and rams him with her shoulder.

Ares grabs her and throws her against the wall. She drops her sword. Before she can pick it up again, he kicks it away from her, into the tomb chamber.

Xena leaps past him, taking the flat of his blade against her shoulders as she tucks and rolls, ending up in the tomb chamber with Ares stalking after her.

Gabrielle is nowhere to be seen.

Xena grabs her sword and changes direction, surprising Ares. He jumps over her, but she twists in mid air and hits his sword with her sword as hard as she is able.

Ares sword goes flying out of his hand, and hits the opposite wall. Xena follows up her advantage, and swings at Ares, forcing him to scramble out of the way.

She keeps coming, driving him back a step at a time, relentlessly. Ares pulls out the bad chakram and beats her off with it, catching her sword on the chakram and diverting it while trying to cut Xena open with the edge.

They are both breathing hard. Ares catches Xena's sword hand and pulls it back, then thrusts the bad chakram at her throat, its edge cutting through the skin.

But his arm is not quite long enough and Xena whirls and pulls back, shuddering at the touch of the chakram she once carried.

Ares comes after her, but Xena ducks under his arm and escapes, leading him across the room before she runs up the wall and pushes off, tumbling over his head and landing near the opening to the tomb.

ARES

You're really pissing me off, Xena.

Xena smiles.

XENA

Good.



Ares cocks his hand and throws the chakram at her with great force. Xena dodges, but the chakram follows her, responding to Ares will and she tumbles and ducks around obstacles in the room until she is against the far wall and out of space to run.

She turns, and the chakram is coming right at her face. At the very last minute, she throws herself out of its way, and it hits the wall.

It breaks in half. Both halves go spinning out of the room. Xena laughs. She stands up and faces Ares. He is furious.

ARES

You little....

XENA

Doesn't pay to be an
indian giver, Ares.

ARES

I'll just go get it fixed.

Ares turns to look for his sword, then notices something on the wall over his head.

It is the Eye of Hephaestus.

Ares laughs, and points at Xena.

ARES

(Cont'd)

You thought you could trap me
with that? Xena! You're an idiot.
Where did you dig up that old thing?

XENA

You'd be surprised.

Ares looks at her, then at the Eye.

ARES

Oh, I get it. You thought you'd trigger
that with the chakram, didn'tcha?
Oo... Did I mess up Xena's plan?

Xena looks at him.

ARES

(Cont'd)

You're over there, I'm over here
and you ain't got no chakram,
Xena. You lose. I win.

Ares raises his hands. Lightning bolts start to form.

ARES

(Cont'd)

You know, I really dug you, Xena.
But I'm just... So... OVER YOU NOW.

Ares lets fly with two huge bolts. Xena dives out of the way.

XENA

You forgot about one thing, Ares.

ARES

Yeah, YOU!

Gabrielle steps into the opening.

GABRIELLE

No, me.

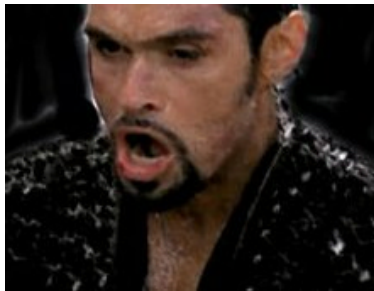


Gabrielle lets fly with the good chakram. It strikes the Eye, and the Eye expands, emitting a fierce light.

ARES
NOOO!!!!!!!

Gabrielle catches the chakram as Xena leaps through the doorway. They fall together as the light from the Eye rushes out and turns everything to a silver so bright they cannot see.

ARES
(Cont'd)
NOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!



Ares scream echoes through the tomb, as the light fades, his voice fades as well.

Xena and Gabrielle lie on the floor with their arms covering their heads, until the room returns to its torch lit dimness, and the sounds behind them vanish.

Slowly, they lift their heads and turn to look.

The tomb is sealed. The Eye guards it... to the naked eye faintly glowing with an almost unseen power.

Xena and Gabrielle sit up and look at each other. After a moment of silence, Gabrielle reaches up and wipes a bit of blood off the bridge of Xena's nose.

Xena produces a faint smile.

XENA
It's over.



Gabrielle looks at the sealed tomb.

GABRIELLE

It's over.



Slowly they stand up, supporting each other, and trudge even more slowly up the steps to the temple.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR

TAG

EXT. HILLSIDE ABOVE ARES' TEMPLE – EARLY MORNING

Xena and Gabrielle sit on some rocks, looking out over the valley where Ares' Temple had stood. The building has returned to its decrepit state, and the people who had gathered there have dispersed, very puzzled, back to their homes.

XENA

Maybe people do need something to believe in, Gabrielle. But not that something.

Gabrielle has the good chakram clasped loosely between her hands.

GABRIELLE

Maybe, but I think people who want to believe in violence will always find someone like him to lead them.

XENA

Hm. Yeah.

She looks out over the hill.

XENA

(Cont'd)

But we're free of him. You and I.

Gabrielle nods.

GABRIELLE

It feels strange.

She looks down at chakram.

GABRIELLE

(Cont'd)

Almost as strange has having this again.

Xena also looks. She smiles, but it is a sad smile.

XENA

Better get used to it.



Gabrielle studies the chakram. Then she offers it to Xena.

GABRIELLE

Here.

Xena looks at her as though she's nuts.

XENA

Forgetting something? I can't take that, Gabrielle. I am no pure heart.

Gabrielle keeps her hand out, just looking steadily at Xena.

GABRIELLE

Take it.

She pauses, watching Xena.

GABRIELLE

(Cont'd)

Trust me.



Xena hesitates, then lifts her hand and closes her fingers around the chakram, wincing in reflex as her skin touches it.

Nothing happens.

Gabrielle releases her hand, and leaves the chakram with Xena. Xena stares at it. Gabrielle pats Xena's leg.



GABRIELLE

(Cont'd)

It's lousy for cutting fish.
You keep it.

Gabrielle gets up and starts walking through the grass. After a moment's reflection, Xena gets up and follows her, the chakram firmly gripped in one hand.

Xena catches up to Gabrielle and they put their arms around each other, walking off into the grassy distance together as Argo II ambles along after them.



FADE OUT.

DISCLAIMER

Dedicated to the memory of Kevin Smith.

An exceptional human being who shared with us the Power and Passion that made him the God of War and an all around nice guy.