

Xena: Warrior Princess - Subtext Virtual Season 9



Production #V909 – Bardcage

Virtual Airdate – January 28, 2004

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TEASER

FADE IN:

INT. CHAMBER - DAY

A YOUNG MAN paces wildly around a spacious, well-appointed palace room. Sitting in a lounge chair near a fire in an older man, whose face is not yet seen.

YOUNG MAN

Father, we have to fix this!

OLDER MAN

Val, calm down. We will find an answer to this problem.

The man rises from the chair and we see that it is a much older PALAEMON. Crossing over to his son he takes him by the arms and forces him to stop pacing.

PALAEMON

Look at me.

Valius' eyes lift to meet his father's.

PALAEMON

(cont'd)

I understand your concern and I share it to some extent. We will not let this be a problem. We'll either find a true answer or make up a convincing lie.

VALIUS

Father, I don't want you to think I don't love him because I do. He's been there for me all my life, but this will be a disaster. King Dameus will call off the wedding if Vidalus....

PALAEMON

Stop. I told you, we will find a way. Have I ever lied to you before?

VALIUS

No.

PALAEMON

Have I ever let you down?

VALIUS

(smiling)

No.

PALAEEMON

And I have no intention of starting now. So ride over and see Alicia. Tell King Dameus that our kingdom is looking forward to receiving him and his entourage next week for the pre-wedding feast.

Valius seems to sigh in relief before hugging his father and leaving the room. Palaemon walks across the room and steps out onto a large balcony, where he can look over most of his kingdom.

PALAEEMON

(cont'd)

And exactly where am I supposed to find a real Amazon in a week? They're as scarce as hen's teeth.

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. MARKET - DAY

XENA and GABRIELLE are wandering through the market, stopping at various booths to browse or pick up a few items. Gabrielle hands them to Xena, who puts them in a shoulder bag she's carrying.

XENA

Are we done yet?

GABRIELLE

Nearly. What's the rush?
You late for a hot date?



XENA

Oh, yeah. I met this cute little pig herder. Come on Gabrielle. You know I'd rather poke myself in the eye with a stick than shop.

Gabrielle laughs and takes the bag from her partner.

GABRIELLE

G'wan, get. I'm sure you can find something to occupy your time until I'm done. I'll meet you back at the inn.

XENA

You're sure?

GABRIELLE

I'm positive. Now go before I change my mind.

XENA

I don't have to be told twice. See you at the inn.

Xena leans over and gives Gabrielle a quick peck on the cheek and then disappears into the crowd. Gabrielle smiles, shakes her head and goes back to her shopping.

GABRIELLE
Warriors.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARKET - DAY

Xena is now wandering through a section of town that is far more to her liking with shops selling weapons, armor and other 'warrior' type items. As she picks up a dagger, it's clear half her attention is on the dagger and the other half is on all the guards milling around the city. She waves the knife and draws the vendor over.

XENA
How much?

VENDOR
Twenty dinars.

An eyebrow goes up and the vendor gulps.

VENDOR
(cont'd)
Fif...fifteen dinars?

The other eyebrow goes up and she starts to lay the dagger down.

VENDOR
(cont'd)
Twelve?

Xena takes in a deep, thoughtful breath and then shakes her head.

VENDOR
(cont'd)
Oh come on, lady.
Yer killin' me here.

XENA
Ten. Not a dinar more.



VENDOR

Sold.

She digs a few coins out and tosses them to his table as she picks up her new dagger.

XENA

Are you expecting
an attack?

VENDOR

What?

Xena gestures around her at all the guards.

VENDOR

(cont'd)

Oh that, no. That's King Dameus'
guard. They're always in the
streets. A deterrent, I think.

The vendor leans over the table and drops his voice to a whisper.

VENDOR

(cont'd)

That's why prices are so inflated
in this town. He taxes us to death
to keep his army up. The treasury
is always empty because he is
constantly supplying his troops
with new weapons and armor.

XENA

A well-prepared army
is a good thing to have.

The vendor stands back and gives her a disgusted look.

VENDOR

If we had any real enemies in the
area it would be all right, but our
closest neighbor is Magara. The
king there is a smart man. His
kingdom has no power to speak
of, but he's got vaults of dinars.
And his son is going to marry
the Princess Alicia in a month.

Xena nods, knowing how these things work.

XENA

So he gets part of an army
and you get the dinars. A
marriage made on Olympus.

VENDOR

Oh no, Prince Valius and
Princess Alicia honestly
love each other.

XENA

Well, that's a nice change.

VENDOR

The marriage will be good for
both kingdoms and since the
Amazons seemed to have
disappeared, King Palaemon....

XENA

What did you say?

VENDOR

I said since the Amazons....

XENA

No, after that, King Who?



VENDOR

Palaemon.

CUT TO:

INT. INN - AFTERNOON

Xena enters the common room of the inn and her eyes land immediately on their target.

XENA

Gabrielle! Come on,
we're leaving.

Gabrielle looks up from a scroll she has been working on. The look of confusion is clear as Xena crosses the room.

GABRIELLE

What?

XENA

We're leaving; we're going to Magara.

GABRIELLE

Why?



XENA

Palaemon is there.
He's the king.

GABRIELLE

Palaemon? Sumac oil?
That Palaemon?

XENA

The one and the same.

GABRIELLE

Where do you come up
with this information?

Gabrielle smiles, honestly amazed and amused at her partner's ability to get information out of thin air.

XENA

That's not important. But we need to go to Magara. Palaemon's son is apparently going to marry the daughter of this kingdom's king.

GABRIELLE

How nice!

XENA

Yeah, but something's not right. From what I found out this kingdom could have taken over Magara anytime it wanted, but it didn't for some reason. And now the kids are getting married....

GABRIELLE

Do you know why Dameus didn't conquer Magara?

XENA

I don't know why, but I know it had something to do with the Amazons. And now that they're gone, a royal wedding is about to take place. Convenient huh?

GABRIELLE

I guess we're going to Magara.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. VILLAGE - EVE

As they enter the village, both Xena and Gabrielle take notice of the high walls that surround the village. There are a few guards walking the walls. Some men and some women and all of them have bow and arrows.

GABRIELLE

I recognize that type of fletching. It's definitely Amazon. What would Palaemon be doing with Amazons?

XENA

Maybe he paid the Amazons to protect his kingdom.

GABRIELLE

And now that they're gone, he has no protection?

XENA

It's possible.

GABRIELLE

You're right. We need to find out. Think Palaemon will see us? No pun intended.

XENA

There's only one way to find out.



CUT TO:

EXT. PALACE - EVE

As they approach the palace, they are quite aware of the lack of guards. Glancing at each other, Xena just shrugs and pushes one of the heavy wooden and iron doors open. Inside one guard meets them and places his hand on the hilt of his sword.

GUARD

Halt!

They stop in their tracks. Gabrielle raises her hands in a placating gesture.

GABRIELLE

Easy. We're friends and we're here to see your king.

GUARD

I was not informed of any visitors to the palace.

XENA

He didn't know we were in the area, but he'll see us. Tell him Xena and Gabrielle are here to see him.

The young guard looks at them and then pulls a cord, which apparently summons a palace messenger. It doesn't take long for a boy of about 10 to appear in the entryway.

GUARD

Go tell King Palaemon that 'Xena' and 'Gabrielle' are here to see him.

Without a word, the boy bows slightly and jogs down the hall, disappearing around the corner.

CUT TO:

INT. PALACE CHAMBER - EVENING

A weary looking Palaemon sits at a table. He is watching Vidalus who stands near an open window, watching the sun dip behind the hills that surround the small kingdom.

PALAEMON

You do understand,
don't you?

Vidalus turns and stares at Palaemon. There are clearly tears shimmering in his eyes, but others have fallen down his cheeks.

VIDALUS

You want to hear I
understand, so that's
what I'll say.
Yes, I understand.

PALAEMON

I want the truth.

VIDALUS

No, you don't!

He waves an agitated hand in a motion that can only be described as 'feminine', causing his flowing blue and golden robes to flourish around him.

VIDALUS

(cont'd)

If you WANTED the truth you
wouldn't be doing this. You
wouldn't deny the simple
truth. You wouldn't want
to hide me away!

PALAEMON

That's not what
we want to do....

VIDALUS

Oh, it's not? Funny... going
in search of a woman to
play the Amazon mother
of our son certainly sounds
like hiding me away.

Agitated, Palaemon stands and crosses to Vidalus. He stops short and gestures his frustration instead of completing the touch he was about to offer.

PALAEMON

You know if King Dameus thinks
there is anything unusual here
he will call off the wedding.
Forget what could happen to us.
What would happen to Val?
He loves that girl. He would be
devastated if anything happens.

Palaemon reaches out and places a gentle hand on Vidalus' arm.

PALAEMON

(cont'd)

You've always done what's
best for him. How can
this be any different?

Vidalus, far too overcome with emotion to speak simply moves closer and is embraced by Palaemon, who rubs his back and does his best to comfort.

PALAEMON

(cont'd)

I promise it'll be okay.

They stand like that without moving when there is a knock on the door.

PALAEMON

Yes!

The voice of the boy floats through the closed door.

BOY

Majesty, the door guard sent
me to tell you that Xena and
Gabrielle are here to see you.

Palaemon looks temporarily shocked, then a smile spreads across his face and he pulls slowly back from Vidalus and looks down at him.

PALAEMON

I know everything will be all
right now. Come on, get
yourself together and
let's go see them.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. FRONT HALL - EVENING

Xena is looking at various weapons along the walls as Gabrielle inspects art hung there as well. It's clear that they're waiting to hear the king's response.

GABRIELLE

Kinda eclectic, isn't he?



XENA

Most definitely. These look more like an art collection than a weapons display.

PALAEEMON

(from the end of the hall)
That's because they are.

They both turn and smile when he approaches them with a huge smile and arms wide open. He hugs them both with one arm.

PALAEEMON

(cont'd)

It is so good to see you again.

He pulls back and whistles low and appreciatively.

PALAEEMON

(cont'd)

I see that time hasn't had the same effect on you that it has on we mere mortals.

XENA

Time in deep freeze doesn't
make us immortal.
Just well preserved.



PALAEMON

I guess it doesn't matter how
it happened. What matters is
it happened. Come! Where
are my manners? Let me get
you some food and wine!

He gestures down the hall and they take a few steps ahead of him. Xena leans toward Gabrielle and whispers.

XENA

Does he seem just a **bit
too happy** to see us?

GABRIELLE

He is acting a little odd.

PALAEMON

Vidalus will be
thrilled to see you.

GABRIELLE

You're still together?

PALAEMON

Why wouldn't we be?

GABRIELLE

Well, I um... I....

XENA

We weren't sure you would
make good traveling companions
when we last saw you. You had
quite a chip on your shoulder.

PALAEMON

I suppose I did, but he became a good friend. After a while I couldn't really think of life without him.

XENA

It's good to see you've gotten rid of the chip.

PALAEMON

I did. Because of you and the things I learned from my friend.



Xena and Gabrielle just smile knowingly as they follow him.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DINING ROOM - EVENING

Xena and Gabrielle sit with Palaemon at a large table. Dinner is complete and now they are sipping from golden goblets.

XENA

So where is Vidalus?

PALAEMON

Well, I'm afraid that we have a situation here that has him a bit upset. I had hoped he would come down to dinner, but, well Vidalus can be so emotional I'm sure he didn't want you to see him like that.

GABRIELLE

What's the problem?

Xena notices that Palaemon seems to try and hide a smile as he prepares his answer, almost as if he is pleased and they've been caught in some trap.

PALAEMON

My son is getting married.

XENA

How is that a problem?



Palaemon knows that the jig is up; Xena knows something is going on. He decides to be straight with them.

PALAEMON

My son, Valius was the product of a short and very intense time with a young Amazon.

GABRIELLE

Well, that explains that.

PALAEMON

Excuse me?

XENA

We heard that your kingdom was here and that there was some connection to the Amazons. That's why we came. To see you and find out if there was some sort of problem since they've all disappeared.

PALAEMON

My problem isn't because they're gone.

He sighs and shakes his head.

PALAEMON

(cont'd)

It is sort of because they're gone.

GABRIELLE

Start from the top.

PALAEMON

Val is marrying Alicia.
King Dameus is expecting
to meet his mother and me.

XENA

But she's not around.

PALAEMON

Right and never has been.
The whole reason Val is even
here is because I had the
unfortunate luck to be held
hostage by the Amazon's
during a mating ritual.

XENA

I see. So they used
you as a stud service?

PALAEMON

And when Val was born his mother
returned him to me. So I guess
since I got my son out of it, it wasn't
that unfortunate. Anyhow, Rhea....

GABRIELLE

Rhea!

PALAEMON

Yeah, did you know her?

GABRIELLE

Yes, she was part of a tribe
we once lent a hand.

PALAEMON

She was a sweet girl, but Val was
not welcome in the tribe so she
brought him to me and I never
saw her again. Vidalus is the closest
thing to a mother Val has ever had.

XENA

But he's not the one you
want to present to Dameus?

PALAEMON

Right.

GABRIELLE

And Vidalus isn't taking it well?



PALAEEMON

Right again.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT

Xena is washing up in a basin as Gabrielle sits in front of the fire staring at the flames. She joins Gabrielle on the floor.

XENA

Dinar for your thoughts.



GABRIELLE

I'm not sure they're worth that much.

XENA

Care to share?

Gabrielle leans back into Xena's arms, resting her head on her shoulder, but continuing to stare at the flames.

GABRIELLE

Does it seem to you that we keep finding ourselves involved in the lives of Amazon progeny?

Xena chuckles and kisses Gabrielle's temple.

XENA

They do seem to pop up
in the strangest places.

GABRIELLE

How long do you think it's
going to take Palaemon to get
up the courage to ask us for help?

XENA

If we sneak out before breakfast,
he won't have a chance.

Gabrielle chuckles and seems to sink further into Xena's embrace.

GABRIELLE

That quickly?

XENA

I'll bet my saddle on it.

GABRIELLE

Are we going to?

XENA

Do you want to?

GABRIELLE

Yes and no.

XENA

That was decisive.

GABRIELLE

Well, on one hand I want to help
anyone of Amazon blood, but on
the other hand, I must admit I'm
not wild about getting involved in
something that has Vidalus so
upset. I dunno, it just seems
wrong for Palaemon to be trying
to deny his place in Val's life.

XENA

Ah yes, but Dameus has a large
army he's not afraid to use. So if
something goes wrong here, it
could be the end of this kingdom.
No wedding, no Vidalus, no nothing.

GABRIELLE

You're not playing fair. You're making it impossible for me to justify making Palaemon get himself out of this mess.

XENA

Shall we wait until morning and see if he even asks?

GABRIELLE

Sure. I guess it's not our problem unless we make it our problem huh?

XENA

Exactly, and in the meantime, we can enjoy that big soft bed.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GARDENS - MORNING

Gabrielle is walking through the palace gardens. In the distance Xena can be seen doing a series of sword drills. Gabrielle has a scroll tucked under her arm and is apparently looking for a place to sit and write. As she comes to a bench she finds Vidalus seated and looking miserable.

GABRIELLE

Morning.

He looks up at her and gestures aimlessly.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

May I join you?



VIDALUS

Of course.

She takes a seat and there is an uneasy silence between them for a moment.

VIDALUS

(cont'd)

I'm sorry I didn't join you
for dinner last night. I
was rather out of sorts.

GABRIELLE

I understand. Palaemon
kind of explained
what was going on.

VIDALUS

I'm not speaking to
him at the moment.

GABRIELLE

I can understand that.

VIDALUS

After all these years! After
everything we've gone through
together, he has the nerve to
treat me like this during one of the
most important times in Val's life.

GABRIELLE

I don't think he wants
to exclude you.

VIDALUS

Of course he does. How can he
think of bringing some woman
in here to pose as Val's mother
and not think he's excluding me?

GABRIELLE

Good point.

Gabrielle looks over at Xena and considers her next words carefully.

GABRIELLE

You know, Xena and I
had a daughter together.

VIDALUS

You did?

GABRIELLE

Yup, a beautiful little girl named Eve.
And there were times when Xena
was pregnant that I felt excluded.
We weren't sure for a long time
exactly how she got pregnant and
I think I held that against her. I
knew she hadn't been unfaithful to
me, but somewhere in the back
of my mind there was this
nagging little voice, ya know?

VIDALUS

I can imagine.

GABRIELLE

But as the baby grew and Xena
began to glow with the pregnancy
somehow I came to realize that she
was changing both physically and
mentally and that it was a good thing.
I put up with morning sickness and
mood swings and.... Gods the
cravings that woman had
would make a cannibal sick.

Gabrielle notices that a short smile flicker's across his face so she presses on.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

So suddenly we had this
precious little girl with us.



VIDALUS

I remember the day Val was
brought to us. I fell in love the
second I laid eyes on him.

GABRIELLE

Same with Eve and me.

VIDALUS

I helped raise him the best way
I knew how. Pal and Val... the
two most important men in my
life. I did my best and now....

He stops and his head drops.

GABRIELLE

Xena and I didn't get to raise Eve.
She grew up without us and when
we found her she had become
Livia, the Bitch of Rome.

VIDALUS

Oh Gods! How did that happen?

GABRIELLE

It's a long and unimportant story,
but what I'm trying to say is that
you have been an important part
of Val's life, all his life. He is who
he is today because you were
there to help him. No matter
what happens, Val will always
carry a part of you with him.

VIDALUS

And I'm being silly?

Gabrielle bumps shoulders with him and takes his hand.

GABRIELLE

No, I don't think you're
being silly, but maybe

Xena and I could help.

VIDALUS

Would you do that for us?

GABRIELLE

To help keep your
family together, yes.

VIDALUS

Where is Eve now?

GABRIELLE

She's dead.

VIDALUS

I'm sorry.

GABRIELLE

So am I.



CUT TO:

EXT. GARDEN - MORNINIG

Gabrielle wanders over to Xena who is wiping her face with a cloth before wiping down her blade with it.

GABRIELLE

I did a very silly thing.

XENA

I know.

GABRIELLE

Now, I know your hearing is good, but I was WAY over there.

She gestures to the other side of the garden. Xena smiles and sheaths her sword. Taking Gabrielle's hand they begin a slow stroll through the gardens.

XENA

I knew the second you sat down on that bench we were going to be involved. You don't like to see people hurting and it's damn clear that Vidalus is hurting. And we sort of owe him.

Xena stops and turns Gabrielle so they're facing each other. She gently cups her cheek.



XENA

(cont'd)

He did save my sight. Gave
me the ability to see the
beautiful things in my life.

Leaning in before Gabrielle can reply, Xena kisses her very tenderly, but with passion and playfulness as she nips her bottom lip before pulling away.

XENA

(cont'd)

Now the question is,
which one of us is going
to be Val's mother?

GABRIELLE

I think you should do
it. You look more
Palaemon's type.

XENA

I think Vidalus is
Palaemon's type.

GABRIELLE

You know... I'm not sure.
I mean I can't tell....

Gabrielle begins to walk through the garden with Xena behind her.

XENA

We still need to decide.
I'll flip you for it.



GABRIELLE

You do mean with
a coin right?

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

INT. BEDCHAMBER - DAY

Gabrielle is standing before a long polished piece of metal that passes for a mirror. She is adjusting a leather top that is supposed to pass for a set of Amazon leathers.

GABRIELLE

I should have kept
my old ones.

She tries again to adjust her cleavage in the top and still isn't satisfied.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

How did I end up
doing this again?

Xena starts ticking points off on her fingers.

XENA

One, you're an Amazon
Queen. Two, I had to
pose for the artist. Three....

GABRIELLE

I get it. It's my turn.

XENA

Basically.

GABRIELLE

And the story is what?

XENA

I think the real story
works. We'll just
substitute you for Rhea.

GABRIELLE

All right. I can live with that.
Now... what else do I
need to pull this off?

She stands staring at her reflection and a wicked grin plays across her face. Slowly she turns to Xena.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)
A slave.

XENA

Oh, you think so, do ya?



GABRIELLE

Most definitely. Not really a slave per se, but more like a general servant. You know, my fetch and carry gal.

Xena grins and grabs for Gabrielle, catching her around the wrist and pulling her in to lift her up into her arms.

XENA

I'll show you fetch and carry.

GABRIELLE

(laughing and squirming)
Xena! Stop! Put me down!

XENA

Heh.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DINING ROOM – EVENING

Valius, Palaemon and Vidalus are all sitting, standing or pacing about the room each of them taking a turn at one action or the other, looking somewhat like a dance.

VAL

Where are they?

PALAEMON

Getting ready. They said they had to see if they could come up with a proper Amazon outfit.

VAL

Why?

VIDALUS

If you want this to work Vallie,
trust them. They know what
they're doing. They were doing
this before you were born.

PALAEMON

And Gabrielle really is an
Amazon Queen. That
should impress Dameus.

VAL

You don't think they'll
give it away do you?
Even by accident?

VIDALUS

Not a chance. Once
they have a plan, it's
as good as gold.

The door opens and they enter. Gabrielle is in leathers that have been decorated and now are as close to authentic as they can get on such short notice. Xena on the other hand is dressed in a VERY skimpy leather skirt and halter. If there was any less of the outfit, it would be napkins.

Val immediately takes notice. Palaemon isn't completely disinterested. Vidalus is completely nonplussed. It takes a minute for any of them to form words.

PALAEMON

This will work.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DINING ROOM - EVENING

They are eating in relative silence... only the sound of clinking goblets and plates is heard. Xena takes a sip of her wine and gently clears her throat.

XENA

We've been thinking.



All eyes turn to her except for Gabrielle who continues to eat the food on her plate. It's clear she's heard this plan and is waiting to hear what they think.

XENA

(cont'd)

Gabrielle and I both feel that it's important that Vidalus is a part of the meeting between the families.

Vidalus is all smiles. Palaemon even manages a grin as he leans forward to listen. Val doesn't look so sure.

XENA

(cont'd)

So what we're going to do is make him more... presentable.

Gabrielle looks up quickly and smiles at him.

GABRIELLE

Not that we don't think you are now. Xena and I think you're wonderful, but we're concerned about Dameus. If he suspects anything is out of the ordinary, it could cause him to call off the wedding.

VIDALUS

That would be the least of our problems.

VAL

For you maybe.

VIDALUS

Now, Vallie I didn't mean it that way.

XENA

Face it Valius. Dameus has the ability to flatten your father's kingdom in less than two days. Now I know you love this girl, but you must think of your family too.

Val nods, suddenly finding his wine interesting. When Xena has chastised you, you stay chastised.

GABRIELLE

So, Xena will be working with
Vidalus to help him pass muster
while Dameus is here.

VAL

What happens
after the wedding?

XENA

You'll be married. Once
Dameus gets his hands
on your father's gold, I'm
sure nothing else will matter.

VAL

Good point.

VIDALUS

So, Xena what's
our first lesson?

Xena looks up just in time to see him dabbing the corners of his mouth with his napkin.

XENA

Well for starters, stop that.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GARDENS - MORNING

Xena is pacing back and forth. She is in her regular leathers and armor, but without her weapons. Her sword and chakram are lying on the same bench where Vidalus and Gabrielle sat the day before.

She is about to get really irritated when Vidalus joins her. Her irritation quickly dissolves into something she can't quite put her finger on, but it resembles trepidation. Vidalus is dressed in long flowing multicolored robes. All his fingers are adorned with rings, and around his neck are several necklaces of various precious stones and metals.

XENA

(to self)

Gods help me.



Vidalus stops and looks at the expression on Xena's face. He gives a quick glance around and then at himself.

VIDALUS

What?

XENA

I'm not even sure
where to start.

She looks him up and down for a moment then makes a decision.

XENA

(cont'd)

All right, first the jewelry has to
go. No man would be caught
dead wearing it. Hiding it in
a cave somewhere maybe,
but not wearing it.

VIDALUS

But Pala....

XENA

Do you want my help or not?

VIDALUS

Yes, I'm sorry.
Get rid of the jewelry.

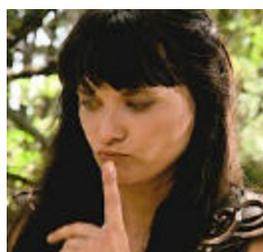
XENA

And the robes. We need to get
you more suitable attire. A
merchant perhaps. Palaemon
does enough trade that it would
be believable that a member of
his family is the trade ambassador.

VIDALUS

This is the finest silk from Ch....

Xena holds up her finger and makes a noise that sounds something like 'no', but even the short word is clipped and direct.



VIDALUS

Fine.

XENA

I suppose next is your walk.

VIDALUS

What's wrong with the way I walk? I put one foot in front of the other just like you do.

XENA

No you don't. I walk with long strides. You scurry like a girl. You need to learn to walk like a man. Like this.

Xena takes a few steps forward. Her stride is long, steady and very masculine. Her arms move very little. After taking a few paces back and forth she stops in front of him.

XENA

Can you do that?

VIDALUS

Well, it's not difficult!

He takes a few steps, which start out fine, but quickly degenerate into a near run with his hands pulled up in front of his chest.

XENA

No. No, no, no. You have to... to... swagger. That's it you need to swagger.

VIDALUS

I've never swaggered in my life.

XENA

No kidding. All right, let's forget the walk for now; we'll deal with that later. Can you hold a sword?

One of Vidalus' hands goes to his hip, while the other gestures through the air.

VIDALUS

What do you think?

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GARDEN - AFTERNOON

Gabrielle is moving through the garden, taking the time to stop and smell the flowers. She happens upon Xena who is facing a tree with her forehead resting against it.

GABRIELLE

You haven't been beating
your head against that
defenseless tree have you?

XENA

I considered it.

GABRIELLE

Is he hopeless?



XENA

Only if he wants to walk or
talk while they're here.

Gabrielle can't help herself and makes a sound that was suppose to be a laugh but comes out as more of a snort, directly from her sinuses.

Xena slowly looks up from the tree.

XENA

Well, that was attractive.

GABRIELLE

Do you have any
helpful suggestions?

XENA

I could kidnap Vidalus and
keep him hidden until it's over.

GABRIELLE

It would break his heart.

XENA

I know. We're just going to have to do our best with what we've got.

GABRIELLE

We've managed more with less.

XENA

Not by much.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PALACE GROUNDS - DAY

Everyone is in place as they await the arrival of the royal caravan. Val is handsomely dressed in his best tunic. Palaemon is in royal regalia befitting his position. Vidalus is trying to look comfortable in a pair of soft doeskin trousers, knee boots and white shirt with a tan vest. There is a hat perched crookedly on his head that Xena finally had to concede to... much as she hated it.

Gabrielle stands in her Amazon gear, with a long cloak to ward off a slight breeze that is blowing. Xena is back in her napkins, only this time with a pair of thigh high black boots. Her eyes roll slightly to the right as she feels Gabrielle looking at her.

XENA

I'll get you for this.

Gabrielle merely bites her lips to hide her smile as she looks forward at the approaching caravan.



Two carriages, surrounded by a dozen well-armed guards pull through the gate and stop just a few feet away from the group.

Palaemon and Vidalus watch as Val's eyes light up when a servant assists Alicia from the second carriage. They are so wrapped up in watching him they almost make the first error in dealing with Dameus by not paying him the proper respect as he exits the first carriage.

Gabrielle makes the save by stepping forward.

GABRIELLE

Your Majesty, I am Queen Gabrielle of the Amazons. On behalf of King Palaemon and my son Prince Valius of Magara we welcome you.



Dameus takes a moment to look Gabrielle over very appreciatively and take her hand to bestow a kiss to it.

DAMEUS

Delighted, Your Majesty. I am glad you could make the long journey from your tribe to be here. I have always been impressed with Palaemon's ties to your nation. Your warriors are legendary.

GABRIELLE

Thank you. Please allow me to introduce you.

Turning she gestures to each one.

GABRIELLE

This is of course, Valius' father, King Palaemon. Valius you know, of course. This is Valius' Uncle Vidalus. He is the king's most senior and trusted trade ambassador.

Everyone holds their breath as the two men shake hands. When Dameus doesn't appear to be taken aback in any way they all give silent thanks and let go of breaths they don't realize they're holding.

Dameus then notices Xena.

DAMEUS

Palaemon, you've provided entertainment. How kind of you.

GABRIELLE

Actually, Your Majesty, this is....

She pauses and Xena knows she's trying to come up with a good name for her servant.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Nikias. She is my
personal servant.

DAMEUS

You're not traveling
with guards?

GABRIELLE

Why would I need guards?
I'm here for my son's wedding.
Besides... Nikias was a gift to
me from Artemis. If something
arises that I can't take care
of myself, she certainly
will deal with it.

Dameus gives Xena another look and decides not to test Gabrielle's word.

PALAEMON

Shall we adjourn inside?
We can find your quarters
and prepare for dinner tonight?

Xena and Gabrielle hang back and watch as the others head inside. Xena seems pleased that Vidalus is managing to not be his normal self.

XENA

I think we're going to make it.

GABRIELLE

The evening isn't over yet.

XENA

You had to point that
out, didn't you?



GABRIELLE

Come, Nikias. Let's not keep our guests waiting.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DINING ROOM - EVENING

Everyone is seated at the table except for Xena, who is standing right behind Gabrielle's chair. As servants place large trays on the table, Xena takes Gabrielle's plate and begins placing various items on it after tasting each one first. It's a good show and Dameus is properly impressed.



DAMEUS

Would you be interested in selling her?

XENA

No, she's been pretty good to me. I think I'll keep her.

Gabrielle nearly spits her wine across the table as Palaemon and Vidalus have a hard time keeping their faces neutral. Alicia smiles and looks to Gabrielle.

ALICIA

You'll excuse me for saying so, Your Majesty, but you seem much too young to be Val's mother.

GABRIELLE

More gifts from the Gods.

PALAEEMON

Yes, I can honestly say Gabrielle doesn't look much older than she did the very first time I saw her.

DAMEUS

So tell me Gabrielle, why have the Amazons left the region?

GABRIELLE

I must do what is best for my tribes. They have been relocated. They are by nature nomads who move from place to place. It was natural that they would eventually leave.

Gabrielle leans nearer Dameus and smiles nicely, but with warning.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

I assure you that we are never really far away and if Palaemon were to call on me, I would be here.

DAMEUS

Oh, there will be no worries about that. In an exchange of wedding gifts, I'll see to it that Palaemon and the kingdom are well protected.

XENA

And he'll see to it your treasury is full.

DAMEUS

Seems an equal trade to me. Gold buys power, you know.

Xena raises a brow and is about to say something when Gabrielle places a hand on her arm.

GABRIELLE

You know Dameus, Nikias is my champion. Perhaps tomorrow if you would like, you two could spar.

XENA

(saccharine)

Oh could we, please? That would just make my day. Why, I haven't had a good tussle in days.



DAMEUS

I would be delighted to see what you can do. I'm sure you've been well trained.

Before anyone notices, Gabrielle catches Xena's hand to stop her from plunging the knife she's gripping between Dameus' eyes.

GABRIELLE

(through gritted teeth)

Put it down!

XENA

No!

GABRIELLE

Yes!

She shakes the knife loose as the other guests are beginning to take notice. Vidalus leans over and whispers in Palaemon's ear.

VIDALUS

And you were worried about me?

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

EXT. GARDEN - MORNING

Vidalus and Gabrielle are walking along in the early morning light, both carrying mugs that are steaming.

VIDALUS

Thank you for everything you've been doing these last few days.

GABRIELLE

It seems to be going well, doesn't it?

VIDALUS

Yes, and I adore Alicia. She's so good for Vallie. He seems to walk on air when she's around. It's been nice to get to know her.

GABRIELLE

I think she's rather fond of you too.

VIDALUS

Pal and I have come up with a story about while I'll be staying here after the wedding.

GABRIELLE

I'm sorry you have to come up with a story at all.



VIDALUS

Well, it'll be for the best. We're sure that Dameus won't care once he has the gold. If it weren't for the fact that Vallie and Alicia loved each other so much, he wouldn't be doing more than selling her.

GABRIELLE

I have to agree with that. Xena doesn't care for him and it was all I could do to call her off during that sparring match.

VIDALUS

What was that thing that she did that she said she didn't know how to undo?

GABRIELLE

The pinch. I can't believe she made me undo it.

VIDALUS

Well, the wedding is tomorrow. Very soon you will be on your way.

GABRIELLE

That's going to be good for Dameus.

VIDALUS

And I'm sure Xena will be glad to be back in her regular clothes. I'm not sure she cares for her costume. I know these trousers have been itching like mad. At least Xena didn't make me give up my silk unmentionables.

GABRIELLE

Did you tell her about them?

VIDALUS

That's why they're called unmentionables.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Gabrielle falls face first into the mattress with a groan. Xena just smiles from where she is slipping a sleeping gown over her head.

XENA

Tired?

There is a grunt from the bed, but nothing that resembles normal Gabrielle speech. Xena crosses the room and picks her partner up like a sack of flour, over her shoulder. Gabrielle smiles at the play but remains limp over Xena's shoulder with a smile on her face.

Xena throws back the bedcovers then places Gabrielle down far more gently than her partner's previous position would have indicated. Taking a seat next to Gabrielle, she pulls the covers up and kisses her on the forehead.

XENA

(cont'd)

Just a couple more days
and we'll be done.



GABRIELLE

Who knew pretending to be
someone's long lost Amazon
mother could be so tiring?

XENA

It's not the pretending that's
wearing me out. It's not
acting on the very real desire
to kick Dameus' butt. He
is an arrogant son of a...

Gabrielle chuckles placing one hand over Xena's mouth, and patting the bed next to her.

GABRIELLE

Come to bed. We've got a long day
ahead of us tomorrow. You'll need
all the energy you can get not to
kill him tomorrow at the feast
before the wedding. I have a
feeling he'll be insufferable.

Xena crawls under the covers.

XENA

Oh goody.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FESTIVAL HALL - EVENING

Xena is standing against the wall, scowling as she watches various members of Dameus' entourage fall all over themselves for Gabrielle's attention. She watches and it's clear she's tapping her foot in irritation as yet another young man vies for a bit of Gabrielle's attention.

VIDALUS

(handing her a goblet)
You shouldn't frown like that. It'll give you horrible lines around your eyes.

XENA

Thanks for the beauty tips.

He watches as she sips from the cup but never takes her eyes from Gabrielle.

VIDALUS

It's just a ruse.
Remember that.

Xena's gaze swings to him and there is a glare for just a moment and then it softens.

XENA

Come with me.



CUT TO:

INT. FESTIVAL HALL - CONTINUOUS

Gabrielle has escaped the throng of young men and is now seated next to Palaemon.

PALAEMON

Have you seen Vidalus?

GABRIELLE

No. Xena's been missing for some time too. I hope she didn't resort to plan B.

PALAEMON

Plan B?

GABRIELLE

Never mind. I'm sure
they'll turn up eventually.

Dameus swaggers across the room, cutting a swath through the guests in the room. Stopping in front of Gabrielle and Palaemon, he smiles at the King, then leers at Gabrielle.

DAMEUS

I think the father of the bride
deserves a dance with the mother
of the groom. Don't you?

As Gabrielle looks at him, there are a hundred responses she wants to give him and they're all written clearly on her face. Somehow she manages to smile and nod.

GABRIELLE

I'd be delighted.

She allows herself to be guided to the floor where several couples are dancing. As they take their positions to start the next dance, Gabrielle smiles politely and looks into Dameus' eyes.

GABRIELLE

(cont'd)

Move your hand.

DAMEUS

Excuse me?

GABRIELLE

The extremity that has found
its way to my backside. Move
it... or lose it. Your choice.



Dameus is about to respond when a sudden look of anguishing pain crosses his face. From behind Gabrielle his hand comes up, gripped at the wrist by a furious Xena. She is now dressed in her own clothes and if looks could kill, Dameus would be a smoldering pile of ash.

XENA

My choice. You move it.

GABRIELLE

Xena! What in the name of...?

Gabrielle stops, noticing that Xena is in her leathers and that Vidalus has been returned to his normal state of appearance.

XENA

Listen to me, you worthless piece of centaur dung. This woman is not my master. She is my spouse, wife, partner, companion, mate, pal, chum, buddy, cohort, significant other, other half, comrade or FRIEND. I don't care what people call her, but I do care if you have your grubby paws on her. So HANDS OFF!

She shoves him back; he stumbles, but regains his footing. Before he can respond, Xena steps forward and places a finger in his chest as the entire room watches.

XENA

(cont'd)

This man is not Palaemon's trade advisor.

She points to Vidalus.

XENA

(cont'd)

He is an important part of Palaemon and Val's family. He has been with them since the boy was a baby and he's an important part of this family. If you're going to allow your daughter to marry into it, you're going to have to accept it.

DAMEUS

Maybe I'll call off the wedding.

Val and Alicia step through the crowd and watch as Dameus gains more composure and draws himself upright to look taller. Xena is not impressed.

XENA

No, you won't. For several reasons. The first is that your daughter and Val love each other and you wouldn't do that to her. The second being, you're a greedy bastard and you don't want to give up your claim to Palaemon's gold.

DAMEUS

I have an army.
I can TAKE his gold.

GABRIELLE

I have one too, remember.

Dameus stops and looks between them as they simultaneously cross their arms and raise opposite brows.

XENA

And she's not afraid to use it.



Dameus knows he is beaten as Vidalus and Palaemon stand next to each other, along with his daughter and Val.

DAMEUS

Fine. The wedding will
go on as planned.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CHAPEL - MORNING

Xena and Gabrielle watch from the back of the room as the wedding seems to go off without a hitch. The bride's father sits on one side, looking a little frustrated but reasonable.

Palaemon, sitting next to Vidalus, looks over as his friend weeps loudly and dabs at his eyes with a brightly colored hanky. Palaemon smiles and takes Vidalus' hand, looping it through his arm and patting it comfortingly.

PALAEMON

(whispering)

Think about it... in a few years maybe
we'll have grandchildren to spoil.

This only causes Vidalus to wail again, this time putting his forehead against Palaemon's shoulder.

From the rear of the room, Xena and Gabrielle share a smile.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR

TAG

FADE IN:

EXT. COURTYARD - MORNING

Xena is stowing their gear on Argo as Gabrielle, Palaemon and Vidalus approach from the garden.

PALAEMON

Seems like I'm always
saying thanks to you two.

XENA

(teasingly)

And since we keep saving
your backside, well you should.

Palaemon laughs and nods.

PALAEMON

I suppose so.

He offers Xena his arm.

PALAEMON

(cont'd)

If you're ever in the area
again stop in and see us.

Xena breaks the handshake and mounts Argo, offering her hand to Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE

(hugging Vidalus)

Take care of
yourself and them.

VIDALUS

I will. I promise.

Gabrielle turns and is pulled up behind Xena. She waves as they ride off toward the countryside.

VIDALUS

I'm going to miss them.

PALAEMON

So am I. I learned a lot
while they were here.

VIDALUS

Really?

PALAEMON

Yeah, that you should never try to hide or be something you're not.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Xena is sharpening her sword as Gabrielle tosses a small log on the crackling fire. Gabrielle's eyes follow the embers that float upward.

XENA

And what is tonight's great philosophical contemplation?



Gabrielle smiles and shakes her head a little as she takes her place stretched out on the blanket.

GABRIELLE

Well, it just seems like I was right.



Xena lays her sword aside and joins Gabrielle on the blanket. Immediately, their hands clasp and finger entwine.

XENA

You usually are, but what were you right about this time?

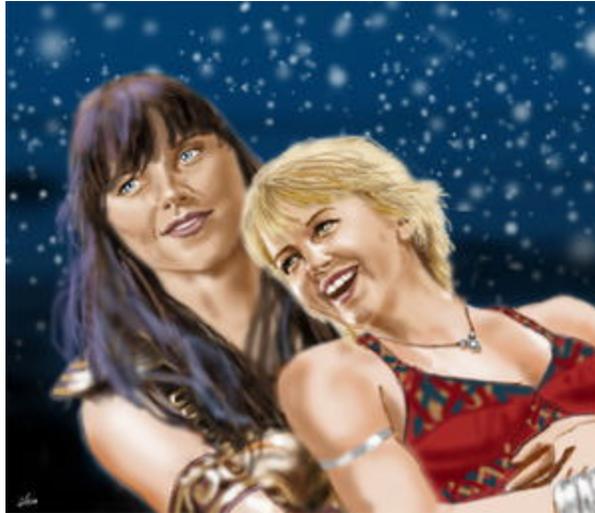
GABRIELLE

Sidekick is pretty good
work if you can get it.

Xena chuckles as they both grow quiet and stare at the night sky. Xena points into the sky.

XENA

Does that look like
a centaur to you?



FADE OUT.

DISCLAIMER

Xena didn't beat up any trees during the making of this episode,
but we're pretty sure she was the one that kicked a couple shrubs.