

Prod. #76906

XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"Cradle of Hope"

Written by  
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Directed by  
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XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"Cradle of Hope"

SET LIST

INTERIORS:

GREGOR'S CHAMBER  
GREGOR'S KINGDOM/DINING ROOM  
GREGOR'S KINGDOM/CORRIDOR  
SERVANTS' QUARTERS  
ROCK FORMATION  
TAVERN/INN  
HIDING PLACE  
NEMOS' BEDCHAMBER  
SECURE ROOM

EXTERIORS:

SERVANTS' QUARTERS  
RIVER BANK  
WOODS NEAR RIVER BANK  
ROAD/WOODS  
ROCK FORMATION  
STREETS  
GREGOR'S KINGDOM  
GREGOR'S KINGDOM/OUTER GATES  
UNDER WINDOW OF GREGOR'S CHAMBER  
GREGOR'S COURTYARD

Prod. #76906 - 7/24/95 - Blue

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UNDER WINDOW OF GREGOR'S CHAMBER

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XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"Cradle of Hope"

CHRONOLOGY

NIGHT 1

DAY 2

NIGHT 2

DAY 3

SCENES #1 - 4

SCENES #5 - 16

SCENES #17 - 29

SCENES #30 - 33A

XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"Cradle of Hope"

TEASER

FADE IN:

1 INT. GREGOR'S CHAMBER - NIGHT

1

Sitting cross-legged on the floor is a haggard old blind woman named CYNARA, the King's Oracle. The King, GREGOR, a grey-haired, powerfully-built man of 45, sits before her. Behind him is his Chancellor, NEMOS, 35. In the background, a Servant Girl, OPHELIA, 20s, fills a water basin. The men watch as Cynara removes her runestones from a leather pouch.

NEMOS

Be quick, old woman. Don't waste His Majesty's time.

\*  
\*

GREGOR

Patience, Nemos. The future has all the time in the world.

\*  
\*

Cynara nods her thanks and continues her ritual, placing the stones in a golden chalice. Slowly, she raises it...

CYNARA

Almighty Zeus, grace me with the vision of your all-seeing eyes.

...then spills the runestones onto the floor in front of her. Cynara picks up several stones and "reads" their symbolic markings with her fingertips, braille-style.

GREGOR

Well? What do they say?

CYNARA

~~He~~ troubled sleep... There is truth to your dreams, Your Lordship. There is indeed a child in your future.

\*  
\*

GREGOR

(annoyed)

You're reading the past, woman. My son died in childbirth months ago.

CYNARA

Apologies, My Lord. But this child is not of your line. He is an orphan... of humble parentage. Born on the equinox. He is a child... in your possession...

(CONTINUED)

1 CONTINUED:

NEMOS

(intrigued)

Such a infant was born to one of your  
servants ~~last week~~. The mother died in  
childbirth.

This seems to strike a chord with Gregor, who leans in.  
Ophelia, the Servant Girl, begins to eavesdrop.

GREGOR

Then what of this child?

CYNARA

It is... puzzling, My Lord.

(then; worried)

I only speak the vision.

NEMOS

No one's going to blame you for your  
gift. What is it?

CYNARA

The child... will one day occupy the  
throne. Your throne, My Lord.

Gregor is taken aback. Nemos does not appear amused at all.

GREGOR

That's... why that's ridiculous.

CYNARA

The stones do not lie.

NEMOS

What is it then? Will he attempt to  
take the throne by force? Will he grow  
to lead an army? Tell us.

CYNARA

I cannot read that. But whatever it  
is, his birth has set the course of  
events in motion.

With that, the old crone bows her head, weary. Gregor pats  
her on the shoulder, but is deep in thought. He looks to  
Nemos.

GREGOR

Thoughts, Advisor? We are talking  
about a mere infant.

NEMOS

Threats to the crown take on many  
guises. I think the threat is serious  
enough to take action.

(CONTINUED)

→ HAVE NEMOS  
INSURE GREGOR

1 CONTINUED: 2

Ophelia shoots a look at Nemos while Gregor mulls this over. After a few beats, Gregor turns to Nemos...

GREGOR  
Very well. Find this child. Bring him to me.

Nemos nods. On Ophelia's concerned look, we:

CUT TO:

2 EXT. SERVANTS' QUARTERS - LATER THAT NIGHT

OPHELIA'S VOICE  
You promised his mother on her death bed that you'd care for him as your own, did you not?

3 INT. SERVANTS' QUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

Ophelia watches as PHILANA, an elderly woman, wraps an infant in a blanket. Other SERVANTS look on as well.

PHILANA  
You know I did, but...

OPHELIA  
(cutting her off)  
Then listen to me, Philana. The child is in grave danger. The King's Advisor, Nemos, is hunting for him.

Ophelia nods toward a large, woven straw basket.

OPHELIA  
Put him in the basket.

PHILANA  
(placing Baby in basket)  
Isn't there any other way? Perhaps the King will listen to reason.

OPHELIA  
(firmly)  
And when would you be able to talk to the King? Nemos won't allow it. I'm afraid... he wants the child dead.  
(lowering her eyes)  
You don't know him as I do.

Just then, we hear the sounds of FOOTSTEPS approaching.

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED:

3

OPHELIA  
(frantic)  
They're coming.

Ophelia grabs the basket and ducks behind a curtain leading to the next room. The door opens and

NEMOS AND A SOLDIER ENTER

NEMOS  
(looking around)  
The newborn. Where is he?  
(nothing)  
By the order of the King, tell me!

PHILANA  
He's... not here, Your Grace.

NEMOS  
Where then?

Nemos notices Philana shoot a nervous glance toward  
THE CURTAIN

Drawing his sword, Nemos approaches the curtain and forcefully swipes it aside - but the room is empty. As he looks up toward the open window, we:

CUT TO:

4 EXT. RIVER BANK - LATER THAT NIGHT

4

Out of breath, Ophelia collapses to her knees at the water's edge, carrying the basket. She leans in, kisses the Baby...

OPHELIA  
May the gods protect you, child.  
...and places the basket in the water. As she watches it float downstream, we notice tears in her eyes and:

CUT TO:

5 EXT. WOODS NEAR RIVER BANK - THE NEXT MORNING

5

With her horse tied to a nearby tree, Xena straps on her sword and chakram, then begins to fold up her bedroll. Gabrielle lays nearby, covered in a blanket, still sleeping. After a beat, she awakens and begins to rise, sleepy-eyed.

(CONTINUED)



5 CONTINUED:

5

GABRIELLE

(yawning)

Good morning.

(standing up)

You sleep okay?

XENA

Like a rock. How about you?

GABRIELLE

On a rock. That's why I slept so late... I was trying to find that one patch of ground that didn't have a boulder on it. Sorry. I know you like to get early starts.

XENA

Not always.

Just then, we HEAR a NOISE from off camera. They both react.

GABRIELLE

What is that...? A cat?

Xena draws her sword. Gabrielle notices...

GABRIELLE

A big cat?

XENA

Stay behind me...

She starts to cautiously approach the reeds. Gabrielle, following Xena's order to the letter, is one step behind her.

GABRIELLE

Or a gryphon?

XENA

Shhh...

The noise is heard again, louder.

GABRIELLE

A gryphon with a big cat in it's mouth...

Xena shoots her a look.

GABRIELLE

(quietly)

...or maybe not.

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED: 2

Xena wades into the water. She parts the leaves, looks, and turns back to Gabrielle --

GABRIELLE  
What is it?

XENA  
It's not a cat or a gryphon... *Giffis*

Gabrielle looks through the parted leaves to see --

THE BABY

floating in its basket, wedged between a rock and a branch.

BACK TO SCENE

As Gabrielle and Xena react.

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

6 EXT. WOODS NEAR RIVER BANK - LATER THAT MORNING

6

Gabrielle holds the smiling Baby in her arms. Xena stares at her like she's crazy.

GABRIELLE

(baby talk)

You are just the most pwecious wittle thing. Yes, you are. Oh, Xena, can we keep him? It is "him," isn't it?  
(peeking under blanket)  
I always wanted a little brother!

XENA

We're on the road, Gabrielle. This is no place for a baby.

Gabrielle frowns as Xena takes another look at the child. It looks like she may be softening, but...

XENA

He belongs with his mother.

GABRIELLE

Well, whoever she is, she doesn't want him, obviously. Imagine... sending a baby down a river.

XENA

Maybe she had a reason. I should find out.

GABRIELLE

I guess we should.

Just then, the Baby starts crying. Gabrielle starts "shhhing" the Baby and rocking him up and down, but the crying goes on.

XENA

Why's he crying? Are you holding him wrong or something?

GABRIELLE

No... maybe he's hungry.

Xena looks over at the water, then glances upriver.

XENA

He must've come from that village upriver.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

6 CONTINUED:

6

XENA (cont'd)

We'll get him something to eat there  
and find out who he belongs to.

GABRIELLE

So what should we call him? Until we  
find his mother, I mean. You know,  
Gabriel's a nice name.

(off Xena's smirk)

Then again, Xenos is okay, too.

And as they head to the horse, we:

CUT TO:

7 INT. GREGOR'S CHAMBER - DAY

7

Gregor sits at his desk, engrossed in a portrait of an  
attractive young woman in full royal garb, obviously the  
Queen. Nemos enters, clearing his throat. Gregor looks up.

GREGOR

Any news?

NEMOS

None. But we have only begun our  
search. The child will turn up, don't  
worry.

Gregor leans back in his chair; he thinks for a beat, then:

GREGOR

Perhaps we should let things be. I  
mean, do we dare tamper with Fate?

NEMOS

I believe that Fate is just an excuse  
for men with no destiny. You, My Lord,  
are destined for greatness.

Gregor has heard this flattery before. He merely shakes his  
head. Nemos goes on.

NEMOS

I would hate to see that threatened by  
the hand of a child.

GREGOR

When the child is an adult with a  
dagger to my throat, I'll view him as a  
threat. For now...

(CONTINUED)

7 CONTINUED:

NEMOS

(interrupting)

I would agree, My Lord. Except word of the prophecy has already reached the outer villages.

(off Gregor's look)

There are some who already consider him as your successor. If the child were to fall into the wrong hands...

Gregor rises to look out the window as he considers this. Then, he heaves a heavy sigh. He crosses the room and stands before the portrait of the queen, looking up at it.

GREGOR

The people can't afford another civil war, Nemos.

NEMOS

You brought us out of the last one, My Lord. How many lives were saved through your leadership... and how many lives are at stake so long as the infant remains free?

Gregor stares at the portrait, lost in his thoughts...

GREGOR

(looking at portrait)

It has been six months since she died, taking my son with her...

A moment, then Gregor turns back to the waiting Nemos.

GREGOR

This child...

Nemos leans forward, expectantly... Then;

GREGOR

My command is unchanged. Bring him to me. I'll decide what to do once I have him.

Not the answer Nemos wanted, but he has patience. He knows how to play the King. He bows and exits.

CUT TO:

8 EXT. THE ROAD/WOODS - LATER THAT DAY

Xena walks along leading the horse by the reins as Gabrielle rides, holding the Baby.

(CONTINUED)

8 CONTINUED:

8

The topography here is rocky with large boulders. Up ahead, they spot

A MOB OF VILLAGERS

surrounding a 27-32 year-old woman we'll come to know as PANDORA. Though sitting on a horse, Pandora's not going anywhere - her hands are bound and there's a noose around her neck. Her attitude is one of resigned determination. She certainly isn't happy with this arrangement, but she's not going to give anyone the satisfaction of seeing that. And, in fact, we get the idea that this lynching wasn't unexpected. One of the VILLAGERS slings the long end of the rope over a high tree branch. Xena surveys the Mob and spots a Weasely-looking guy puffing out his chest and standing on a rock.

XENA

I take it you're in charge?

WEASEL

(proudly)

It's that obvious?

XENA

It's been my experience that cowardly mobs are led by weasels.

\*  
\*

The Mob snickers and the Weasel's expression sours. Pandora regards Xena with curiosity.

GABRIELLE

(re: Pandora)

What's this woman done?

The Weasel simply sneers at Gabrielle, dismissing her without a reply. He looks over at the Mob.

WEASEL

(nodding toward Pandora)

Send her to Hades.

\*

With that, the Weasel turns his back on Xena, who's already reaching into her saddlebag for her horsewhip and chakram.

TWO VILLAGERS

tug on the rope, lifting Pandora off the saddle by her neck. Just then, Xena throws her chakram, slicing the rope that suspends Pandora, freeing her. The Mob of Villagers looks on as the chakram returns to her, fright and awe on their faces. At the same time, Xena snaps the whip at the Weasel, coiling the leather around his neck and spinning him around to face her.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

(CONTINUED)

8 CONTINUED: 2

8

XENA

Didn't your mother ever teach you not  
to turn your back on a lady?

In a flash, she tosses the whip's handle over a branch,  
catches it and gives it a YANK, lifting the man up onto his  
tiptoes to prevent him from choking. She nods toward the  
Weasel, who grasps at the noose around his neck. She pokes  
him in the chest, causing him to sway as she talks to the  
crowd. \*

XENA

Any volunteers to replace him?  
(as they scatter)  
I didn't think so.

Gabrielle puts the Baby down and begins to release Pandora  
from her bonds. Xena, meanwhile, lets the Weasel down - and  
he literally hits the ground running after his henchmen.

GABRIELLE

Are you okay?

PANDORA

I'm fine.

GABRIELLE

You're fine? Did I miss something?  
They were going to kill you.

PANDORA

Yes. I think they were. Uhm... thank  
you.

Gabrielle shoots a look to Xena. Is this woman cynical or  
what?

GABRIELLE

You're welcome.

Gabrielle starts gathering up Pandora's things, which are  
spilling out of a large leather shoulder bag. Pandora bends  
down to help as Xena picks up the Baby.

PANDORA

(to Gabrielle)  
Be careful with that bag.

GABRIELLE

Don't worry, I've got it.

THUNDER is heard. Gabrielle looks up at the darkening sky,  
and then to Xena. And with that, we go to: \*



9 EXT./INT. ROCK FORMATION - DAY

9

The four of them enter.

XENA  
(We can't stay here too long.)

*This will have to do  
for till the story  
passes*

Xena hands the Baby to Gabrielle, takes a sharpening stone from her saddlebag, then tosses the bag on the ground next to Pandora.

\*

\*

GABRIELLE  
(to Pandora)

Even when we're not in a rush, we're in a hurry. See, we found this baby in a stream...

Gabrielle tries to put down Pandora's shoulder bag when she drops it. Pandora is horrified as its contents spill out, including

A SMALL WOODEN BOX

It looks fairly plain except for the ornamental design in the lid which looks like the impression of a human palm. Pandora picks the Box up and inspects it frantically. Satisfied that it's unharmed, she turns to Gabrielle and shoots her a look.

GABRIELLE  
(sheepishly)

I was only trying to help.

XENA  
Does that Box have anything to do with  
~~these people? Is that~~ what ~~they~~ *these people*  
wanted?

\*

PANDORA

In a way. But it was me they were after.

Nothing. This woman doesn't volunteer an iota.

GABRIELLE  
After you because...?

Pandora takes a beat, deciding what to say. Finally:

PANDORA

I was born into the wrong family and I'm paying for it now. My name is... Pandora.

GABRIELLE

Pandora? The one who opened the Box?

(CONTINUED)



9 CONTINUED:

9

PANDORA

It was my grandmother. We have the same name. But, yes, I still carry the --

GABRIELLE  
(realizing)

The Box!

Xena and Gabrielle look at the Box in Pandora's hands. Gabrielle steps back as if it's about to attack her. Xena stays where she is, but her eyes are fixed on the Box.

PANDORA

It's okay. It can't hurt you. If you know the story, you'll remember that all the desires of mortals were released when my grandmother opened it.

Pandora puts the Box down. Xena goes back to sharpening her chakram.

GABRIELLE

Does it still hold the Hope of Mankind?

XENA

Gabrielle...

PANDORA

It's okay.

(to Gabrielle)

Yes. The Hope of Mankind is the one thing that my Grandmother managed to trap. That's why we all have hope. The rest of mankind's desire is fleeting.

(then)

I've told the story a thousand times. I don't mind.

(beat)

If you want to leave me here, I'll understand.

XENA

~~That's up to you.~~ Where are you headed?

PANDORA

Calchinia. I'm going there to live.

GABRIELLE

Calchina? There's nothing there. I mean nothing.

(CONTINUED)

9 CONTINUED: 2

PANDORA

That's the whole point. I'll be alone.  
Away from people who can only hate me.  
You don't know what it's like, being  
cursed with this.

GABRIELLE

It's not your fault your grandmother  
opened the Box.

PANDORA

I wish that were true. But, I'm stuck  
with it. It's the most important  
thing in my life. And it's the reason  
I can't live my life.

(wry)

Sounds pretty tragic, doesn't it?

A beat as Xena regards Pandora. Her eyes shoot to Pandora,  
then to the Baby.

XENA

Gabrielle, give the Baby to Pandora and  
help me here.

PANDORA

I'm not the best one to trust with a  
baby.

Gabrielle hands her the Baby. Pandora holds the Baby  
naturally, but hesitantly. Gabrielle moves to Xena.

GABRIELLE

What do you need?

XENA

(a beat)

Get my saddlebag.

GABRIELLE

For that you needed me?

Gabrielle goes over to the saddlebag, which sits on the  
floor next to the Box. Pandora is looking at the Baby; Xena  
is still sharpening the chakram. Gabrielle stops and looks  
at the Box. Curiosity is a tempting thing... She reaches  
out and touches the lid...

XENA

(without looking)

Don't even think about it.

Gabrielle jumps and grabs the saddlebag.

CUT TO:

10 EXT. GREGOR'S KINGDOM - DAY

10

Nemos sits atop his horse, as <sup>three</sup>~~four~~ other SOLDIERS approach.

NEMOS

We do not rest until the infant is found.

With that, Nemos gives a signal and three of the Soldiers start to ride off. Nemos leans in to the fourth, CASTOR.

NEMOS

(conspiratorially)

But remember -- he needn't necessarily be found alive.

Castor smiles wickedly, and he and Nemos take off after the others, exiting the gates of the kingdom as we:

CUT TO:

11 INT. TAVERN/INN - DAY

11

A dark, torch-lit place, dotted with CUSTOMERS. An INNKEEPER tends bar while a young BOY sweeps up. Xena enters, followed by Gabrielle and Pandora, who still holds the Baby and her shoulder bag.

INNKEEPER

Wait a minute, wait a minute. You'll have to check your weapons.

XENA

We need some milk and some port.

INNKEEPER

Weapons first. Then milk.

Xena considers this. The Baby cries. She reluctantly hands over her sword and chakram. The Innkeeper hangs them on the wall behind the counter and gets some milk. They move to a table and settle. The Innkeeper turns to the Boy and whispers to him. The boy shoots a look at the Baby and rushes out.

Meanwhile, Pandora is still looking at the Baby.

GABRIELLE

He's really cute, isn't he? I'd like to say he has my nose, but...

(grinning)

What can I say? He does.

Suddenly, Pandora remembers something and hands the Baby to Gabrielle, who coos over him. The Innkeeper comes over with the milk and port jug and some glasses.

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED:

11

XENA

We're looking for the mother of this baby.

INNKEEPER

I'm an Innkeeper. That's all I know. That'll be six dinars.

\*

Xena takes the money out and hands it to him. Meanwhile:

CLOSE - ON PANDORA

As she opens the shoulder bag and takes out the Box. She makes sure no one is looking as she places her hand in the handprint and turns it, as if winding a clock. We can barely HEAR the ratchet sound. Done, she places the Box back in the bag.

BACK TO SCENE

Pandora turns back to Gabrielle and takes the child. Gabrielle raises an eyebrow, but gives the child up. The Innkeeper is getting real nervous. He keeps looking at the door.

XENA

~~Is there something that bothers you~~  
~~about this particular baby?~~ *our baby - bothering you?*

INNKEEPER

No. Now I got work to do.

Then, the door SLAMS open - it's NEMOS and the four SOLDIERS. Behind them, we see the Boy who left earlier. Nemos and his men approach Xena. He looks at the Baby and smiles.

\*

NEMOS

By the order of King Gregor, that child is under arrest.

\*

Assessing her situation, Xena shoots a look toward

HER SWORD AND CHAKRAM

hanging useless on the far wall.

XENA

Realizing she'd never make it in time. Off this:

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

12 INT. TAVERN/INN - CONTINUOUS

12

We pick up where we left off. The Soldier has his sword pointed at Xena, who sits with the glass of port wine before her. Gabrielle stands to the side; Pandora is behind Xena, holding the Baby. Nemos and the other Soldiers look on.

NEMOS  
Give me that child.

\*

\*

Xena turns to Pandora, who comforts the crying Baby.

PANDORA  
Don't be afraid, little one.

XENA  
(feigning)  
We'd better do as he says.

And with that, Xena takes a large swig of wine and puts the glass down. Pandora looks shocked as Xena starts to reach for the Baby, but at the last moment, Xena grabs --

A TORCH

instead. In a flash, she pulls it close to her mouth and spits the wine directly into its flame, sending a FIREBALL directly into the sword-wielding Soldier's face. As he stumbles backward over a table, Nemos draws his sword. Xena kicks at the chair across from her, knocking Nemos' feet out from under him, then rises and turns to Gabrielle:

XENA  
(re: Pandora & Baby)  
Get behind the bar.

As they quickly jump up, Pandora grabs her bag and it spills open, the Box falling out. Pandora is forced choose between --

THE BOX

-- or the Baby. She hesitates, then turns her back on the Box and flees behind the bar with the child.

Nemos seems to notice Pandora's hesitation and the Box that caused it.

Just then,

(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED:

12

THE THREE SOLDIERS

charge in at Xena. CASTOR lunges at her with a spear as Nemos attempts to regain his feet. Just as the spear's point comes toward her, Xena drops, body-slamming Nemos back down to the floor. The spear sails over her head and sticks into the wall behind her. Using the spear handle as a chinning bar, Xena pulls herself back up and double-kicks the two other sword-wielding Soldiers back across a table.

NEMOS

is back on his feet and swipes at Xena with his sword. She dives, tumbling across a table, avoiding his blows. She's just about reached the wall with her weapons when she sees

CASTOR

lunging toward Pandora and the Baby with his spear. Her sword won't help, so Xena grabs the chakram from the wall.

XENA

Pandora! Get down!

NEMOS

wears a look of realization upon hearing Pandora's name. He shoots a quick glance at the Box, then back at

XENA

who hurls the chakram at Castor's head. It misses, sailing directly over him - exactly as she intended. With a CLANG, it ricochets off one of the candelabras and SLAMS back into Castor's breastplate, knocking him backward over a table.

THE INNKEEPER

surveys the damage - he looks like he's going to faint.

XENA

turns back to the wall to grab her sword, but Nemos swipes at it with his, knocking her weapon to the floor. Unarmed now, Xena grabs a three-headed iron candelabra from a table.

NEMOS

Surrender now and I'll spare your life.

XENA

I was just about to say the same to you.

\*

Nemos lunges at her with his sword, but Xena uses the candelabra to deflect his blows.

(CONTINUED)



12 CONTINUED: 2

12

Nemos swings wildly, but Xena catches his blade between the candlestick holders and snaps it in two. Now they're both unarmed - and Xena closes in on him with a blindingly quick series of kicks and punches, sending him HURLING over a table. Behind her, the

TWO SWORDS

close in. She grabs her own sword now and turns to face them. One of them crosses to position himself behind her while she fights off the other. Meanwhile, Nemos crawls across the floor, unseen by Xena as he snatches up

PANDORA'S BOX

Across the room,

XENA

fends her opponent off, swords clanking away - but his partner is ready to attack from behind. Just as he's about to plunge his sword into her back, Xena snatches a peek at him in a wall mirror. She drops to the floor, extending her sword behind her, plunging it through one of his thighs as he lunges. His momentum continues to propel him forward - and he impales the other sword through the shoulder. And with that, Nemos and his Soldiers escape from the tavern.

GABRIELLE AND PANDORA

emerge from behind the bar. Xena turns to them.

XENA

Are you two okay?

They both nod and Pandora crosses the room with the Baby, searching the rubble for her belongings. Xena, meanwhile, approaches the trembling Innkeeper as Gabrielle looks on.

INNKEEPER

What? What do you want with me?

XENA

You sent that Boy to get them. ~~noted things like that.~~

Xena quickly applies the "Xena pinch" to his neck. His nose starts to bleed.

THE INNKEEPER'S

knees begin to buckle; his eyes begin to roll back.

(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED: 3

12

XENA

That weak feeling is the blood to your  
brain being cut off. You'll be dead  
in less than a minute. Or we could  
talk.

\*

\*

INNKEEPER

(stammering)

Let's talk.

XENA

You're smarter than you look.

With that, Xena quickly massages his neck, undoing the  
pinch. She pulls up a chair; the Innkeeper slumps into it.

XENA

Now who's Gregor and what's this all  
about?

INNKEEPER

King Gregor. The Baby belongs to one  
of his servants.

GABRIELLE

Why does he want him? He's not going  
to hurt him, is he?

\*

\*

INNKEEPER

I don't know.

Xena holds up two fingers, warning him.

INNKEEPER

Okay. An oracle told him the Baby  
would one day take his throne. The  
word out is that he wants it killed.

\*

Xena nods. Just then, Pandora lets out a shriek from across  
the room. Xena and Gabrielle look up, startled.

GABRIELLE

What's wrong?

PANDORA

The Box... it's gone!

And on Xena's look, we:

CUT TO:

13 INT. GREGOR'S CHAMBER - LATER THAT DAY

13

CLOSE ON PANDORA'S BOX

(CONTINUED)



13 CONTINUED:

It sits on top of a map of the outlying regions.

13

NEMOS' VOICE  
It's worse than we imagined.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL NEMOS

who stands before Gregor, the Box on the desk in front of him.

NEMOS  
Xena is involved. The Warrior Princess has the child and, more than that, she has Pandora. I was barely able to escape with the Box.

GREGOR  
Xena... you were lucky to escape with your life. I feared the day I might have to go up against her Army.  
(re: Box)  
So, this is it.

Gregor reaches for it and touches it. He runs his hand along the palmprint on top. Nemos looks on.

NEMOS  
My Lord... That design might trigger the latch.

GREGOR  
I'm not going to open it, Nemos. No man in his right mind would.

NEMOS  
But a Warrior Princess might. Or, at least, use it to blackmail a King.

GREGOR  
(starting)  
You think that was her intent?

NEMOS  
She had Pandora and the child. What am I to think? She has conquered larger kingdoms with weapons less than this.

Gregor is deep in thought. Nemos refers to the map.

(CONTINUED)

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13 CONTINUED: 2

NEMOS

We have sent men into the outlying villages and cut off all escape through the mountains here. These areas are secured, so we know they must be... here. Somewhere near the peasant area.

Nemos pauses a beat. Then his attention turns back to Gregor. His shoulders drop in a well-staged show of frustration and defeat.

NEMOS

Of course this is all useless. We know the solution. It's just too horrendous to consider. But, we must.

GREGOR

I'm afraid I don't see your solution.

Nemos turns his back. He is in "pain"... this guy is good.

NEMOS

The child... I can't believe that I am to suggest this... the child must die. As soon as possible.

GREGOR (SUCCEEDED)

I'm to order the death of a child?!

NEMOS

No! But you are to order the life and prosperity of your people! This child is dead already! Do you think Xena cares about it's well-being? And even if it lives, it will be just a pawn in a battle against the crown. It has no life. And neither do your people as long as it remains a threat.

Gregor pauses, thinking. Nemos places a "comforting" hand on his shoulder.

GREGOR

You have a plan?

NEMOS

Two plans. I have agents who will put out a reward for the Baby's capture.  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

13 CONTINUED: 3

13

NEMOS (cont'd)  
If they're hiding out among the  
peasants, then we'll get the peasants  
to work for us.

GREGOR  
(nodding)  
And the other?

NEMOS  
We offer Xena the Box for the Baby.

At that moment, a servant enters the room and hands Nemos a  
message. He reads it.

GREGOR  
None of these ideas please me.  
(noticing)  
What is it?

NEMOS  
It seems our Warrior friend is one step  
ahead of us. She wants to meet you.

Off Gregor's look...

CUT TO:

14 INT. HIDING PLACE - LATER THAT DAY

14

A dark hole in the wall with a glowing firepit in the corner  
to indicate some life in the embers. Pandora sits before  
it, holding the Baby. She rocks back and forth, hugging the  
child, as if the worries of the world are on her shoulders.  
Xena checks her weapons. Suddenly, there is a knock on the  
door. Xena draws her sword and goes to it. She waits,  
counting out the seconds. At the appropriate moment, two  
more knocks are heard. Xena cautiously opens the door and  
Gabrielle enters. She carries a ~~wine bag~~ CASK of milk

GABRIELLE  
Gregor's agreed to meet with us.

XENA  
Good. <sup>wait</sup> I need to look into this man's  
eyes to ~~know~~ my enemy. And he's not  
meeting "us." I'm going alone.

GABRIELLE  
But...!  
(then; shrugging)  
Whatever. I managed to get some milk  
for the Baby but it wasn't easy.  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

14 CONTINUED:

14

GABRIELLE (cont'd)

Did you know there was a reward out for us? The word is that it's over a thousand dinars. I'm tempted to turn myself in.

(noticing)

What's wrong with Pandora?

XENA

She's been like that since the tavern. I think it's the first time she's been without the Box.

Xena takes the milk from Gabrielle and takes it over to Pandora. Pandora looks up at them, a scared expression on her face. Her lips are set, but there is fear in her eyes.

GABRIELLE

Are you all right, Pandora?

PANDORA

I have to get it back.

XENA

We will. But first we have to make sure the Baby is safe. Once that's done...

PANDORA

That will take too long. I made the wrong choice... I should have grabbed it instead of...

She looks toward the Baby.

XENA

Are you kidding? You made the only choice!

GABRIELLE

Gregor's not stupid enough to open it.

PANDORA

It doesn't matter how stupid he is! You don't know! If I don't have the Box in my possession... it opens itself.

Shocked reactions.

(CONTINUED)

14 CONTINUED: 2

14

PANDORA

That's the curse of Pandora's family.  
That's why we must always carry the  
Box. I'm the only one who can reset  
the lock. If I don't have it back  
before midnight... it opens... and Hope  
escapes.

\*

Off their looks, we:

CUT TO:

15 INT. GREGOR'S CHAMBERS - DAY - ON THE BOX

15

As it sits there, quietly. We can now see the design on the  
top more clearly. A palmprint with the fingers toward the  
back of the Box, away from the front lock. It looks  
harmless enough...

The palmprint on the top rotates one "click."

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

16 INT. TAVERN/INN - LATER THAT DAY

16

The Innkeeper stands stiffly at his bar as the door opens and Nemos and Gregor enter. They look around. The bar is empty.

GREGOR

I guess I can't expect someone like Xena to be on time.

NEMOS

She has nothing but contempt for you, Lord.

INNKEEPER

Are you alone, My Lords, or shall I prepare drink for your guards?

NEMOS

Just the two of us. Ale for the King.

INNKEEPER

Only two?

NEMOS

Only two. Is there something wrong with my voice?

The Innkeeper swallows and glances down. A beat, then Xena stands up from behind the bar, a dagger in her hand pointed at the Innkeeper.

XENA

I wanted to make sure this party is just between us.

She walks around the bar and indicates they should sit. Gregor's eyes narrow; the Ruler evaluating a threat. They all sit.

GREGOR

Where is the child?

XENA

Safe. And non-negotiable. That's not why we're here.

NEMOS

Then there is nothing to talk about.

GREGOR

And why are we here?

(CONTINUED)

16 CONTINUED:

16

XENA

I wanted to look you in the eyes. I wanted to see what kind of man would order the death of a defenseless child.

If that comment hurt, Gregor doesn't show it.

GREGOR

I could order your death right here and now.

XENA

Under a flag of truce? Then I would know what kind of man you are.

GREGOR

What would a flag of truce mean to a coldblooded murderer? I know who you are and you disgust me. You swept across countless nations and saw the world tremble at your feet. But my people will not be your next victims. If it means my death or the death of this... child... so be it.

His eyes don't waver. Xena, however, is taken back slightly. Not too much to be noticed, but we can tell something is going on in her head. Nemos intervenes.

NEMOS

The answer is simple. We have the Box. We know you want it back. You have the child. We want him.

XENA

(beat)

Did you bring it?

NEMOS

(smiling)

Did you bring the child?

(nothing)

I didn't think so.

XENA

He can't hurt you, Gregor. He's just an infant.

For a split second, Gregor looks as if he'd like to agree. But before he can reply, Nemos interjects.

(CONTINUED)



16 CONTINUED: 2

16

NEMOS

Yes, he's just one infant.

~~(adding to the box)~~  
And surely his life doesn't compare to  
losing the Hope of Mankind?

XENA

You're not mad enough to open the Box.

GREGOR

No? My kingdom may have nothing to  
lose.

They stand to leave.

GREGOR

Twenty-four hours to make your  
decision.

With that, Nemos and Gregor exit. The Innkeeper looks  
relieved. Xena sits there for a moment, thinking.

CUT TO:

17 EXT. STREETS - NIGHT

17

Several people are gathered around a STREET VENDOR who is  
selling his wares from a cart. Sausage on a stick seems to  
be his stock and trade. The Vendor hands a sausage to an  
OLD MAN as the people talk among themselves.

OLD MAN

I don't care if it's a child or a man,  
he's a threat. He has to be found.

STREET VENDOR

Half dinar for that pig-on-a-stick.  
How about you, ma'am?

WOMAN

One.

(then)

I've heard that he's not even a year  
old! I mean, he's just a baby!

STREET VENDOR

(who cares?)

Right. You gotta get 'em young or  
they're out of control. Half dinar.

YOUNG MAN

The King is right. Kill him now before  
we pay the price later.

Do ARC  
around  
using street  
vendor as  
pivot. Label  
legs and arm  
to camera  
figures

(CONTINUED)



17 CONTINUED:

STREET VENDOR

And the price would be half a dinar.  
(off their looks)

Hey, I'm selling sausage here! What?  
I'm supposed to have an opinion?

As they stare at him, we LOOK OVER to see two figures in  
cloaks moving quietly through the streets, avoiding people  
where they can. They move toward a ~~specific door~~ and...

18 INT. HIDING PLACE - NIGHT

Xena is opening the door, her sword drawn. Gabrielle enters  
with the other figure, who turns out to be Ophelia.

XENA

Who is this?

GABRIELLE

This is Ophelia. She works in the  
castle as a servant.

OPHELIA

I was the one who put the Baby into  
the river. Is he safe?

Xena gives a look at Gabrielle. Gabrielle nods. Xena calls  
to:

XENA

Pandora...

From behind a door, Pandora appears holding the child.  
Ophelia immediately goes to her and begins to touch the  
child, tears in her eyes.

OPHELIA

I brought some clean blankets for him.  
And some food.

Ophelia and Pandora begin to change the Baby's blankets  
as Gabrielle speaks to Xena in private.

XENA

How did you find her?

GABRIELLE

You fight; I talk. We each have our  
gifts. Anyway, you wanted me to scout  
a way into the castle, she's the way.  
She works there.

XENA

Good work.

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED:

18

GABRIELLE  
How'd it go with Gregor? Is he the  
worm's tongue we expected him to be?

XENA  
No, he's not.

GABRIELLE  
(surprised)  
He's not?

XENA  
I looked into his eyes and I didn't see  
an evil man. I saw a King trying to  
protect his people from a "coldblooded  
murderer." His words. An evil man  
wouldn't have cared.

LEAN IN  
2 shot.

GABRIELLE  
Maybe you should have told him about  
the Box opening.

XENA  
I almost did. But that Advisor of  
his... Nemos. I don't trust him.  
Knowledge is power. I don't want him  
to have that power.

Xena moves over to Pandora and Ophelia. Ophelia holds the  
Baby, feeding him, as Pandora spreads the Baby's blanket  
out.

XENA  
Ophelia... I need to ask you something.  
Gregor has a small wooden box with a  
palm design on the lid.

OPHELIA  
(nodding)  
I've seen it. Nemos either keeps it  
under close guard or in his room.

Pandora shoots a look to Xena.

XENA  
I need a way into the castle. Can you  
help us?

OPHELIA  
Yes. But not tonight.

PANDORA  
It has to be tonight!

(CONTINUED)

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18 CONTINUED: 2

18

OPHELIA

No! The Quarter Moon Festival is tonight. There will be too many people there.

GABRIELLE

What goes on at this festival?

Ophelia puts the Baby on the blanket. Pandora wraps him up and holds him.

OPHELIA

Eating, drinking. Then Nemos has several of the servant women dance for him...

(lowering her eyes)  
and chooses...

XENA

Are you one of the dancers?

Ophelia nods shyly.

XENA

When do you have to be there?

And off this, we:

CUT TO:

19 EXT. GREGOR'S KINGDOM - OUTER GATES - NIGHT

19

An ARMED GUARD stands stoically, manning the gates of the kingdom. After a few beats, several young women approach.

GUARD'S VOICE

Halt!

One of the women is Ophelia.

OPHELIA

(gesturing behind her)  
The dancers for tonight's feast.  
King's orders.

The Guard shoots a look at the young WOMEN, each dressed in silk robes and veils. The Guard turns back to Ophelia and waves her through. As they enter, the CAMERA PANS THE WOMEN - the dark-haired one at the end looks very familiar - it's Xena.

CUT TO:

*① Make into  
Guards. Ophelia  
comes in from it,  
see previous  
to see  
fairer  
② (W) (C) (M)*

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

20 EXT. GREGOR'S KINGDOM - NIGHT

20

Once again, we see our Street Vendor. This time, his cart is turned over and the people we saw before are rummaging through it. He stands off to the side, a sausage on a stick in each hand, waving them like weapons at the mob.

STREET VENDOR

I ain't got no baby hidden nowhere!  
Get away from my cart, I'm warning ya'!

YOUNG MAN

I heard a baby cry! I swear it came from here!

STREET VENDOR

It was the grease! Ain't you ever heard grease sizzle?

He hits the Young Man on the head with a sausage stick as we see two cloaked figures walk by.

GABRIELLE AND PANDORA

Their eyes stay focused on the mob as they continue their pace.

PANDORA

These people have gone ~~mad~~ trying to find the baby.

GABRIELLE

They're scared. Or greedy. Or a little of both.

They stop and Gabrielle looks off toward the walls of Gregor's fortress.

GABRIELLE

This should be close enough. I'll bet old Nemos would have a fit knowing we were right outside his walls.

They settle on the ground. At that moment, we hear a BABY'S CRY. Pandora and Gabrielle go into a mild panic as they try to "shhh" the Baby.

GABRIELLE

No, no, Gabriel. We don't want to wake anyone! Shhh.....!

Pandora hums a little lullaby as she rocks the Baby. The crying subsides.

(CONTINUED)

① Vendor stands into the taxman's to cost and all to figure.

as we

② SIB DOWN  
TO PINE  
up  
neir

③ (as) FOR

④ (as) POUNCE

⑤ GOSE INTO  
GR P  
FRAM  
TO BAS  
TO COB

20 CONTINUED:

20

GABRIELLE

You have a knack for this kind of thing. He sure likes you. Have you ever wondered what would have happened if...

PANDORA

No. I can't afford to dream about things that never will be.

GABRIELLE

(beat)

Can I ask you something?

(off Pandora's nod)

Did your grandmother ever tell you why she opened the Box?

PANDORA

She just gave in to the temptation, curious of what was inside. We all have curiosities. Wanting to know what's inside a closed Box. Wanting to know what it's like to live a normal life.

GABRIELLE

Wanting to know what it's like to have a child.

A long beat as Pandora looks at the child.

PANDORA

That's something I never dared to know. Now I feel as if I know too much.

(then)

But I wouldn't trade it for the world.

And on Gabrielle's smile, we:

CUT TO:

21 INT. KINGDOM - DINING ROOM - NIGHT - CLOSE ON BOX

21

It sits on a table. This is a STYLISTIC SHOT as we are on it for a beat with NO SOUND at all. Dead air. We notice that the palmprint has turned more since we last saw it. And, as we watch it, it turns one more degree with a LOUD CLICK over the dead silence. Then, we PULL BACK and ADJUST as the SOUND COMES UP and we are in:

THE FESTIVAL

With a large meal before them, Gregor's Soldiers sit at a long table, laughing and joking uproariously.

(CONTINUED)

*OK Box pull back and pull*

21 CONTINUED:

21

Judging from their demeanor, the wine has been flowing freely. Nemos sits at the table with these men. Gregor is not to be seen. Nemos sits next to the Box. Nemos' prize trophy. Behind Nemos stands Castor, talking, drinking, and, occasionally, eyeing the Box curiously. We stay on them a beat, then, across the room, we see:

#### THE DANCING GIRLS

Are herded into the room at the far end of the open area. Among them, we find Xena, with her face veiled. Her eyes flash about the room, scanning it, checking the possibilities... Suddenly, those eyes fix on the Box. And Nemos' hand resting lightly on it. Then, her eyes move to a large window with wooden slats as bars. A way out. She moves through the raucous crowd to the window and casually - unlatches it.

She turns and a drunk bars her way. He makes a playful grab at her and, almost in annoyance, she casually hits him behind the ear. He drops into a chair as Xena grabs his mug of ale and sits it on the table next to him. But her attention is taken by the sound of "thumping."

It's all the men at the table. They are pounding their hands on the tabletop; the floor; whatever to show their impatience.

It isn't too hard to figure out the focus of their impatience as the dancing girls are moved onto the floor and begin their dance. The men near Xena move out of the way to allow her access to the floor. Eyes are on her as she is forced to move out into the room and begin her dance.

Okay. Now to get an idea of the way she dances, it's best to remember that the other dance girls have all been taught in this village by the same tired dance teacher who was once a consort of the cousin of the man who owned the dance hall... the point being that the dance moves are all ROUTINE, WORN and TIRED. Xena, however, knows the earthy, sensual dances that made the toughest Warrior break out in a sweat.

It's a dance of seduction that we can start imagining she did more than once in her past. Instead of straight lines across the floor and pirouettes, she writhes and undulates with the time of the music.

Every eye in the room is fixed on her.

Her eyes are fixed on that damn Box. She slithers across the floor, heading toward it. It seems to be an unwritten rule that none of the dancers approach the head table, but Xena ignores that rule and moves right in front of it. The men don't seem to mind.

(CONTINUED)



21 CONTINUED: 2

21

The usually stoic face of Nemos can't resist a leering grin. He moves his hand off the Box...

Xena's hands flutter about the table, swaying back and forth, but Nemos' eyes fix on her... veils. Out of the corner of her eye, Xena sees Castor starting to move curiously toward the Box. He reaches out and touches the lid...

SLAP! Xena's hand comes down on his. He pulls it back, angry. But she grabs his wrist and pulls him away from the table as a part of her dance. He grins, playing along. Xena moves from him and heads back toward Nemos and the Box. Her eyes move to the window... She reaches behind her and we see her hand rest on:

A DAGGER

hidden in the small of her back.

BACK TO SCENE

Xena starts forward. With all the frivolity going on, she has a clear shot at the Box with no obstructions. Nemos is looking to the other dancers for the moment, or talking with one of his cronies. Play the suspense as we CUT BETWEEN her eyes, fixed and purposeful; and the BOX, sitting there, inviting; waiting. And, as if to add to her desperation, she sees:

THE BOX "CLICKS"

One degree closer. The palm is almost inverted on the lid. Getting closer to the deadline.

Xena reaches, begins to make her move when

HANDS COME DOWN ON THE BOX!!

We adjust as we find Gregor standing above the Box. Everyone freezes, having noticed their regent in their midst.

NEMOS

My Lord, please join us. The search goes on and things are well in hand.

GREGOR

(re: Box)

What is this doing here?

NEMOS

I feel much safer if I know where it is, My Lord.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

*- Push into box - hands  
- push into sees  
- move down with  
her*

21 CONTINUED: 3

21

NEMOS (cont'd)  
I would think that we have enough men  
here to protect it if need be.

GREGOR  
(considering; then)  
It will be better protected with me.

Nemos starts to say something, but he stops, smiles, and  
bows his head. Gregor picks up the Box. Xena watches  
helplessly as Gregor exits through a door behind the table.  
Quietly, Nemos turns to Castor.

NEMOS  
I am beginning to believe that our King  
is becoming distracted with his moral  
convictions.

(beat)  
Gather as many men loyal to me as you  
can. I want to have a strong hand in  
case our King loses his judgement  
temporarily.

(then)  
But first we deal with the Warrior  
Princess.

NEMOS  
STANDS up  
FRAMED  
POINTS.  
push into  
XENA

Castor exits. Then Nemos turns and points directly at Xena.

NEMOS  
You! Come here!

Xena hesitates, but two guards move up behind her and push  
her toward the table. She can't act, she doesn't have the  
Box yet...

Nemos looks her up and down and then:

NEMOS  
Have her taken up to my room.

He smiles and Xena is ushered out of the room.

CUT TO:

22 INT. NEMOS' BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT

22

This is a bedchamber reflecting the power that Nemos has.  
It is richly appointed and his bed, his battlefield of  
conquest, is draped in thin fabric. Nemos enters.

The room is dark. He looks about.

(CONTINUED)



22 CONTINUED:

22

NEMOS

I know you are here. Don't be afraid,  
my child. My desire is pleasure, not  
pain.

Suddenly, a sensuous form slides up next to him, the fabric  
from the bed pulling away, wrapped around the body of Xena  
as she presses up against him

XENA

My pleasure is yours, My Lord. I  
merely want to take your  
responsibilities from you. At least  
for one evening.

It is dark enough to where he can't make out who he is  
holding. She turns her back on him, allowing him to wrap  
his arms around her and begin kissing her neck.

XENA

I'm surprised you have time to take  
from your work. Or the King. Is he  
working tonight?

NEMOS

He's in his chambers. You smell so  
good...

He buries his nose into her shoulder as he starts to peel  
away the fabric over her form. Xena goes on with her  
conversation; probing, but with such a sexiness in her voice  
that Nemos hardly notices... or cares.

XENA

You mean I'm actually near the Royal  
Chambers?

NEMOS

Just up the hallway. Enough of him.  
You spoke of pleasure.

With that, she brings her elbow straight up into his face.  
BAM! He drops to the bed.

XENA

And you spoke of pain.

She moves to the door.

23 INT. CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

23

Like a Ninja dressed in dancing togs, Xena makes her way  
down the dimly-lit hallway in a series of catlike movements.  
In her hand is the dagger.

(CONTINUED)

① Dolly across  
despite up Nemos  
② Pose into  
be see around  
③ That's it.  
Xena.

23 CONTINUED:

She looks over her shoulder as she approaches the door to Gregor's chamber.

She begins to reach for the handle when -- the door starts to open from the inside. Quickly, Xena jumps back, pressing herself against a wall, disappearing into the shadows.

She watches as Gregor exits into the corridor, wearing his night clothes. With his back to her, the King crosses to a sconce and stands tiptoed to blow out a candle. Xena's so close to him she could probably blow it out herself. Gregor turns and heads off down the hallway. Xena slips into:

24 INT. GREGOR'S CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

24

The wind is all we can hear as Xena stands alone in the King's dimly-lit room. She looks around, surveying its contents. Off in a far corner is

THE KING'S BED --

large enough to hold two, though empty at present. On the wall hangs

THE PORTRAIT OF THE QUEEN --

who looks down at Xena with sad eyes. Off in a nearby ANTEROOM

barely visible in the dim light, is

A CHILD'S CRIB --

unused, covered in cobwebs. On the floor beside it are dust-covered toys, also unused.

A RATTLE

A STUFFED BEAR

Xena takes all this in. And, slowly, her dagger starts to lower. Her eyes begin to soften. This all means something...

Just then, from the hallway, we hear FOOTSTEPS as the King returns. Xena backs into the shadows as Gregor enters and closes the door behind him. Passing directly in front of Xena, the King heads not to his bed, but to

THE ANTEROOM

Xena stays put for a few beats. Gregor's barely audible mumbling is all we hear.

(CONTINUED)

① push down candle  
② Another shot  
23

-P.O.V. ROOM.

24 CONTINUED:

24

Xena moves to the door and latches it shut. Then she slowly crosses the room toward his voice. The dim light from the CRACKLING fireplace glistens off her dagger's blade as she passes the bed. Just then, something moves in the darkness.

A SLEEK GREYHOUND

looks up at her from the bed, snarling. Xena moves toward the animal, extending her hand toward the dog's neck as he begins to GROWL. Xena puts her hand out as he snarls. She suddenly clamps her hand around the dog's muzzle.

- Turn and meet dog.  
cut scene  
(w) not \*

XENA  
(whispering)  
Don't start with me.

She releases him and he lies down with a whimper. Xena continues on her way, following Gregor's voice toward

THE ANTEROOM

She enters quietly. There, kneeling on the floor of the dusty, cobweb-filled room, is Gregor. Xena stands at the doorway watching as he mumbles to himself, as if praying.

GREGOR  
What has become of your father, child?  
The man your mother called husband?

XENA

listens, a curious look on her face, then begins to move toward him.

GREGOR  
I would have valued your life greater than my own. And, now, another child's life is in my hands.

(then; the tears flow)  
Why were you taken from me?

Xena is right behind him. She raises her hands toward him... and slaps the "pinch" onto him.

He drops to the ground, asleep. She regards him for a moment, then turns to search the room.

CUT TO:

25 INT. NEMOS' BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT

25

Nemos is coming to. He touches his now-swelling jaw and clears the cobwebs. Suddenly, his thoughts are as clear as a bell:

① Low point ground to Nemos as he awakes (CONTINUED)

Little chop  
"Sorry, see  
majesty!"

- Behind  
cobweb slowly  
passing in  
front of him  
- away to  
find

25 CONTINUED:

The Box!

NEMOS

26 INT. GREGOR'S CHAMBER - NIGHT

A wall tapestry is pulled back and there, in an alcove, sits the Box. Xena grabs it up and looks at it.

THE BOX

The fingers are almost pointing toward the open end! Not much time left. And, as if to punctuate that, it "CLICKS" another degree.

BACK TO SCENE

Xena goes to Gregor and massages his neck, bringing him to. He moans, restless. She hears a commotion from the hallway.

NEMOS' VOICE

Search the rooms! Check with the King!  
You men, come with me..!

Xena bolts toward the window and looks out.

XENA'S POV - A LONG WAY DOWN

At least a couple of stories and nothing to break the fall. Nope. She's not going to make that free-jump.

BACK TO SCENE

She thinks quickly. Looking up, she sees the curtains and, more importantly, the curtain ropes. She puts the Box down and begins to measure off some rope with the length of her arm, looking out the window to gauge the distance...

Someone hits the door... hard!

NEMOS' VOICE

Break it down!

Xena has the rope measured. We can see she is tying it. Gregor moans, trying to come out of it.

THE DOOR

Another hit, and it's loose on it's hinges. Another hit... another and it breaks down. Nemos and two of his men, swords drawn and ready to rock. The dog growls at them.

A) (w) Break down  
B) we comes to  
C) Xena's pen  
CONTINUED)

- All back Tapes  
push in  
Box  
BACK TO:  
it slides  
request  
up  
- Behind  
up

Direct Jump  
down

- Dog growling

26 CONTINUED:

26

NEMOS

(smiling)

Well, Xena... you've made this far  
easier than I expected.

Off this, we:

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

27 INT. GREGOR'S CHAMBER - NIGHT - AS BEFORE

27

Where we left off: Xena near the window, the Box in her hand and a coil of curtain rope at her feet. Nemos is rubbing his face where she hit him. All in all though, he is pretty happy.

NEMOS

Hand me the Box and maybe I'll let you live. You have no options, be certain of that.

XENA

There are many things I'm not certain about, Nemos. But I'll bet my life that this will surprise you...

And, with that, she turns and DIVES OUT THE WINDOW!!

Nemos and his men react in shock. Then, he notices the coil of rope unwinding on the floor... He rushes to the window and looks down at:

28 EXT. UNDER WINDOW - NIGHT

28

Xena hangs upside-down for just a second at the end of the improvised bungee-cord. A slash with her dagger cuts the rope and she falls, rolling quickly to her feet and heading off into the night. Nemos' scream can be heard as we go to:

28A EXT. STREETS - NIGHT

28A

A few people milling about as Xena comes rushing around the corner, the Box in her hand. People have to jump out of her way to avoid being nailed. General grumbling is heard as she

LEAPS OVER SOME CRATES

and hits the other side flying.

XENA'S POV - ON THE BOX

in front of her in her outstretched arms. In the background, we see the world rushing at us. The palm print "CLICKS" again. Up ahead, someone has moved a horse and cart into her path and

BACK TO SCENE

(CONTINUED)

*1 push in Nemos.  
2 Xena takes it  
3 Xena is pushed in  
4 Xena is pushed in  
5 Xena is pushed in  
6 Xena is pushed in  
7 Xena is pushed in  
8 Xena is pushed in  
9 Xena is pushed in  
10 Xena is pushed in*



28A CONTINUED:

28A

As Xena SLIDES UNDER THE HORSE and comes to her feet on the other side, not missing a step. She is heading toward

THE STREET VENDOR

who is trying to clean up his overturned cart. Xena plants her foot in the back of his head as she launches off him over the cart.

STREET VENDOR

Hey! What is it with this town?

XENA'S POV - ON BOX

in front of her. The Palm is almost completely inverted. It's going to be close... in the distance, (still in POV) we see Pandora and Gabrielle standing. Pandora takes her hand out of the cloak and holds it out. The Box races forward... her hand reaches out and:

CONTACT!

as her hand fits into the imprint and she twists. The ratchet sound is heard and it is reset. And we are now at:

29 EXT. GREGOR'S KINGDOM - NIGHT

Now they can all breathe.

GABRIELLE

Okay. We've got the Baby and we've got the Box. Let's get out of here.

XENA

No. Not yet. There's still the prophecy.

PANDORA

What do you mean? The Prophecy is fulfilled if the Baby lives. He'll grow up to take the Kingdom.

XENA

That's right.

She gently takes the Baby from Gabrielle.

XENA

And that's why I have to give the Baby to Gregor.

Off their astonished looks, we:

CUT TO:

① Dolly/Gregor 29l  
with Box AS it's  
brought to Pandora  
② Dolly auto read  
of Pandora  
③ Gregor brace  
with it.



30 INT. GREGOR'S CHAMBER - LATER - DAY

30

The breaking sunlight streams through the window as Gregor lays sleeping in his bed. Just then, the sound of a baby's CRY coming from

THE ANTEROOM

awakens him. Gregor rouses, sitting up in his bed as he looks toward the source of the noise. Warily, he crosses to the door and looks inside toward

THE CRADLE

which now contains the infant. Stunned, Gregor crosses toward the Baby as

XENA

steps out from the shadows, dagger in hand.

XENA  
Don't be alarmed.

Gregor looks up, startled.

XENA  
If I wanted to kill you, you'd be dead already.

Xena flips the dagger over, catching it by the blade. She extends the handle to him. He takes the dagger warily and places it on a table beside him.

GREGOR  
What is it you want?

XENA  
~~I want to fulfill the prophecy.~~

GREGOR  
You want to take my throne...

XENA  
I have no interest in your throne. I never have. You're a good man, Gregor. And a good ruler.

(beat)  
I know about your wife and child.

Gregor looks away, in pain... but his eyes settle on the child.

XENA  
Think, Gregor. This child will take your throne.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

PAW FROM  
UNSOLO  
TO  
JENSEN  
DOLLY

- PUSH INTO  
ANTE ROOM.  
- PUSH BABY.  
- BALANCE  
CRADLE.  
(as) XENA  
(as) GREGOR

ful  
to be killed

30 CONTINUED:

30

XENA (cont'd)  
But as your heir, not as your  
conqueror. He's a child who needs a  
father to love him. And you are a  
father who needs to love a child.  
That's the prophecy!

Gregor picks the child up in his arms and looks at him.  
Then:

GREGOR  
I was so blind...

And he hugs the child, his eyes watering. Then, he looks to  
Xena.

GREGOR  
I think it's time my people met their  
next King.

Off that, we:

CUT TO:

31 EXT. GREGOR'S KINGDOM - LATER

31

As Gregor, Xena, Pandora, and Gabrielle walk among the  
people. Gregor's personal guard is with him. He holds the  
child and shows him to an appreciative populace. All seems  
well until:

NEMOS AND HIS GUARDS  
suddenly appear.

NEMOS  
Have you lost your mind?

GREGOR  
I've come to my senses.

NEMOS  
(re: Xena)  
You're being seduced. It's a trick!

Nemos takes a step toward Gregor.

NEMOS  
Give me the child.

GREGOR  
(firmly)  
I command you to return to your  
chamber.

*QJB down Arc as  
Gregor goes  
then.*

\*

(CONTINUED)

31 CONTINUED:

31

NEMOS

(beat)

What I do, I do for the betterment of  
this kingdom!

And his men jump to the attack. Xena quickly grabs the  
child from Gregor and TOSSES him to:

GABRIELLE

who pulls up the front of her long skirt, as

THE BABY

falls into it, landing softly. But before the child even  
lands, the battle begins.

Nemos and the other Soldiers charge in - and Xena and the  
Servants begin fighting them off.

NEMOS

desperately lunges toward Gabrielle. Gracefully, she  
sidesteps him and tosses the child back to Xena, who drops  
the dagger and catches the Baby inches from the ground.

The battle rages on. As Xena holds the Baby with one arm,  
she uses her free hand and both legs to punch and kick her  
way through the crowd of Soldiers.

THE SERVANTS AND VILLAGERS

join in, using staffs, pitchforks and any other available  
farm tools to fight off the Soldiers in defense of their  
King and new Prince. OPHELIA wields a staff and uses it to  
corner one of NEMOS' sword-wielding men, who swings wildly  
at her. Blocking the Soldier's overhand blows with her  
weapon, she uppercuts him to the groin and the man collapses  
in a heap. Ophelia abandons her staff in exchange for the  
Soldier's sword.

CASTOR

meanwhile, spots the still-unarmed Xena and swipes at her  
with his sword. Xena barely manages to dodge his blows.

XENA

Gabrielle! The Baby!

With that, Xena again tosses the Baby to Gabrielle as she  
ducks and rolls.

GABRIELLE

(CONTINUED)

31 CONTINUED: 2

31

dives to the floor underneath her, barely managing to catch the Baby before he splats.

CASTOR

lunges in at Xena, swiping furiously at her with his sword. Xena dodges his blows, then lands a series of devastating roundhouse kicks to his ribcage. As he doubles over, she knees him in the jaw, sending him sailing backwards. She turns and sees another Soldier heading toward:

GABRIELLE AND THE BABY

Xena runs, picking up the fallen sword, approaching Gabrielle from behind.

XENA

Gabrielle. Behind you!

Just then, Gabrielle hands off the Baby to Xena and dives to the floor as the Soldier lunges - right into her extended sword.

XENA TURNS

holding the Baby. She looks up to see

TWO SOLDIERS

coming at her at once. Gabrielle isn't around to catch the child, so in a flash, she tosses him high in the air, cuts both the Soldiers down, and catches the child.

Just then, Nemos reappears, swiping at Xena's legs with his sword. As if jumping rope, she avoids his parries, managing to pass the Baby back to Gabrielle. That done, she and Nemos square off, one on one. Fiercely, he chops at her with his sword. The two fight furiously, each holding their own, until Nemos manages to strike a blow that knocks Xena's sword from her hand to the ground beneath her.

NEMOS

You should have killed me when you had the chance. Any warrior would have.

XENA

What makes you think I'm not going to?

Nemos screams and slashes down at her head with the sword. Xena slaps her palms together, trapping Nemos' blade between them and rolling backwards as she directs the tip of the blade into the ground.

(CONTINUED)

"Cradle of Hope" #76906

48.

7/25/95 - Yellow

31 CONTINUED: 3

31

Continuing the roll, she kicks up into his midsection, adding to his momentum, and sailing him over her and flat onto his back. Xena, continuing her momentum, rolls over and onto her feet above him as she pulls the sword from the ground. He pulls a dagger from his coat, but Xena drives the sword into his chest. (NOTE: believe it or not, all the preceding action was IN ONE MOVE). Looking at her in disbelief, Nemos clutches at his chest. Finally, he collapses, dead.

Silently, Xena rises and crosses to Gabrielle. She takes the child from her arms and approaches Gregor and Pandora. She hands the Baby back to the King, and as the rest of the Servants cheer, we:

DISSOLVE TO:

32 EXT. GREGOR'S COURTYARD - LATER

32\*

All is calm again. Gregor holds the Baby as Pandora and Xena come out of his castle.

PANDORA

I feel a little nervous, just letting it out of my sight.

GREGOR

Don't you worry. As long as I...  
(nods to Baby)  
...or my son rule, the Box will be safe in my fortress. The room is well protected.

Pandora smiles.

PANDORA

I still have to reset the lock every day, but I won't have to wander anymore. I have a home now.

GREGOR

The child needs a mother. Even as a King, I can't handle it alone.

Pandora looks at him appreciatively. And, from the way he looks back at her, there may be more to this than just a nanny's position...

GREGOR

You brought the prophecy true, Xena. How can I ever repay you?

(CONTINUED)

\*  
① Walk and Talk  
② Pandora  
③ Xena  
④ Gregor  
⑤ Pandora?

32 CONTINUED:

32

XENA  
I didn't do this for payment. Good  
luck with your new lives. All three of  
you.

She starts to go.

PANDORA  
Isn't there anything you'd like?

Xena stops and thinks. Then:

XENA  
Name him Gabriel.

And she is gone.

CUT TO:

33 OMITTED

33

33A INT. SECURE ROOM - DAY - THE BOX

33A

The palm print has been freshly wound. Hold on it a beat  
and:

ADJUST ANGLE

to find we are in a windowless room lit only with flame  
sconces. At one end of the room is a small altar where the  
Box sits in a pool of light. In front of it stands  
Gabrielle, staring at it. A beat, then Xena enters.

XENA  
Are you ready to go?

GABRIELLE  
Sure.

(then)  
I can't believe that I actually  
touched it.

She steps forward and puts her hands on the Box gently.

GABRIELLE  
Pandora's grandmother was cursed  
because of this thing. And now, she's  
blessed because of it. Did all this  
happen because of Fate? Or was it just  
Chance?

(CONTINUED)

33A CONTINUED:

33A

XENA

It all happened because you slept on a rock.

GABRIELLE

(grins)

It did, didn't it?

(then)

Okay, let's go.

She starts to turn when her hand hits the BOX and it falls to the floor, breaking open and releasing.... NOTHING!

XENA

There's nothing in it.

Gabrielle picks up the Box and looks inside.

GABRIELLE

(disbelief)

It's empty. All these years she's been carrying around an empty Box. What should we tell her?

Xena thinks about it for a few beats, then:

XENA

The Box was empty, but Pandora was still carrying our Hope.

(then)

~~We tell her the truth.~~ Hope always has, and always will be safe -- inside each and every one of us.

And on Gabrielle's smile, we:

FADE OUT.

THE END