

XENNA

WARRIOR PRINCESS

The Reckoning

BY

PETER ALLAN FIELDS

Episode #8

XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"The Reckoning"

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Revised pages: FULL SCRIPT

Executive Producers
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SHOOTING DRAFT
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XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"The Reckoning"

CAST LIST

XENA	
GABRIELLE	
PERANIS	(per-AN-iss)
TERACLES	(TER-a-clees)
TERESIA	(te-REES-ee-a)
GRATHIOS	(GRA-thi-us)
BENITAR	(BEN-i-tar)
ARES	
AREOLIS' WIDOW	(a-ree-OWE-liss)
TEEN SON	
PALINIOS	(pal-IN-ee-os)

Name said in dialog:

DORACLES	(DOR-a-clees)
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XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"The Reckoning"

SET LIST

INTERIORS:

LARGE MEETING HALL
XENA'S CELL
XENA'S FANTASY BOUDOIR
CORRIDOR OUTSIDE XENA'S CELL

EXTERIORS:

FIRST SITE IN WOODS
SECOND SITE IN WOODS
THIRD SITE IN WOODS
ROAD NEAR WOODS/ATTACKED WAGON SITE
RAVINE IN WOODS
STREAM IN WOODS
STREET FRONTING MEETING HALL
STONE JAIL
VILLAGE STREET
ROAD
COUNTRY ROAD

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XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"The Reckoning"

CHRONOLOGY

DAY 1	SCENES # 1 - 6
NIGHT 1	SCENES # 7 - 9
DAY 2	SCENES #10 - 22
NIGHT 2	SCENES #23 - 33
DAY 3	SCENES #34 - 34A

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XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"The Reckoning"

TEASER

FADE IN:

1 EXT. FIRST SITE IN WOODS - DAY 1

Xena rides, Gabrielle walks as usual -- and is trying to see through the wooded landscape on either side.

GABRIELLE
(frustrated)
I'm gonna go find that road.

XENA
It should be straight ahead, I told you.

GABRIELLE
You told me that an hour ago when I still had feet.

Gabrielle angles off; will disappear into the woods, during:

XENA
Don't get lost.

Xena continues on her way.

ON XENA

just a little farther now, she brings her horse to a pause.

CLOSER - XENA

as, listening, she hears the faint sound of a man crying out in pain.

RESUME - ON XENA

She spurs her horse forward with urgency.

2 EXT. ROAD NEAR WOODS - ATTACKED WAGON SITE - DAY 2

A wagon has been stopped in the road. Doracles and Areolis, two of it's four hefty male occupants, by now lie sprawled, lifeless, on the ground. The third, POLINIOS, still living (and conscious, but slipping away fast), is seated on the ground, looking stunned. The fourth, still (but barely) alive, will prove to be named, TERACLES. Badly wounded, he's seated on the ground, his back against a wagon wheel.

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED:

2

Though he's totally defenseless, his attacker -- a tall, cloaked, HOODED BEING (who'll later prove to be ARES) -- is just about to finish him off anyway, as:

XENA

sees this grisly scene and urges her horse forward -- drawing her sword as she goes.

ATTACKED WAGON SITE

The Hooded Being turns from Teracles to give his full attention to the onrushing Xena.

XENA - HOODED BEING - INTERCUTS (AS DESIRED)

In a fluid movement, Xena dismounts.

XENA

You're pretty good against unarmed people. How are you against somebody who can fight back?

She engages the Hooded Being, blade-to-blade. Xena feints, then thrusts -- but the Being parries;

Xena lashes across his legs, but he adeptly jumps above the cutting sword, and brings his own blade down hard toward her head;

Xena shields her head with her blade, but the unusually powerful downward hack of the Being sends her down to one knee for a moment... and on the defensive now, she must parry to left, then right, then thrust with great effort just to get the Being to retreat a step so that she can regain her feet.

CLOSE - POLINIOS

He's been watching Xena's valiant fight... but now dies.

RESUME - XENA - HOODED BEING (INTERCUT AS DESIRED)

Outraged at facing one who seems to be, so far at least, as good at this as she is, Xena ROARS as she throws her whole body into a frontal assault on the Hooded Being...

...who jumps high, OUT OF FRAME, causing her to be assaulting thin air. She regains her balance -- wheels; finds herself facing...

XENA'S POV

...no one. Where the Hooded Being should've landed after somersaulting over her -- there is no one. He's evaporated.

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED: 2

2

CLOSE REACTION - XENA

Confused disbelief. Beat -- then we HEAR the GROAN of:

TERACLES

Bleeding badly, he still sits against the wagon wheel. Xena ENTERS FRAME to kneel next to him. As she inspects, and then treats him, her hands will become covered with his blood. Noting the sword cut at the base of his neck, she quickly rips away his already torn sleeve, folds it, presses it against the neck wound. She then uses her sword as a lever; it's tip under the bottom of the wagon, the flat of the great blade laid hard against, and covering, the now wound-soaked cloth. With her free hand, she brings his hand to press down on the blade where it helps staunch the blood flow from his neck via direct pressure.

XENA

Press down... hard as you can.

WIDER ANGLE

She inspects his badly wounded leg. Looking around quickly, she spots the money pouch attached with leather string to his waist. She rips the pouch off, strips it of the leather string, dumps out the pouch coins, and -- utilizing the string as a leg tourniquet -- uses the pouch (as one would a stick) to turn that tourniquet and hold it in place.

TERACLES

(indicates bodies; very weak)

My... brother...

XENA

Keep pressing down, and...

(guides his free hand to tourniquet)

...hold this as tight as you can till I get back.

But Teracles, weak but slightly crazed now by his loss of blood, throws off the (now bloodied) sword, and rips away the tourniquet, during:

TERACLES

(weakly)

My... friends...

Just as Xena's picking up her bloody sword:

PERANIS (O.S.)

(shouting)

There they are!

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED: 3

2

OVER XENA'S SHOULDER - LONG SHOT

Several Villagers, led by a young, strong-looking fellow named PERANIS, are rushing toward Xena and the wagon scene. Among them is a lovely young woman, TERESIA (whom we'll learn is Teracles' wife), AREOLIS' lovely young pregnant WIDOW and a large, 40ish farm fellow named GRATHIOS. Aside from one or two farm-working knives, they carry only pitchforks, scythes, wooden staffs. These are all big, tough farmers with big scary farm implements.

ON XENA

She rises, absently holding her sword, as she sees them coming.

FAVORING PERANIS, TERESIA AND VILLAGERS

Teresia rushes immediately to Teracles. Peranis, forgetting his pitchfork and letting it drop, will kneel alongside each of the dead bodies in turn.

TERESIA

Teracles.

XENA - PERANIS, TERESIA AND TERACLES - VILLAGERS (INTERCUTS)

To Xena's surprise, Grathios and the other Villagers will surround her; level their farm implements threateningly, as:

TERESIA

Teracles... Husband... Can you hear me, my dearest?

Peranis, his quick inspection of the others finished, comes to kneel with Teresia alongside Teracles.

PERANIS

We heard the cries, and the swords clashing. We got here as fast as we could.

TERACLES

(weak gasp)
Teresia... We were... almost home...

XENA

We've got to stop the bleeding.

But as Xena approaches to once more give aid, the grief-stricken Teresia rises quickly to her feet -- blocking Xena's access to Teracles.

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED: 4

2

Confronting Xena, she'll fix her eyes on Xena's bloody sword and hands.

TERESIA

Stop! Keep away from him. Haven't you got enough blood on you already from our poor good neighbors?

TERACLES

(last gasp; re: Xena)
This woman...

Teracles passes out.

Now Peranis slowly rises to stand alongside Teresia, with:

PERANIS

(to Teresia)
Don't worry, we'll get him home.

Peranis joins Teresia in riveting his loathing gaze on Xena. Xena, in turn, realizes what all these looks portend, and:

XENA

(calmly)
Now, wait a minute...

But, as one, the Villagers with their levelled farm implement weapons, close in -- with Xena's back against the wagon, as we:

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

3 EXT. ROAD NEAR WOODS - DAY - FULL SHOT - ATTACKED WAGON SITE 3
- CONTINUING INTERCUTS (AS DESIRED)

No time has passed. Teresia and Peranis again turn their attention to the unconscious Teracles. The rest of the Villagers still crowd slowly in (trepidatious, but determined) toward Xena.

XENA

I didn't kill these people. There was a man here with a sword...

PERANIS

(interrupts; deadly)

You're the only one we've seen.

Grathios raises his staff to strike Xena down. She easily catches his wrist; holds it immobile; squeezes just enough to force him to drop the staff, as:

XENA

I don't want to hurt anybody. I fought the man who killed these people. *

Peranis, with Teresia helping, has been lifting the unconscious Teracles; is now cradling him in his arms.

PERANIS

(scornfully)

Fought an invisible man, did you?

Peranis watches Teresia bending to pick up Teracles' blood-soaked money pouch and a couple of coins, as:

PERANIS

One who ran away without the money he was stealing? And left his blood all over your hands and sword? I don't think so.

GRATHIOS

(pitchfork forward)

Together now. Take her.

WIDE ANGLE

Xena doesn't want anyone else getting hurt, but doesn't want to be captured, either. She swings her huge sword around above her head... and the Villagers step back and aside almost reflexively... as she dashes out of the semicircle to her horse.

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED:

3

But even as Xena mounts, the Villagers are recovering. As she wheels the horse, and it takes a first galloping step away, Grathios and several Villagers are after her at a frenzied run, farm weapons brandished.

ON PERANIS, TERESIA AND TERACLES

Peranis and Teresia remain preoccupied with Teracles, whom they'll begin loading gingerly onto the cart, as we go to:

4 EXT. SECOND SITE IN WOODS - DAY - FOLLOWING XENA

4

Loping along through the woods, looking for:

XENA
(calling O.S.)
Gabrielle!... Gabrielle?

5 EXT. STREAM IN WOODS - DAY - ON GABRIELLE

5

Fully dressed, she's just emerging from a blissful time in the cool stream. Behind her, in middle b.g., is the crest of a small hill.

XENA (O.S.)
(from distance)
Gabrielle!

Gabrielle quickly puts her sandals back on, during:

GABRIELLE
(calling O.S.)
Here! C'mon, this stream is great!

INCLUDING XENA

as she rides into view over the crest of the hill and down toward the stream.

XENA
Time to go.
(reaching Gabrielle)
Climb aboard.

GABRIELLE
(no way)
That horse hates me.

XENA
(still calmly; proffers arm)
There's no time to argue.

FAVORING CREST OF HILL

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED:

5

The Villagers, led by Grathios and coming hard, crest the hill in a horizontal line, 'weapons' in hand.

RESUME - XENA AND GABRIELLE

As usual, Gabrielle's a very quick study. One look at the oncoming Villagers, and she extends her arm to meet Xena's. As Xena hoists her aboard.

XENA AND GABRIELLE - VILLAGERS (INTERCUTS AS DESIRED)

Xena will spur her horse across the stream, with Gabrielle hanging on for dear life behind her. As they disappear into the heavy woods on this side of the stream, the Villagers halt on the far edge, looking vengefully after their escaped prey.

6 INT. LARGE MEETING HALL - DAY - FULL SHOT

6

This is the City Hall of the village. Later, it'll be used as the courtroom. In addition to the main door at the front, is a side, interior door, leading to some other part of the building.

The village elder, BENITAR, speaks firmly to the large gathering of Villagers. Toward the front of the gathering are Teresia and Peranis, who hugs to him a weeping woman (Palinos' Mother). Three or four other tearful mourners (including Doracles' TEEN SON and Areolis' Widow) are alongside. Also near the front is Grathios.

INCLUDING HOODED BEING

Unobtrusively, he enters, stands in the rear, and hears:

BENITAR

Grathios? You're sure she's trapped in the mountain ravine?

GRATHIOS

The only way out is through the pass we've got covered. She won't get away, even on horseback.

BENITAR

Good. I'll begin preparations for the trial.

ON PERANIS

He glares around at his neighbors; disapproving and incensed.

(CONTINUED)

6 CONTINUED:

6

PERANIS

Trial? I saw her standing over the bodies, covered with their blood. We don't need a trial.

BENITAR

She should be heard like any other accused.

PERANIS

(indicates Doracles' son)
Will Doracles' son and daughters care what excuse their father's murderer may offer? And Areolis...

ON AREOLIS' WIDOW

Hearing her husband's name, she resumes her soft weeping.

PERANIS (O.S.)

...whose young widow carries his child. You expect us to stand quietly at this?

RESUME - SHOT

Peranis now points his finger at Grathios, with:

PERANIS

Grathios: Didn't Polinios labor in your fields as a boy? I say we don't waste time with some useless hearing.

BENITAR

She will have a fair trial.
(off Peranis' scowl)
Peranis, I understand your rage. But we can't let ourselves become as savage as the savage we hunt?

CLOSE - HOODED BEING

Watching the goings-on.

FAVORING GRATHIOS

More meditative than the fiery Peranis, he nonetheless has come, in his own time, to the same conclusion as Peranis.

GRATHIOS

With respect, Benitar... You weren't there. You didn't see the carnage.
(suddenly strident; to all)
Neighbors, Peranis is right. We need swift revenge, not slow justice.

(CONTINUED)

6 CONTINUED: 2

6

FULL ANGLE

This time more Villagers than before are rooting for vigilante justice, as we hear:

SOME VILLAGERS
(simultaneously)
He's right... Let's do it!... I'm
ready... We're with you, Peranis!

Most of the Villagers (excepting Teresia, the grieving Palinios' Mother, Areolis' Widow and the other Mourners), rally to, and behind, Peranis -- as he turns to lead them out.

FAVORING HOODED BEING

He's not even seen by Peranis, Grathios and the crowd of Villagers who storm right THROUGH him on their way out.

ON TERESIA

As sad as everyone else, but still understanding the need for a balanced justice.

TERESIA
(quiet understanding)
Go after them, Benitar. No more
slaughter.

FOLLOWING - BENITAR

Beat -- then, in agreement, he rushes to follow the vigilante segment of the Villagers. CAMERA STOPS on Hooded Being -- and we HOLD on him for a beat -- as Benitar, too, goes right past without seeing him.

7 EXT. SECOND SITE IN WOODS - DUSK - XENA AND GABRIELLE

7

Gabrielle is lying on her stomach. Xena is alertly peering into the woods.

XENA
We'll wait here 'til nightfall. Then
we'll be able to slip by them in the
dark.

GABRIELLE
I don't know what you're worried
about. Farmers aren't going to risk
coming after an armed warrior.

(CONTINUED)

7 CONTINUED:

7

XENA

I've seen what can happen to people whose loved ones are butchered. Their vision gets... bent and twisted. When people get that way, there's no telling what they'll do.

GABRIELLE

But you didn't do anything.

XENA

The villagers saw me there; covered with blood.

GABRIELLE

Appearances aren't everything; that's why they have trials. If it came to that, we'd just prove you didn't do it.

XENA

(thinking aloud)
That hooded assassin who did do it...
(to herself now)
...fights as well as I do... maybe better. Strong... fast... then just disappeared.

GABRIELLE

Do you have an idea who it might have been?

XENA

(thoughtful, troubled)
Maybe.

(suddenly)

Gabrielle, if anything happens to separate us, I want you to get as far away from here as possible.

GABRIELLE

What do you mean? What's going to happen?

XENA

Just do as I say.

CAMERA now PANS SLIGHTLY, so that Xena and Gabrielle are OUT OF FRAME. Then, it ZOOMS SLOWLY IN TOWARD, and INTO, the dense woods.

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- 8 EXT. RAVINE IN WOODS - DUSK - SLOW PANNING SHOT 8
- The first people we see -- through the foliage -- are Grathios and another Villager, both at work sharpening stakes. PAN further to see three or four Villagers doing the same.
- MEDIUM CLOSE ON GRATHIOS AND VILLAGER
- His stake sharpened, Grathios now picks up several stakes already at his feet, and begins taking them somewhere. They're vicious-looking instruments.
- ON PERANIS AND A VILLAGER
- Each with a lasso in hand, they start climbing a pair of trees on opposite sides of the relatively narrow ravine.
- 9 EXT. VAST MOUNTAINOUS WOODED AREA - NIGHT (STOCK) 9
- Establishing the area at night. Beat, before:
- 10 EXT. MOUNTAINOUS AREA OF WOODS - SUNRISE (STOCK) 10
- Establishing -- early morning.
- 11 EXT. THIRD SITE IN WOODS - DAY - XENA AND GABRIELLE 11
- Xena rides, Gabrielle walks.
- GABRIELLE
Looks like the way we came up is the only way back down.
- XENA
(looking around; preoccupied)
Uh-huh.
- CLOSER - XENA
- She senses something which seems not quite right in the foliage through which they're moving.
- GABRIELLE
What's the matter?
- Xena continues peering from left to right, trying to see through the dense foliage. Something...
- XENA
(calm but not conversational)
Get on the horse.

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED:

11

RESUME - XENA AND GABRIELLE

XENA
Now. Move.

Xena's tone impels Gabrielle to do as instructed without the usual hesitation. She grabs Xena's outstretched arm and again finds herself riding behind Xena.

XENA

More and more wary of what she cannot see but somehow feels is out there.

XENA'S POV

The right and then left side of the ravine. Are bushes moving slightly?...

Was that a bit of leather clothing we just saw back in the shadows?

XENA AND GABRIELLE

XENA
(quietly)
Hold on.

And Xena suddenly spurs her horse forward.

INCLUDING VILLAGERS

Carrying long spikes, they rush in from the foliage on either side -- just a beat too late to nail Xena and Gabrielle.

FAVORING XENA AND GABRIELLE

as Xena guides her galloping horse around a bend in the ravine -- she suddenly reigns in tightly, stopping the horse on a dime, because:

SHARPENED STAKES

are jutting up out of the ground directly across their path.

RESUME - SHOT

As Xena turns the horse, it rears -- and Gabrielle slides off onto her butt on the ground.

WIDER ANGLE

Before Xena can react, the lassos thrown expertly from the two trees entwine Xena.

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED: 2

11

Despite this, she draws her sword and hacks away the lassos.

ON GABRIELLE AND VILLAGERS

Before Gabrielle can regain her feet, the Villagers are upon her -- pinioning her arms behind her and with a couple of pikes ready to run her through should she struggle.

XENA AND HORSE

With Xena having hacked away the lassos, her horse will dash forward, carrying Xena away from the immediate harm surrounding Gabrielle. But Xena slides off the horse, sword in hand -- leaving the horse to continue it's gallop away from the scene.

VILLAGERS SURROUNDING GABRIELLE

She's scared; they're venomous.

INCLUDING XENA

Sword still in hand, she walks back toward the Villagers surrounding Gabrielle. Despite their number, they're very uncertain about having to face her sword.

XENA

It's me you want. Let her go.

INCLUDING BENITAR

who comes into view from the foliage for the first time.

BENITAR

Then give up your sword.

XENA

(re: Gabrielle)

She's done nothing. She goes free right now, or...

(brandishing sword)

...she goes with me right now.

BENITAR

(thoughtful beat)

So be it.

(to Villagers)

All of you... Peranis... Grathios...

The young girl goes as she pleases.

(beat; to Xena)

You have our word.

Benitar gestures the pikes away from Gabrielle. The Villagers do back off and lower their pikes.

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED: 3

11

ANGLE

To the Villager's relief -- and Gabrielle's shock -- Xena tosses her sword at Benitar's feet.

GABRIELLE

in semi-shock.

GABRIELLE.

What're you doing!?

RESUME - SHOT

Xena just stands there, waiting for the Villagers to do whatever they'll do. Suddenly:

PERANIS

appears behind Xena and slams a club down on her head. As she falls to the ground unconscious, we:

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

12 EXT. LARGE VILLAGE - DAY - FULL (STOCK) 12
Re-establishing.

13 EXT. STONE JAIL - DAY 13
A crowd of the still-irate Villagers is gathered. A general lynch mob mentality... with Peranis and Grathios the motivating hatemongers. Two guards stand between the crowd and the jail.

PERANIS
(to all)
If enough of us are willing, we can give her our own special hearing.

The crowd responds with an affirmative ANGRY HUBBUB. Not yet at fever pitch, however.

PERANIS
She took our loved ones from us. We have to make her pay for that. Quickly, and without mercy. A trial is a waste of time and will just give her a chance to escape. We owe her nothing but an efficient execution.

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INCLUDING GABRIELLE
as she bravely makes her way through the crowd toward the jailhouse door, which is barred from within.

PERANIS
(to Gabrielle)
I'd get away from here if I were you, young lady.

Gabrielle, careful to appear unintimidated, and certainly undeterred, bangs on the door, as:

GABRIELLE
(in Peranis' face)
You gave your word. I'm free and I can go where I want. Or does your oath mean as little to you as your laws?

Someone opens a peephole from within; sees Gabrielle.

(CONTINUED)

13 CONTINUED:

13

GABRIELLE
(staunch dignity)
I'm here to speak with the wrongfully
detained hostage.

As the door is opened from within, Gabrielle tries another verbal thrust at Peranis and the nasty crowd:

GABRIELLE
(her first try at defense
counsel)
She could've just ridden away, y'know.
Have you thought about that?

GRATHIOS
(easily)
The only place to go, little lady, was
right back down where the rest of us
were waiting.

This evokes a derisive HECKLING CHUCKLE from the Villagers.

INCLUDE GUARD #1

Even bigger than Grathios, it is he who's admitting Gabrielle.

PERANIS
(shouting to Guard #1)
Alinar! I'd like a word with you.

Guard #1 acknowledges Peranis with a friendly nod, and holds up a finger indicating 'Wait just a minute.' Then, he closes the door behind Gabrielle.

14 INT. XENA'S CELL - DAY - FULL

14

Xena is sturdily shackled to an equally sturdy wall. She has been stripped of her armour and wears only her undergarment. Through a small barred window, we may hear the WALLA of the (far O.S.) Villagers. GUARD #2 (also huge) unlocks the cell door from without, and admits Gabrielle -- closing the door again behind her.

GABRIELLE
Are you alright? That was quite a blow
you took.

XENA
My head's throbbing, but it's not my
biggest worry at the moment.

(CONTINUED)

14 CONTINUED:

14

GABRIELLE

You just gave up. Why didn't you fight them?

XENA

I'd've had to kill them. They're not warriors. It would have been a slaughter. That's not what I do. Look, I told you to get away from here if something happened. I meant it. Save yourself, Gabrielle. We're up against more than you know.

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GABRIELLE

I understand you may be feeling a little negative at the moment.

(pounds on door)

But Xena, you shouldn't give in to that. Justice prevails.

XENA

(wearily)

That'd be nice.

The door's opened by Guard #2.

GABRIELLE

I'll get you out.

XENA

(as Gabrielle exits)

No, Gabrielle, leave.

The door's closed and locked; Xena's alone again.

ON XENA

She takes a deep breath, closes her eyes; is exhaling lengthily, as:

ARES (V.O.)

Look at you...

We follow Xena's startled gaze across the cell to discover:

ON THE HOODED BEING (ARES)

Leaning casually against the opposite wall.

ARES

... Hardly a suitable situation for a warrior princess.

XENA - HOODED BEING (ARES) - INTERCUTS (AS DESIRED)

(CONTINUED)

14 CONTINUED: 2

14

Her face reflects only great caution and distrust, not fear.

ARES
You're probably wondering who I am.

XENA
I know who you are. Ares, God of War.

ARES
Very good. I should have known
you'd figure it out. Who else could
outfight your sword.

The Hooded Being now comes toward her -- and pulls off his hood as he does so. He is tall, lithe, dark-haired and sophisticatedly handsome. He's neither slithery nor a creep. Worst of all, even we may find some charismatic charm in him.

ARES
Behold your former mentor, and still
greatest fan: At your service.

XENA
I used to wonder what you looked like.

Reaching her, he begins removing her shackles without the slightest difficulty. And, having done so, he'll begin gently to rub her aching wrists... massage her equally aching neck... rub her throbbing temples. He displays nothing but true and gentle kindness. Throughout the above:

ARES
Ah, now that's the problem. You 'used'
to wonder. I can't tell you how
disappointing that is.
(re: massage)
Better? Of course it is. Now take my
hand, Xena.

She hesitates; his smile remains truly kind. Understanding.

ANGLE (OPTICAL)

ARES
Give me your hand...
(as she does so)
...and come with me... out of
yourself... into what is wonderful...

The entire SCENE CHANGES around Xena and Ares. And, though standing just as they were, they are now:

15 INT. XENA'S FANTASY BOUDOIR - DAY

15

The entire boudoir is scarlet in color. Magnificent scarlet drapes hang from ceiling to floor here and there; opulently framed full view mirrors; a chandelier such as Xena's world has never seen; a wonderful fireplace; a lushly cushioned chaise-type couch; a great four-poster bed. On one table is a candle-lit dining setup for two; and alongside a window (which we cannot see through from this angle) is a table on which we'll soon learn there are several documents.

ARES
... And now behold.

ON XENA

Looking around; awed... but catches herself; resumes as much of a poker face as she can muster.

XENA
You slaughtered those four villagers.

ON ARES

He walks to a large closet.

ARES
Only three so far. That one you ministered to might actually recover. By all the gods you are a beauty. And you must know I've missed you.

He opens the cabinet. Inside is a dazzling wardrobe fit for a queen.

XENA
What do you want?

TWO SHOT

Ares takes out a beautiful robe from the wardrobe.

ARES
I want you back, of course.
(gestures around)
My warrior princess living as my warrior queen. We were once a great match.

XENA
I didn't know any better then. I thought your ways were all there was for me.

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED:

15

Ares gently drapes the robe over Xena's shoulders. *

ARES
It's chilly in here. You'll be more comfortable in this. *

(beat) *
Now that you do know there's another side to life. All I ask is that you compare the two. Tell me: Are you really having more fun these days? *

XENA
I'm fighting now for a better world.

ARES
My dearest Xena, you always were fighting for a better world. You were going to conquer it, then run it. The perfect way to bring order out of chaos. And you were doing very well, you know.

Xena allows him to finish putting on the robe. *

ARES
Take a look at the documents on the table there. *

She moves to the table; perfunctorily goes through the documents, with: *

XENA
(re: 1st document)
...Each village taxed only on it's profits...
(re: 2nd document)
...Comfort for the elderly...
(re: 3rd document)
...Teaching of medicines...

ARES
(re: documents)
They need only your signature.

XENA
I could pass these decrees?

ARES
If it'd make you happy.

He gently turns her around to face him. They're pretty close together.

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED: 2

15

ARES

Your destiny is to rule the world.
With me. Fulfill your destiny ...
And fill me again with the delicious
sight of you... the warmth and
strength of you. Go look out the
window.

*
*
*
*
*
*

Xena does so; peers out.

*

ARES

What do you see?

*

XENA

All those warriors... Thousands...

*

ARES

And all of them yours. Trained;
ready; willing to die if you command
it. With an army like that you could
mould the world anew. Eradicate
injustice. You can't tell me all this
holds no attraction... even a
slight... fascination, maybe?

*
*
*
*
*
*

Xena's affected, and it shows. But she summons all her
will, to wonder aloud:

XENA

And what do you want out of it?

ARES

I only want the world to be at peace
under a great leader. You. And to
bring this all about you need only call
out my name... Call upon me to help
you, and I shall be there instantly...

The entire SCENE CHANGES around them -- back to:

16 INT. XENA'S CELL - DAY

16

Still Xena and Ares -- but she's still shackled to the wall
as we first saw her here. Ares facing her.

ARES

I seriously doubt you'll get a better
offer. Just call for my help, Xena...
and you'll hold the world.

(indicates window; re:

angry crowd noise)

And you better hurry. That crowd
doesn't seem as fond of you as I am.

*
*
*

(CONTINUED)

16 CONTINUED:

16

ON XENA

She turns for a beat to the window; then turns back to find...

XENA'S POV

Ares is gone.

CLOSE ON XENA

Surprised, and a bit confused. Did this actually happen?

FULL SHOT

The heavy cell door crashes open, Guards #1 and #2 enter. They wait for a hate-filled Peranis to enter between them. He stops; stares at her in nasty anticipation. Obviously, he's got a little something planned. *

17 INT. MEETING HALL - DAY

17

Currently, only Benitar and Gabrielle are present. He sits looking up at her in some surprise; whatever he's been writing momentarily forgotten, as:

BENITAR

(all business)

Your friend will have a hearing before she's executed. We're not barbarians.

GABRIELLE

Who'll speak for her?

BENITAR

I'll act as her advocate if that's what you mean.

GABRIELLE

With respect, Sir... The fairest way is to let her advocate be the person who believes the most in her innocence. Like me.

BENITAR

That's impossible. You don't understand. It was all I could do to get these people to agree on a trial. If I let an outsider speak on her behalf, they may explode.

(CONTINUED)

17 CONTINUED:

17

GABRIELLE

So you're afraid? To get real justice takes a little guts sometimes, you know.

An uncomfortable beat for him, while he digests this. But then, they're interrupted by the sudden LOUD CHEERING of the (far O.S.) Villagers. Benitar rises; hurries quickly toward the front door. A very concerned Gabrielle follows.

18 EXT. STREET FRONTING MEETING HALL - DAY

18

The Villagers line each side of the street gleeful anticipation.

ON GABRIELLE AND BENITAR

as they emerge from the Meeting Hall to watch.

GABRIELLE

What is this?

BENITAR

This is the way the condemned are executed.

THEIR POV - FOLLOWING CHARIOT

From up the street comes a racing chariot, with Peranis driving. As it churns past, we see that, hanging from ropes attached to the chariot's rear, is a stuffed dummy. It's being torn to shreds as it drags along. Peranis slows the chariot, turns it around, comes slowly back toward us.

CLOSE - THE STUFFED DUMMY

A total, shredded, almost shapeless mess.

REACTION - GABRIELLE

Horrified. Suddenly, the (O.S.) crowd again CHEERS. Gabrielle looks up to see:

STONE JAIL - XENA AND GUARDS #1 and #2

Xena, in chains, is being dragged from the jail.

CHARIOTEER AND CHARIOT

The Charioteer drives the chariot back toward Xena.

GABRIELLE

*

*

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED:

18

Horrified, she starts trying to make her way through the crowd.

ON BENITAR

He looks concerned.

ON XENA

Grim, pulling at her thick chains, but without success. As she looks around her, someone (O.S.) catches her eye, and she stares fixedly at:

ARES

No longer hooded, he stands amidst the Villagers who cannot see him.

CLOSER - ARES

His eyes on (the O.S.) Xena. Smiling slightly, he waits for her to call upon him. He offers a gesture, which silently says: "Here I am; call me."

FAVORING XENA

as the chariot arrives, and they start tying the ropes at it's rear to Xena's legs. *

CLOSE - ARES

Unpleasantly surprised. Isn't Xena going to save herself?

CLOSE - XENA

Her eyes riveted on (the O.S.) Ares, she slowly, almost imperceptibly, shakes her head. HOLD on her resigned expression, then...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

19 EXT. STONE JAIL - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

19

No time has elapsed. The chariot ropes are being attached to Xena's chained legs. There is plenty of slack in the ropes.

GABRIELLE

rushes up, and loops the middle of one of the ropes around her own neck.

ANGLE

Xena's as surprised as everyone else.

XENA

(to Gabrielle)

Stop it. Take that thing off.

FAVORING GABRIELLE

GABRIELLE

(angrily; to all)

Come on! If you're going to murder one, why not murder two? What's the difference?

PERANIS

(re: Xena)

She's the only murderer here.

GABRIELLE

(in his face)

Not for long.

(to all)

And she's no murderer!

CLOSE ON XENA

She's staring straight at Ares, who's almost lost in the crowd.

CLOSE ON ARES

Still with his nice, genuinely gentle smile, he waits -- fairly certain -- for Xena to call his name. But suddenly:

BENITAR (O.S.)

Stop!

WITH BENITAR

(CONTINUED)

19 CONTINUED:

19

He approaches Gabrielle. He removes the noose around her neck, as:

BENITAR

(to all)

I was chosen by you to bring justice to this village. This isn't it.

(to Peranis)

Would you have us destroy the very laws we live by?

PERANIS

(at Benitar; angry)

When someone destroys the people we've lived with all our lives, yes!

Peranis steps forward. The Villagers look like they're willing to follow. Benitar waves toward the Guards who come to his side holding their spears in front of them sideways. They push the Villagers back a la police handling riot control.

BENITAR

If you want blood now, you'll have to come through them. And if you get through them, you'll have to kill me.

The Villagers begin to lose their nerve.

BENITAR

Peranis, justice will be done. I promise you.

Peranis angrily turns on his heel and stomps away. The crisis is past.

BENITAR

(to Guards; re: Xena)

Return her to her confinement.

(to Gabrielle)

You may act as her advocate.

20 INT. XENA'S CELL - DAY - START CLOSE ON XENA

20

She appears more annoyed than angry.

*

XENA

That was a pretty dumb thing you did; you know that, don't you?

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED:

20

PULL BACK and WIDEN to discover that, once again, Xena and Gabrielle are alone in Xena's cell.

GABRIELLE

Why? You'd do the same for me.

XENA

Yeah, but that's different.

GABRIELLE

Why? Because you're a warrior? Well, just normal people like me are willing to take chances to save their best friends, too, you know.

XENA

You don't get it, Gabrielle. There's no saving me. They have eyewitnesses who saw me standing there with a bloody sword in my hand and nobody else around.

GABRIELLE

Which brings us to the subject of your defense. Are you sure none of the villagers saw you fighting this mysterious hooded man?

XENA

I'm sure.

GABRIELLE

(ever the optimist)

Well, then I'll just have to find some exonerating evidence.

Off Xena's sigh, go to:

20A EXT. ROAD NEAR WOODS - ATTACKED WAGON SITE - DAY

20A

Gabrielle is walking around the wagon looking for clues. She stoops and studies something carefully.

CLOSE ON FOOTPRINTS IN THE DIRT

Boot prints are everywhere. We focus on two that face each other, toe to toe.

ON GABRIELLE

She kneels down to measure first one with her hand and then the other.

(CONTINUED)

20A CONTINUED:

20A

GABRIELLE
(eureka)
That's it.

She starts running back toward the town.

20B EXT. VILLAGE STREET - DAY

20B

Benitar is crossing the street. Gabrielle runs up to him.

GABRIELLE
Benitar. I can prove there was someone
else at the site of the murder. And
that Xena fought him.

BENITAR
What are you talking about?

GABRIELLE
There are two sets of boot prints face
to face. One of them is Xena's and the
other is longer and wider. They're
definitely prints made by warrior
boots. Not the footwear of choice for
humble villagers.

Benitar gives her a thoughtful stare.

BENITAR
Show me.

20C EXT. ATTACKED WAGON SITE - DAY

20C

All is quiet for a moment and then a PIECE OF FABRIC on the
wagon begins rippling as a breeze picks up. Soon the piece
of fabric is waving like a flag and dirt has begun to swirl
around.

ON THE FOOTPRINTS

The dirt begins settling on the footprints, covering them
from view.

20D EXT. ROAD - DAY

20D

Benitar and Gabrielle walk along.

GABRIELLE
The different footprints are toe to toe
and are all over the place, like
footprints would tend to be after a
sword fight.

They round a turn in the road and spot:

20E EXT. ATTACKED WAGON SITE - DAY

20E

Gabrielle runs up to the wagon and points to the ground.

GABRIELLE

They're right --

She freezes. Benitar joins her.

BENITAR

Where are they?

GABRIELLE

I don't understand it. They were here moments ago.

BENITAR

I don't have time for this.

He turns to walk back into town.

GABRIELLE

Here's one.

CLOSE ON A BOOT PRINT

wedged against one of the wagon wheels.

ON BENITAR AND GABRIELLE

as they peer down at the print.

BENITAR

One print? That doesn't prove a thing.
(walking back toward
village)

I hope you don't waste our time with nonsense like this during the hearing.

As he goes, a confused Gabrielle stares down at the dirt for a moment and then trudges thoughtfully back toward the village. We FOLLOW her for a few steps until she passes a large tree. We HOLD on the tree as she trudges on. After a moment, Ares appears out from behind the tree and smiles after Gabrielle. He gives a little flick of his head toward the wagon.

ON THE FOOTPRINT

as another little breeze comes up and covers this last print.

21 EXT. LARGE VILLAGE - DAY (STOCK)

21

Re-establishing.

(CONTINUED)

21 CONTINUED:

21

BENITAR (V.O.)

And from your field, you could hear the sounds of the massacre?

22 INT. MEETING HALL - DAY

22

Defendant Xena, now wearing her complete outfit, sits at one table at the left front with Gabrielle; Benitar sits in a large, high-backed chair squarely in the middle; the witness rail (before which each witness stands) is on the right. Currently, Areolis' Widow is at the rail.

AREOLIS' WIDOW

I heard men screaming. I left my plow and ran toward the road. That's when I recognized my husband's voice. He was yelling "No... Please, no..." Then I heard him scream, too.

E.C.U. - XENA'S FACE

Feeling this woman's pain.

AREOLIS' WIDOW (O.S.)

I was trying so hard to get there... I fell down...

RESUME - SHOT

AREOLIS' WIDOW

...That's when I heard the fighting. But by the time I did get there, my husband and the others were dead.

(at Xena)

And I saw her...

E.C.U. - GABRIELLE

This is pretty damning stuff.

AREOLIS' WIDOW (O.S.)

...kneeling over Teracles, robbing him...

RESUME - SHOT

AREOLIS' WIDOW

...Blood on her sword; blood on her hands...

ON VILLAGERS

riveted by her testimony -- and visibly hating Xena.

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED:

22

RESUME - SHOT

AREOLIS' WIDOW
...My husband's blood coloring the
ground.

CLOSE ON BENITAR

BENITAR:
Your father and the others had just
been selling at the market, that means
they each had money.

FAVORING TEEN SON

We discover it is the Teen Son (of Doracles), rather than
the Widow, who's now at the rail.

TEEN SON
His purse was gone when they finally
brought him to us. My two little
sisters were... eating supper.

CLOSE - XENA

Hurting for this kid. She happens to glance over at:

THE VILLAGERS

By now, there's hard and visible hatred for her emanating
not only from the general Villagers, but from even the two
hitherto tearfully mourning women.

E.C.U. - GABRIELLE

GABRIELLE
You all say you heard the sounds of the
massacre... that's what drew you to the
road.

As CAMERA PULLS BACK and WIDENS, we see it's Gabrielle now
standing doing the questioning -- and Peranis at the rail.

PERANIS
Yes.

GABRIELLE
In addition to the voices... there were
the sounds of the fight itself; the
swords clashing.

PERANIS
That's right.

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED: 2

22

GABRIELLE

But none of the men who died were carrying swords. If you heard Xena fighting before you got there... who was she fighting?

(off his silence)

She's said she fought with a hooded man and kept him from killing the one man who did survive. And that is what you heard, isn't it?

REACTIONS - VILLAGERS (INTERCUT AS DESIRED)

Throughout the following exchanges, we'll see the Villagers become more interested than angry; less and less certain in their general demeanor.

PERANIS

There was no hooded man, there was only her.

GABRIELLE

By the time you got there, yes. And she was on her knees using her fine medical knowledge to save that one survivor. If she'd killed the others, why was she saving him?

CLOSE - BENITAR

Frowning in slight confusion, as:

BENITAR

She was covered in blood, young lady. So was her sword.

RESUME - SHOT

as Gabrielle turns back to Peranis at the rail.

GABRIELLE

Have you ever helped someone on your farm who was badly injured and bleeding?

PERANIS

Uh... one time, yes.

GABRIELLE

Any of his blood get on you?

PERANIS

Well of course, I was helping him.

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED: 3

22

GABRIELLE
Exactly my point.

CLOSE ON GABRIELLE

She turns away from the witness rail for a couple beats, thinking. Then, as she turns back:

GABRIELLE
You say the surviving man...
Teracles?... He still had his money-
scattered around in the dirt.

Again, CAMERA PULLS BACK and WIDENS to reveal it's now big Grathios she's talking to as he stands at the rail.

GRATHIOS
If we hadn't gotten there quick as we
did, she'd've picked him clean, too.

GABRIELLE
Like the others.

GRATHIOS
Just like the others.

GABRIELLE
Then where's their money?
(off his silence)
If she'd already robbed everybody else,
where'd she put their money?

GRATHIOS
So she tossed it away... go back for it
later, I don't know.

GABRIELLE
When the rest of you showed up, she
could've killed you, too. No
witnesses. Why didn't she do that?

GRATHIOS
Hey, if she wasn't guilty, why'd she
run away?

GABRIELLE
Nobody here cares that she didn't
murder anybody; nobody cares that she
was only trying to help... Nobody
believes she fought off the real
murderer. All you care about is
executing someone. I'd've run away,
too... and so would you.

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED: 4

22

As we hear the (O.S.) main door of the meeting room bang open:

FAVORING TERESIA, TERACLES AND STRETCHER BEARERS

The wounded man, Teracles, to whom Xena ministered in the Teaser is carried in by two Stretcher Bearers. His wife, Teresia, walks at his side, holding his hand.

INCLUDING XENA

She rises, relieved.

XENA

(to Gabrielle)

That's the man I was trying to save.

GABRIELLE

(mutters to self)

Thank the gods.

ANGLE

BENITAR

Stand clear everyone. Teracles...
What happened?

TERACLES

(weakly)

Attacked... So quick...

BENITAR

By whom? Who murdered our three
neighbors and left you like this?

TERACLES

I felt a sword strike me. I fell. I
heard Palinius call out in pain...

PALINIOS' MOTHER

Upon hearing her dead son's name, she MOANS in renewed
grief.

RESUME - SHOT

TERACLES

Then the sword came down again. The
last thing I remember was...

(indicates Xena)

That woman, standing over me... my own
blood covering her sword.

A lot of negative, angry WALLA from the Villagers. During
this:

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED: 5

22

REACTION - XENA

She SIGHS in defeat.

RESUME - SHOT

GABRIELLE

No!

(moves to Teracles)

Sir, if I could ask just a couple of questions...

TERESIA

Stay away from him. He's told what happened; now leave him alone.

BENITAR

This hearing is finished. The council will meet this evening; I will post my verdict in the morning.

(to Guards #1 and #2)

Remove the accused.

As the two Guards approach Xena, and begin escorting her out, MOVE IN on an anxious, even desperate, Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE AND BENITAR

as she moves quickly to him, with:

GABRIELLE

About the verdict, and what that gentleman said... I'd appreciate just a word or two with your Council when you get together?...

Benitar nods.

23 EXT. STONE JAIL - NIGHT

23

Re-establishing the place at this late hour.

24 INT. XENA'S CELL - NIGHT - FAVORING XENA

24

She's again well-shackled to the wall. This time they left her full outfit on. The heavy door opens, spilling light across her.

FAVORING PERANIS AND GUARDS #1 AND #2

as they enter. The Guards flanking him, Peranis holds a small horse whip. He comes fairly close to her, and stops, with:

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED:

24

PERANIS

I'm glad now that we didn't kill you.
We've got until tomorrow morning before
we do kill you. Meanwhile...

XENA - PERANIS - INTERCUTS (AS DESIRED)

He uses the whip to WHACK her across the shoulder. If he
expected anything from her but disdain, he doesn't get it.
So:

PERANIS

Palinios...

He knees her in the stomach, then:

PERANIS

He was the best friend I had on earth.
And now...

As he draws the whip back for another swipe:

E.C.U. XENA'S FACE

She closes her eyes.

PERANIS (O.S.)

I'll tell you about the others you
murdered...

(ominously)

One by one.

Now, even as her FACE LINGERS ON SCREEN... and we hear the
terrible sound of Peranis WHACKING her again, Xena's FACE

BECOMES SLOWLY OVERLAID BY, then FULLY DISSOLVES INTO:

25 INT. XENA'S FANTASY BOUDOIR - NIGHT - XENA AND ARES

25

Again they stand facing each other across the bed. Ares,
wearing no hood and looking somewhat dashing, will come
slowly around to her, during:

ARES

You were almost willing to let them
drag you to death today. And now some
unbearably smelly farmer is beating you
half to death. This is grotesque.

XENA

You above all know what grief can drive
people to do.

(CONTINUED)

25 CONTINUED:

25

ARES

I so hoped you'd call my name.

XENA

I think I almost did.

Still most casual and inoffensively confident, he'll take her hand. There's nothing about him to suggest malevolence.

ARES

Ah, now that's the important thing; you did want my help.

XENA

I wanted to live, yes.

As he did last time, he takes her shoulders in his hands.

ARES

You want more than just living. Danger excites you. And as you know, I am somewhat dangerous. Action and power draw you like a moth to flame...

TWO SHOT - XENA AND ARES

as he draws her closer.

ARES

... The god of war is a flame. It burns inside you. I burn inside you. You can feel me there. Like a fever. Xena will never be answerable to these pathetic creatures. Not the Xena whose Army scorched the earth at will. You are remembering it now. The unfettered freedom of it. You're Xena!

*

(about to kiss her)

*

Unstoppable; unbeatable. Now summon forth that super-mortal strength of yours.

*

They kiss.

*

26 INT. XENA'S CELL - NIGHT - START ON XENA

26

as she lets out her battle cry. QUICKLY PULL BACK and WIDEN to see Peranis and the two Guards jump reflexively back and away from this suddenly-scary demon of a woman.

ANGLE

(CONTINUED)

26 CONTINUED:

26

Almost with ease, Xena RIPS loose from the shackles. With a single swipe she sends Peranis flying into the wall and totally out cold.

ANGLE

Guards #1 and #2 instantly flee. Rushing out through the heavy door, they lock it behind them (the hell with Peranis).

FOLLOWING XENA

She rushes at the locked door -- leaping upward and thrusting both legs with full force against it.

OVER XENA'S SHOULDER

as the force of her legs striking the door bursts it down.

27 INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE XENA'S CELL - NIGHT

27

Guards #1 and #2 are stunned by Xena's bust-out -- but recover quickly. As Guard #1 moves toward her, Xena body-rolls at a low angle into him, knocking his legs out from under him. He's down, but not yet out.

ANGLE

Guard #2 swings his club at Xena's head. She blocks the heavy blow with only one forearm; grabs the club with her free hand... yanks it from him as she uses the elbow of her blocking arm to cold-cock him.

INCLUDING GUARD #1

as he ENTERS FRAME by leaping on Xena's back. With him hanging on her neck, she bends over -- reaches down between her own legs to grab his ankles -- and yank them forward. Guard #1 lands flat on his back. Then, as he starts to raise his head, Xena delivers a spinning round kick to his jaw. But just as she's putting his lights out, we:

INCLUDE GABRIELLE

who's just entering the other corridor door (ostensibly from the (O.S.) Council meeting).

GABRIELLE

Xena, the Council said...

But, out of pure instinct, all Xena's aware of initially is that someone else is coming at her.

XENA - GABRIELLE (INTERCUTS AS DESIRED)

(CONTINUED)

27 CONTINUED:

27

Even as she's finishing the round kick which just dropped the Guard, Xena lashes out with a vicious backhand sweep -- at Gabrielle.

The force of the slap literally flings Gabrielle several feet and flat against the wall. MOVE IN on GABRIELLE'S FACE. A fairly quick return to her senses is followed by an expression of her heartfelt anguish. She rises slowly... holding her bruised cheek, and with tears welling up in her eyes...

Only now does Xena vaguely recognize Gabrielle... the sight of whom will slowly bring her out of her madness.

Beat, then -- sobbing -- the heartbroken Gabrielle runs out of the place. Xena looks after her... bewildered at first... then, with reality creeping back into her:

XENA

(dazed)

Gabrielle?...

(fully realizing; brokenly)

Oh, no...

Suddenly emptied of all hostility -- indeed, all strength -- Xena leans back against a wall. What she's done pains her greatly. HOLD on her like this, before we:

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

27A EXT. STREAM IN WOODS - NIGHT

27A*

Gabrielle runs through the woods. She looks distraught. She reaches the stream and falls down beside it. She's unsuccessfully trying to hold back tears. A couple have escaped and are running down her cheek. She reaches into the stream and gingerly applies the soothing water to the cheek where Xena struck her. She's in a state of despair when she looks up and sees something across the stream from her. We don't see what she's looking at. Off her thoughtful gaze, we:

CUT TO:

28 INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE XENA'S CELL - NIGHT

28

A somber Xena kneels, tending to the injuries she inflicted on Guards #1 and #2. Leaning against the door jam leading into the (O.S.) cell, and holding a damp cloth to his bruised face, is Peranis. He'll be staring down at Xena more in confusion than with the hatred we're used to seeing in him. The Guards are both seated on the floor, backs against the wall. Guard #1 has already had a plaster placed across his swollen nose, and his arm placed in a sling. Guard #2 is now the focus of Xena's attention -- and he's still scared to death of her (almost jumps in fear every time she touches him with the salve she's applying). Benitar ENTERS SHOT to stand over Xena, with:

BENITAR

Once again you could have escaped if you chose. We don't understand you.

XENA

(judging herself)

I know now it doesn't matter whether I killed your friends or not. I've done worse in my time. And I guess I'm capable of it again.

(to Peranis)

You saw what I did to my best friend.

BENITAR

As your friend argued before the Council... we can hold you answerable only for what you've done here.

(at Peranis; edged)

Our verdict will be objective.

29 EXT. LARGE VILLAGE - NIGHT (STOCK)

29

Re-establishing. All quiet and peaceful.

30 INT. XENA'S CELL - NIGHT 30
Sitting alone and disconsolate on the floor, Xena hears the (O.S.) sound of a horse's hooves. She rises quickly, goes to the little window, and sees: *

GABRIELLE.

XENA
Gabrielle...

31 EXT. STONE JAIL - NIGHT - XENA'S POV 31*
A HOODED FIGURE *
on horseback rides toward the jail. The figure dismounts and walks up to the window. The figure stands outside the window for a moment and then throws back the hood, to reveal: *
*
*
*
GABRIELLE *
She give a little forgiving smile. *

GABRIELLE *
Hi. *

32 INT. XENA'S CELL - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS ACTION 32
XENA - GABRIELLE (INTERCUTS AS DESIRED)

GABRIELLE *
I found Argo getting a drink at the stream. I'll wrap a rope around the bars, and we can pull them out of the wall.

XENA
How could you come back after what I did?

GABRIELLE
What you did wasn't you; that I know. I also know now there's a big difference between what Justice is and what the law is. I don't think we'd better wait around for Justice. Here, grab the rope.

XENA
(self-deprecating)
Not this time. If I run I'll be running forever.

(CONTINUED)

32 CONTINUED:

32

GABRIELLE

Well it beats being dead. Will you please take the rope?

But now Xena's face reflects that she's suddenly lost in the thought of a new idea. Gabrielle notes it immediately.

GABRIELLE

(beat; hope-filled)
You've got an idea.

XENA

(still musing)
Someone made me a better offer.
(beat; gently)
I need you to leave me alone for a while.

GABRIELLE

(a bit hurt)
Okay.

XENA

(quick afterthought)
I didn't mean that the way it probably sounded. I'm, uh... glad you came back.

Gabrielle returns Xena's look with the shiny smile of her unconditional friendship. Then disappears with the horse. Stepping back to the center of the cell, Xena takes a deep breath... spreads her arms slightly, and:

XENA

Ares.

The entire SCENE CHANGES around Xena, to put her again in:

33 INT. XENA'S FANTASY BOUDOIR - NIGHT

33

Xena is standing midway between the bed and the chaise-type couch. Throughout this scene, she'll seem much more pliant -- her demeanor tinged with genuine sensuality -- as she faces a very pleased, if not expectant, Ares. (She's not over the top with the sensuality part, because Ares is no dope, and males do like believing the initiative's theirs.)

ARES

Somehow I felt I might hear my name.

(CONTINUED)

33 CONTINUED:

33

XENA
(slight shrug)
If the verdict's 'guilty,' they'll
execute me in the morning.

Xena will move to the closet, open it and begin exploring
the wardrobe.

XENA
I'd rather live.

ARES
Ah, but you won't merely live. You'll
make the world a better place by
leading it... our way. It's a joy to
have you back.

Ares will move to pour a couple of portions of his fine
wine, as:

XENA
Oh, I'm not back yet. Only if they
find me guilty.

She finds something very sexy and will begin putting it on.

ARES
I wouldn't've bothered killing those
village fools if I didn't know they'd
think you were guilty. Shall we drink
to us?

XENA
(pauses)
I'm a little concerned about something.
If I do have to escape, the whole
village'll be after me and I won't have
my sword. How do I fight my way out of
there?

ARES
My dear, do you honestly think I won't
supply you with whatever's necessary?
(picks up the bottle of
wine)
This particular wine really is
delicious.

XENA
You did all of this to get me back.
I'm flattered.
(with that killer smile)
Well if I'm going to be your warrior
again...

(CONTINUED)

33 CONTINUED: 2

33

ARES

(quickly; would love some
love here)

No, not just my warrior. You'll be
the architect of a new world. My kind
of world. Where force of arms keeps
the peace and one great warrior queen
rules.

*
*
*
*
*

She finishes putting on the garment. She looks like ten
million denars.

XENA

You're a handsome man. But I suppose
you already know that. Anyway, I'd
have to have a new army.

She sits on the bed.

ARES

Whatever you want, whomever you want.
The most legendary fighters in history
if you like.

He sits next to her.

XENA

(wow; that's impressive)
Hector? Achilles? Agamemnon? They're
long gone.

ARES

I am Ares, God of War. For you, I'll
bring back them and anyone else you
desire.

XENA

Anyone? I just want to make sure of
the offer.

ARES

Anyone you name.

She runs her fingers through his hair once.

XENA

As long as I have your word.

ARES

You do. My word, my pledge, whatever
you want.

With studious leisure -- and to Ares' disappointment -- Xena
starts to rise.

(CONTINUED)

33 CONTINUED: 3

33

XENA

It's almost time. See you later, then?

And the ENTIRE SCENE suddenly CHANGES again... This time to:

34 EXT. STREET FRONTING MEETING HALL - DAY

34

The death chariot, with it's prancing horse, awaits. All the Villagers are present (especially prominent are those mourners -- Areolis' Widow, Doracles' Teen Son, Palinios' Mother, etc. -- whom we've seen earlier).

ON GABRIELLE

Fearful, dreading what's to come -- helpless.

ON ARES

He stands far back in the crowd, calmly and pleasantly waiting, as:

XENA AND BENITAR

emerge. Xena is in chains.

BENITAR

(announces to all)

The woman, Xena, having been found guilty of murdering the good and innocent men, Palinios, Doracles, and Areolis, of this village... will now, and publicly, pay the supreme penalty for her crimes.

The Villagers are pleased. Xena looks past most of them to:

ARES - INTERCUT WITH XENA (AS DESIRED)

Catching Ares' eye, she calls to him:

XENA

'Guilty!' You said I could ask for anyone I name. I call on you to send me the following protectors: The good and innocent men, Palinios, Doracles, and Areolis... of this village.

E.C.U. - ARES

Evil he may be, but not above a wry smile at the realization he's been suckered.

(CONTINUED)

34 CONTINUED:

34

ARES
(finally; with wry
admiration)
Marvelously manipulated, my dear.

OVER XENA'S SHOULDER

Though Xena faces the crowd, that crowd is now looking past her -- their facial expressions ranging from disbelieving (but happy) shock, to near-delirious SHOUTS of exuberance, to instantly tearful, nearly hysterical SHRIEKS of joy. They surge forward.

REVERSE

Emerging from the building behind Xena are Palinios, Doracles, and Areolis. All alive and well.

THE TEEN SON

rushes to embrace his father.

PALINIOS' MOTHER

rushes to him.

AREOLIS AND HIS WIDOW

as they embrace.

FULL SHOT

Happy pandemonium.

GABRIELLE AND BENITAR

Getting over her own stunhood, a joyous, almost elfish Gabrielle arrives to tug at the sleeve of the overwhelmed Benitar.

GABRIELLE
Nobody's even dead. Nobody! Can you
still say she's guilty?

BENITAR
(happily)
It's magic... But what wonderful
magic.

FAVORING PALINIOS

as he spots Xena, and, with his mother still hanging on, moves to the warrior princess, with:

(CONTINUED)

34 CONTINUED: 2

34

PALINIOS

(shouts to all)

Everybody! Hear me, my friends! This brave and noble woman! She was the last thing I saw. Battling a cowardly Hooded Man who attacked us. She fought him for our lives, though we were total strangers. Truly, I say she is the very soul of goodness. And we thank her with all our hearts!

FOLLOWING XENA

Even as THREE CHEERS go up for her from the Villagers, she's making her way slowly through the mob toward Ares. As she's doing so:

GABRIELLE

(slight tug on Benitar's sleeve)

Excuse me again, Sir...

BENITAR

(likes her)

Not guilty; charges dismissed.

XENA AND ARES

As she reaches him. He is not only still gracious in his defeat, but grudgingly bows in admiration as well.

ARES

Well played, my dear. Your choice is totally wrong, of course, but... even as an adversary, you remain one of a kind.

XENA

I know my choice is the right one for me. *

ARES

In that case...

Ares gently takes her hand and suavely kisses it.

ARES

Until next time.

Ares turns -- walks off.

ON XENA

as she watches him go. Feeling pretty good. MOVE IN and HOLD ON HER FACE, until we:

GO TO:

(CONTINUED)

34 CONTINUED: 3

34

34A EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

34A

Xena and Gabrielle walk along, Argo following behind. Xena throws Gabrielle a thoughtful look.

XENA

You coming back for me meant a lot after what I did to you.

GABRIELLE

I trust you. So I never thought for a moment that you meant to hurt me.

XENA

Well, thanks. I owe you.

GABRIELLE

I owe you something, too.

Gabrielle suddenly spins and slugs Xena on the arm. She grabs her fist and groans in pain. Xena glances down at her arm like someone examining a flea bite.

XENA

What was that?

GABRIELLE

(still in pain)
Payback for hitting me.

XENA

Feel better?

GABRIELLE

I feel like I broke my hand, but yeah, I feel better.

XENA

Good. So do I.

FADE OUT.

THE END