

XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"Death in Chains"

a.k.a.

"Death is M.I.A."

(Writing Credits TBA)

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Revised pages: Cast list, 1, 2, 16, 21-23, 36, 37, 39-43
(for a name change only - Queen Merope is now Queen Karis)

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SHOOTING DRAFT
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XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"Death in Chains"

CAST LIST

XENA
GABRIELLE

QUEEN KARIS
KING SISYPHUS
CELESTA
TOXEUS
HADES
STREPTUS
TALUS
SEERUS
CHARON
GUARD
SECOND WOUNDED MAN
OLD WOMAN
THUG

*

XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

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SET LIST

INTERIORS:

CASTLE CHAMBER
CASTLE ENTRY
CASTLE DUNGEON
DUNGEON HALLWAY
DUNGEON CHAMBER
DUNGEON LABYRINTH
GRAND HALLWAY
NARROW HALL
NARROW HALL/SISYPHUS' TRAP
HOSPITAL
SHAFT
PIT

EXTERIORS:

CASTLE GATES
CASTLE WALL
SISYPHUS' BALCONY
ROAD
FORK IN THE ROAD
NEARBY POND
FOREST
ROAD TO CASTLE/WOODS
ROAD TO CASTLE/RAVINE
ROAD TO CASTLE/HILLSIDE
RIVER STYX - THE UNDERWORLD

#76903

XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"Death in Chains"

CHRONOLOGY

DAY 1

SCENES #1 - 41

XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

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TEASER

FADE IN:

1 INT. CASTLE CHAMBER - DAY

QUEEN KARIS, elegant, but consumed by worry, turns to her husband, KING SISYPHUS, a distinguished man in his 40's.

KARIS
Only a fool would challenge the gods
this way, Sisyphus.

SISYPHUS
Don't worry, Karis. I've taken care
of everything.

Off Karis' doubtful expression:

CUT TO:

2 EXT. CASTLE GATES - DAY

ON CELESTA

A beautiful young woman with alabaster skin and long, flowing hair GLIDES by a GUARD. She wears a diaphanous, white gown and carries a single, burning CANDLE.

GUARD
(blocking her path)
Sorry, sweetheart. The King don't want
any visitors. But stick around, I'll
show you a good time.

The Guard BLOWS OUT Celesta's candle, then laughs. A few of his cohorts chuckle as well, but fall silent when the candle mysteriously RELIGHTS ITSELF. Celesta starts to glide around the Guard, ignoring his warning. He reaches out to stop her, TOUCHING HER ARM. He collapses instantly. Celesta regards the fallen Guard, then glides on, leaving the other guards to tend to their lifeless friend.

CUT TO:

3 INT. CASTLE ENTRY - DAY

Celesta glides through the entry hall as GUARDS retreat in fear.

CUT TO:

4 INT. CASTLE CHAMBER - DAY

4

Sisyphus supervises SERVANTS who lay a delectable feast on a table. They exit as a distressed Karis regards Sisyphus.

*

KARIS

*

How can you think of eating at a time like this?!

(then, hopeful)

It's a trap, isn't it?

SISYPHUS

Patience, Karis. You'll spoil the surprise.

*

Suddenly, there is a KNOCK at the door. Karis' eyes widen as Sisyphus crosses to open it.

*

SISYPHUS

Come in. We've been expecting you.

Celesta glides in.

SISYPHUS

I guess you know who I am.

(gesturing)

And this is my wife...

CELESTA

Karis. Hello.

*

Karis forces an uncomfortable smile.

*

KARIS

You know my name?

*

CELESTA

I know everyone's name, though few know mine. It's Celesta.

(turning to Sisyphus)

Are you ready to begin your journey, Sisyphus?

SISYPHUS

Yes, but first, there's so much I want to know about you.

CELESTA

You're not afraid of me?

SISYPHUS

On the contrary, I'm fascinated.

(a beat, then)

And how about you, Celesta? Aren't you the least bit curious about my world?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

4 CONTINUED:

4

SISYPHUS (cont'd)
(gesturing to the table)
Sit. Enjoy a sumptuous feast of
earthly delights.

Sisyphus holds a chair out for her at the table.

CELESTA
(sitting)
All right, Sisyphus. But this doesn't
change things. As soon as we're
finished, we'll go. *

SISYPHUS
Splendid. After all, a visit from you
happens only once a lifetime.
(then, lifting his glass)
A toast. To long life...
(off Celesta's look)
...and a peaceful death.

Celesta smiles, then sets her candle on the table to lift
her glass of wine. Sisyphus WATCHES the CANDLE intently.

CLOSE ON - CELESTA'S HANDS

As she reaches for her glass, a pair of SHACKLES suddenly
slams around her wrists.

WIDEN TO - CELESTA

Shocked by this turn of events, she reaches for her
candle -- but it's gone.

CELESTA
My flame!

Celesta searches, then spots her candle near Sisyphus at the
far end of the table.

CELESTA
What's the meaning of this?! I wasn't
told you were a sorcerer!

SISYPHUS
No sorcery, my dear. Just a trick
devised with wires and boards. A
simple illusion I created to deceive
you.

CELESTA
Do you realize what this means?

(CONTINUED)

4 CONTINUED: 2

4

SISYPHUS
Of course. And I wouldn't have it any
other way.

Sisyphus smiles, SEEING Celesta's CANDLE start to burn down.

CUT TO:

5 EXT. ROAD - DAY

5

GABRIELLE and XENA pass a TREE where PLAYFUL LOVERS pick
APPLES for each other, laughing and kissing all the while.
Gabrielle regards them, then turns to Xena.

GABRIELLE
Looks like they're having fun.

Xena turns, barely noticing them.

GABRIELLE
Not that I envy them or anything.
(then)
I mean, what does she have that I don't
have...? Okay, love. But what about
the important things in life: travel,
adventure, meeting interesting people?
(then)
And as for the apple picking, I can
just help myself.

Gabrielle crosses to a nearby tree and reaches up to pick an
APPLE. Suddenly, an ARROW flies in and pierces it.

Gabrielle turns to SEE -- TOXEUS, a brutal man with an ugly
face and personality to match. He's accompanied by his GANG
OF THUGS, one of whom sent the arrow. They confront Xena.

TOXEUS
Well, well. If it isn't the legendary
Xena.

GABRIELLE
(off Toxeus; re: apple)
Somehow I've lost my appetite.

XENA
Do I know you?

TOXEUS
I'm Toxeus. I saw you fight in Nespa a
while back. My army could use a
warrior like you. How about it?

*
*

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED:

5

XENA

Join a band of worthless, lowlife
scum? I think I'll pass.

*
*

TOXEUS

Pity. I have a strict recruiting
policy. Join...

*
*

(drawing his sword)

...or die.

Toxeus attacks. Xena steps in front of Gabrielle and draws her sword just in time to block his assault. They exchange blows, until Xena disarms Toxeus and throws him to the ground. Clearly the victor, Xena turns, ready to leave.

XENA

C'mon, Gabrielle.

With their backs turned, Toxeus takes a hidden KNIFE from his boot and makes a final lunge at Xena. Instinctively, she spins as the evil thug tries to stab her. She blocks his blow, then twists his arm, driving the dagger back into his own chest. He stands there, a dagger through his heart, then falls at Xena's feet. The Thugs scatter.

XENA

Let's go.

*

Xena starts off. Gabrielle hesitates, looking at Toxeus' lifeless body. Then, feeling creepy, she shudders and quickly follows.

Stay on Toxeus, as Xena and Gabrielle walk off. His lifeless body stirs. His eyes pop open. Then, he slowly sits up, examining the dagger protruding from the lethal hole in his heart. He's alive! He yanks the dagger out and a twisted smile lights his face. As he looks menacingly in Xena's direction, we:

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

6 EXT. ROAD - DAY

6

Xena and Gabrielle crest a small hill.

GABRIELLE
I don't get it. Toxeus knew your
reputation. Why did he want to fight
you?

*
*
*

XENA
Because he knew my reputation.

GABRIELLE
Oh, you mean he wanted to be known as
the man who killed Xena. Not a real
smart goal.

*
*
*

Suddenly, there is the SOUND of RUMBLING as the earth starts
to shake. The road before them splits, belching black smoke
and blinding dust. The noise is deafening.

GABRIELLE
(alarmed)
What is it?

XENA
I don't know. Take cover. I'll deal
with it.

(off her hesitation)
GO!!

Gabrielle reluctantly heads into the nearby BUSHES. Xena
watches her go, then turns back to face the gaping chasm. A
TERRIFYING ROAR sounds from the cavernous hole, then out of
the intense heat and dust, appears a CHARIOT led by a team
of BLACK HORSES.

Xena draws her sword, when she SEES:

HADES

A large, helmeted man with dark clothes and piercing eyes
strides towards her. He takes off his helmet, revealing
dark hair and a rugged face that has spent most of eternity
in the Underworld.

HADES
Always ready for a fight. That's why I
like you, Xena.

(CONTINUED)

6 CONTINUED:

6

XENA
(realizing)
You're Hades.

HADES
God of the Underworld at your service.

Xena approaches him, ready for battle.

XENA
(wary)
What do you want?

Hades responds with a smile.

HADES
Relax. I'm a big fan. Though for a
while, you were working us pretty hard
down there.

ANOTHER ANGLE - THE BUSHES

Gabrielle peeks out from behind the brush. Her eyes widen.

RESUME SCENE

Xena still holds her sword.

HADES
I need your help. My sister has been
captured by King Sisyphus.

Xena reacts to the mention of that name.

HADES
He holds her at his castle. I want you
to rescue her.

XENA
Why me?

HADES
You know him. You've seen the deadly
tricks he's capable of.
(then)
But you have to act quickly. Time is
short and the price of failure is high.

*
*

XENA
What are you talking about?

HADES
In a few hours, Celesta's eternal flame
will burn out.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

6 CONTINUED: 2

6

HADES (cont'd)

If you don't release her before that happens, eternal suffering will be the fate of all mankind.

(then; confirming)

You know who my sister is, don't you?

XENA

(slowly nodding)

Death.

Off Xena's troubled look:

DISSOLVE TO:

7 EXT. ROAD - DAY

7

Xena walks with a stunned Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE

I can't believe it. Eternal life. We're gonna live forever!

XENA

Not so fast. Nobody's living forever.

GABRIELLE

So, you're gonna help Hades?

XENA

He's not evil, Gabrielle, just misunderstood. And what he wants is for the good of mankind.

GABRIELLE

I don't trust him. He has beady eyes. And since when do the gods ask you for favors?

XENA

When the favor is to defeat King Sisyphus.

GABRIELLE

Sisyphus. Right. I've heard he's the shrewdest man alive. He has this amazing castle, very creepy. Sisyphus and his allies wiped the floor with the one army stupid enough to invade.

*
*
*
*

XENA

(interrupting)

We fought them to a draw.

(CONTINUED)

7 CONTINUED:

7

GABRIELLE
(realizing)
That was you?!
(then, with a smile)
Did I say stupid? I meant courageous.

Xena shakes her head.

DISSOLVE TO:

8 EXT. ROAD - DAY

8

Later, Xena, on horseback, rides ahead of Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE
(calling to Xena)
I've been thinking. If Sisyphus gets
his way and nobody ever dies, people
will really have to watch how they
word things. For instance if you tell
somebody you'll love him forever, it
means forever.

*
*
*
*
*

Meanwhile, Xena spots something by the roadside. Concerned, she dismounts, grabs her medicine bag and rushes off.

Xena?
GABRIELLE

FOLLOW XENA

to a ragtag group of SICK AND INJURED by the roadside. A few of them lie sprawled on the ground, their wounds exposed. Xena rushes to a WOUNDED MAN who GROANS in obvious pain.

XENA
Let me take a look.

She kneels down to examine his leg, then takes out a bag of POWDERED MEDICINE and offers it to him.

XENA
Take this. It's for the pain.

She supports his head as she offers a goatskin flask of water. Gabrielle joins her.

GABRIELLE
Is his leg broken?

(CONTINUED)

8 CONTINUED:

8

XENA
Among other things.
(giving her a bandage)
Here. Help the others.

Gabrielle rushes off as Xena fashions a splint. STREPTUS,
an older man, weary and gaunt, approaches Xena.

STREPTUS
Save your medicine. There's nothing
you can do for him.

XENA
What happened here?

STREPTUS
Rockslide in Cadmus. The others are
old or sick. We're headed to the
hospital in Corinth.

XENA
I'd like to help.

STREPTUS
Suit yourself, but you're wasting your
time with that one. Only death will
bring him relief.

CLOSE ON XENA

Her face grows somber. Relief won't be coming anytime soon.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Gabrielle kneels alongside a SECOND WOUNDED MAN who,
slightly crazed, struggles against her attempts to bandage
him.

GABRIELLE
Hold still. I'm trying to help you.

SECOND WOUNDED MAN
Get away from me.

TALUS (O.S.)
Let me give you a hand.

TALUS, handsome, mid-20's, ENTERS FRAME and kneels next to
the Second Wounded Man, opposite Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE
(noticing Talus)
Thanks. We need to stop the bleeding.

(CONTINUED)

8 CONTINUED: 2

8

TALUS
(to Second Wounded Man)
Easy now. You'll be okay.

During the following, Gabrielle and Talus work together, Gabrielle taking the lead and Talus anticipating her every move. They fashion a rudimentary tourniquet as Talus puts the Second Wounded Man at ease.

TALUS
(to Second Wounded Man)
Where are you from?

SECOND WOUNDED MAN
(through pain)
Carthage.

TALUS
Carthage? Well, we have your great city to thank for the weather.

The Second Wounded Man and Gabrielle look at him quizzically.

TALUS
Once, a young man, Lapithus, met beautiful Io in Carthage and they fell madly in love. The gods were jealous of their great love and condemned them to separate destinies: Lapithus to live only in summer, and Io, only in winter. Luckily, Aphrodite took pity on the lovers and thought of a way to reunite them.

*
*

SECOND WOUNDED MAN
(riveted)
How?

GABRIELLE
(also riveted)
And what's it got to do with the weather?

TALUS
Well, Aphrodite turned Lapithus into snow and Io into rain. So, when it's winter and snow falls, it's actually Lapithus blanketing his love, Io. And in the spring? The gentle rain is Io caressing Lapithus.

*
*

The Second Wounded Man and Gabrielle smile.

(CONTINUED)

8 CONTINUED: 3

8

TALUS
(to Second Wounded Man)
We're done. You should be fine.

SECOND WOUNDED MAN
Thanks.

Talus starts off. Gabrielle, taken with him, follows.

GABRIELLE
Where did you learn that?

TALUS
Books. I read a lot about medicine.

GABRIELLE
I meant the great bedside manner.

TALUS
Oh. I guess a good story always helps
me through hard times.

Gabrielle's eyes light up. Is this guy perfect or what?

TALUS
I'm Talus.

GABRIELLE
Gabrielle. Where are you headed?

TALUS
I was on my way to Corinth when I met
these people. I've never seen so much
suffering.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Xena finishes with an injured Man, then heads to yet another
one. She reaches for her water flask, but it's empty.

XENA
(calling)
Gabrielle! We need more water.

RESUME GABRIELLE AND TALUS

TALUS
(to Gabrielle)
There's a pond not far from here.

GABRIELLE
Let's go. I've got a story for you,
too.

They both grab buckets and hurry off.

CUT TO:

9 EXT. NEARBY POND - DAY

9

Moments later. Gabrielle and Talus arrive at the pond.

GABRIELLE

...so, until we release her, no one on earth can die.

TALUS

(pensive)

That explains it...

(then)

You know, a while ago I would've been glad to hear that Death had been taken, but now...

GABRIELLE

I know. After seeing all of this suffering, I understand why she's so important.

Talus nods sadly, then:

TALUS

Not everyone would risk so much for the sake of mankind. You're very brave, Gabrielle. *

GABRIELLE

Well, I have a lot of help...

TALUS

When I was a boy, my mother worked for King Sisyphus. I practically grew up in the castle. I could show you the way. *

GABRIELLE

That sounds great.

Talus picks a flower and hands it to Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE

What's this?

TALUS

Jasmine blossom. It's a rare beauty. Like you.

They look into each others' eyes, an obvious attraction growing here.

GABRIELLE

(a little embarrassed)

So, how do you know so much about flowers, anyway? Wait, I know...

(CONTINUED)

9 CONTINUED:

9

GABRIELLE
Books.

TALUS
Books.

They exchange smiles, then Gabrielle tucks the flower behind her ear and looks at her reflection in the water.

ANGLE ON THE WATER - GABRIELLE'S REFLECTION

Suddenly, out from her reflection springs - TOXEUS! He lunges at Gabrielle, grabbing her arm. His face is deathly white, his shirt tinged with red. Water seeps out of him from everywhere. Gabrielle screams. Talus rushes over, but one swipe from Toxeus sends him flying.

TOXEUS
(to Gabrielle)
Where is she?

Gabrielle tries to wrest herself free, screaming all the while. Just then, Xena arrives.

XENA
Some guys never give up.

Toxeus releases Gabrielle and turns to Xena.

XENA
(giving him the once over;
sarcastic)
You look good.

TOXEUS
Like I said, Xena, I don't take "no"
for an answer.

Toxeus moves in on Xena. She draws her sword. He jumps at her. She counters with a kick to the stomach and a smash to his face with the blunt end of her sword. Nothing! He lunges again. Xena jumps off a nearby tree stump, flipping over his head and landing behind him. She readies her sword but Toxeus, not fearing death, runs right into it!

TOXEUS
(with sword in his chest)
I could get used to this.

Xena backs off, looking for a way to stop her unstoppable foe.

TOXEUS
Give it up, Xena. You can't kill me.
I'm a god.

(CONTINUED)

9 CONTINUED: 2

9

XENA
You're no god, Toxeus. Death's capture
has kept you alive but when I release
her, you will die. *

TOXEUS
That's not going to happen.

He charges. Xena struggles to fend off his blows. Finally,
he lands one, knocking Xena off her feet.

TOXEUS
(lecherous)
Just where I want you.

As he approaches, Xena spots a low tree branch. She tosses
her chakram, causing the branch to break and fall on Toxeus,
pinning him under its considerable weight.

XENA
I'm not that easy.

Xena, Gabrielle and Talus take off, leaving Toxeus pinned
under the branch, at least for the moment.

CUT TO:

10 INT. CASTLE CHAMBER - DAY

10

ON RESTRAINTS

Metal. Very sophisticated, with THREE locks.

WIDEN TO

Celesta, imprisoned by the restraints and a series of heavy
chains. She strains for her CANDLE, just out of reach.

SISYPHUS (O.S.)
I know I can't blow out your candle,
Celesta...

Celesta turns to SEE Sisyphus, watching her.

SISYPHUS
...but I've noticed when you're not
holding it, it burns down very nicely.

CELESTA
If it goes out, I'll cease to exist. *

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED:

10

SISYPHUS

Well, that's the point.

(off Celesta's suffering
look)

You should have thought of that before
you came to my castle.

CELESTA

I had no choice. You angered Zeus.

SISYPHUS

I can't concern myself with Zeus' petty
jealousy. My kingdom needed water, so
I made a deal.

(then)

It isn't my time and you know it.

CELESTA

That's a decision for the gods.

SISYPHUS

Not any more.

Sisyphus turns to SEE the troubled Karis standing nearby. *

KARIS *

It isn't like you to be so cruel,
Sisyphus. What happened to the
compassionate man I married?

SISYPHUS

My compassion has brought Death to my
door.

(then, feeling guilt)

If I release her, it's over. What else
would you have me do?

Karis looks into his eyes and contemplates her loss, then: *

KARIS *

I want you with me, my love.

SISYPHUS

And I will be. In a few hours, her
candle will burn down and extinguish.
And so will Celesta.

(then)

But you and I will have all eternity
together.

CLOSE ON CELESTA'S CANDLE

Burning. It's halfway gone.

CUT TO:

11 EXT. FOREST - DAY

11

Toxeus' band of Thugs are gathered. One of them, SEERUS, rallies the others.

SEERUS
Men, follow me to the next village.
From there we will...

Their eyes widen in fear at the sight of something behind him. Seerus turns to SEE Toxeus in his "undead" glory.

TOXEUS
You're the new leader, huh, Seerus?

SEERUS
Toxeus?! You're alive!

TOXEUS
Very observant.

Toxeus reveals his gaping CHEST WOUND to the amazed Thugs.

TOXEUS
There is no death anymore.

SEERUS
But how?

TOXEUS
That's not important. What I need is
an army to stop Xena before she ruins
it for all of us. Who is with me?!

The Thugs hesitate.

SEERUS
But Toxeus, Xena is powerful. I mean,
look what she did to you.

Other Thugs nod in assent.

TOXEUS
Cowards. Maybe this will change your
minds.

Toxeus grabs a sword and runs it through a NEARBY THUG. He cries out, but remains standing despite the lethal wound. He smiles cautiously, realizing he's alive. Others react in shock and confusion, as Toxeus stabs each of them.

Seerus starts to run, and as he heads into the woods, Toxeus throws a KNIFE, hitting him between the shoulder blades, and stopping him in his tracks. Seerus reaches back, then realizes he has a lethal wound.

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED:

11

SEERUS
(turning to Toxeus)
So, what did you have in mind?

TOXEUS
(to Seerus)
I knew you'd come around.
(to the others)
Saddle up! We'll follow Xena to
Corinth and capture Death for our own
safekeeping.

SEERUS
What if she tries to stop us?

TOXEUS
How can she? We're immortal. But if
she tries...
(with sword in hand)
We'll make her one of us.

Toxeus' twisted grin widens. Off his demented laughter, we:

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

12 EXT. FORK IN THE ROAD - DAY

12

Xena, Gabrielle and Talus arrive at a fork in the road. Gabrielle takes Xena aside.

GABRIELLE

So, what do you think of Talus?

XENA

(preoccupied)

He's nice.

GABRIELLE

Nice?! You're kidding right? Did you hear that story he told? It was warm and sensitive and it really cheered up that poor old man. I mean, he's smart, charming, funny...

*
*
*
*

XENA

(smiling)

Okay, more than nice. I'm glad you'll have someone to keep you company.

GABRIELLE

Why? Where are you going?

XENA

(including Talus)

You two head for the hospital. Tell them about the injured people on the roadway. I'm going the rest of the way by myself.

GABRIELLE

But, what if...?

XENA

The hospital should be full of people looking for relief, Gabrielle. See if you can help.

(mounting her horse)

I'll be back before nightfall. Oh, and stay out of trouble.

With that, Xena rides off. As Gabrielle watches her go, Talus joins her.

TALUS

She'll be all right.

(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED:

12

GABRIELLE

I hope so.

CUT TO:

13 EXT. FORK IN THE ROAD - NOT FAR BEHIND - DAY

13

Toxeus and his Army of Death watch Xena, Gabrielle and Talus from the cover of trees. They SEE Xena ride off, and Gabrielle and Talus take the other path.

SEERUS

They're splitting up.

TOXEUS

Then we'll do the same. One of them will lead us to where Death is held prisoner. Follow them closely and report back to me.

(then)

Remember, your deaths depend on it.

CUT TO:

14 EXT. ROAD TO CASTLE/WOODS - DAY

14

Xena rides her horse towards Sisyphus' castle. Not far behind, a few members of Toxeus' Army of Death, including Seerus, keep pace on their own horses.

Xena stops, sensing something. She turns and notices her pursuers trying to conceal themselves in the woods. She starts off again, spurring her horse with urgency.

CUT TO:

15 EXT. ROAD TO CASTLE/RAVINE - DAY

15

Moments later, Xena breaks out of the woods, riding furiously. As she spurs her horse on, we WIDEN to REVEAL a giant CHASM right in front of her.

TRACK XENA as she convinces her horse to do the impossible -- they leap into the void, and come thundering down on the other side.

ANOTHER ANGLE

TWO of Toxeus' thugs, led by Seerus, ride in pursuit of Xena. They see the same ravine and charge forward, only to be undone when their horses stop short, sending the men hurdling into the ravine.

CUT TO:

16 EXT. ROAD TO CASTLE/HILLSIDE - DAY 16

Xena watches the Thugs from her mount. She smiles, then turns towards her destination. In the distance looms Sisyphus' castle. It's an ancient fortress; dark and mysterious, built into the side of a cliff.

CUT TO:

17 EXT. SISYPHUS' BALCONY - DAY 17

Karis joins Sisyphus as he looks out at his kingdom. *

SISYPHUS
Look at our subjects. They're dancing
in the street.

KARIS
They're celebrating eternal life. And
it's all because of you, Sisyphus. *

Sisyphus smiles at Karis, reassured. *

SISYPHUS
I'll check on our guest.

Sisyphus exits. Just then, a WOUNDED BIRD lands near Karis on the balcony. It hobbles, in obvious pain. She touches it in sympathy. Then, her face drops. She knows this bird will live in eternal pain. *

CUT TO:

18 EXT. CASTLE WALL/SISYPHUS' BALCONY - DAY 18

Xena arrives at the stone castle. It looks impenetrable. She surveys for a beat, then makes a running leap, grabbing onto a FLAGPOLE, eight feet up, which juts out from the sheer wall.

Using the momentum from her jump, she swings from the flagpole like a gymnast on parallel bars, and flies up another few feet, grabbing onto the nose of a HUGE GARGOYLE. Xena climbs up the gargoyle, spotting SISYPHUS' BALCONY some distance away. Without hesitation, she jumps, doing a flip and landing neatly onto the balcony's railing. She jumps onto the balcony and heads inside.

CUT TO:

19 INT. CASTLE ENTRY - DAY 19

Xena makes her way through a dimly lit hall where she is met by A BEHEMOTH GUARD. He draws his sword. Xena draws hers.

(CONTINUED)

19 CONTINUED:

19

As they move closer, Xena senses that something is wrong.

Suddenly, the Guard raises his sword to strike, but instead of fending him off, Xena puts her sword back behind her head, blocking the blow of the REAL GUARD, not his reflection!

Xena quickly spins and kicks the Guard in the gut. As he doubles over, she knees him in the face, flooring him. She crosses over to the trick mirror and knocks on the surface.

XENA
(to herself)
Not bad.

The Guard moans behind her. Xena crosses to him.

XENA
So, what other surprises does Sisyphus
have in store for me?

He looks at her, fear in his eyes.

ON SISYPHUS

behind the two-sided mirror. He's secretly watching Xena. A sly smile lights his face.

CUT TO:

20 INT. CASTLE CHAMBER - DAY

20

CLOSE ON CELESTA'S CANDLE

Three-quarters burned.

WIDEN TO CELESTA

still in chains, growing weaker by the minute. Karis stands nearby. *

CELESTA
Please. Help me.

KARIS
He's my husband. If I release you,
he'll die. *

CELESTA
If you don't, the world's misery will
be on your conscience, Karis. *

Karis considers her words. Just then, Sisyphus enters quickly. Karis crosses to him, concerned. *

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED:

20

KARIS
Something wrong?

*

SISYPHUS
Xena has come to rescue Death.

KARIS
Xena?! Why?

*

SISYPHUS
She's a warrior. Without Death, Xena
has no way to defeat her opponents.

KARIS
Then we've got a big problem.

*

SISYPHUS
Nonsense. Xena just makes things more
interesting.

CUT TO:

21 INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

21

Gabrielle and Talus enter a ward teeming with suffering
people -- some old, some injured. As they look around,
they see a bedridden OLD WOMAN, pale and weak.

OLD WOMAN
(faint cry)
Water. Please. Someone...

TALUS
(to Gabrielle)
See what you can do for her. I'll
fetch water.

Gabrielle rushes to the OLD WOMAN'S side. STAY ON TALUS as
he searches for water. He SEES a pitcher and crosses to it.
Suddenly he clutches his chest and doubles over slightly.
It takes a moment for him to recover. He looks around to
see if anyone has seen his discomfort. He spots something.

CLOSE ON - AN APOTHECARY'S GRINDER

An unseen person mixes powdered medicine.

RESUME GABRIELLE

seated at the Old Woman's bedside, wiping her brow. She's
as near to death as anyone could be this day.

(CONTINUED)

21 CONTINUED:

21

OLD WOMAN

Don't be afraid when I tell you this...
I died this morning. But, as I was
crossing to the Other Side, something
strange happened and I wound up back
here.

(in desperation)

Where is Death?

*
*
*

GABRIELLE

King Sisyphus has kidnapped her.
But don't worry, my friend Xena will
make everything right.

*
*
*

OLD WOMAN

Oh? Is your friend a god?

GABRIELLE

No, but she's met Sisyphus before. She
can take care of herself.

OLD WOMAN

And what of Death? How will she handle
her?

GABRIELLE

What do you mean?

OLD WOMAN

Ah, of course you wouldn't know. It's
one of the gods' little mysteries.
Come closer.

Gabrielle leans in.

OLD WOMAN

(whispering)

If your friend touches Death, or allows
Death to touch her, she will die.

A look of gloom flashes over Gabrielle's face. Talus joins
them and gives the Old Woman water. Gabrielle turns to him.

GABRIELLE

I have to go to Sisyphus' castle.
Xena's in trouble.

Gabrielle starts off, but Talus stops her.

TALUS

But it's dangerous. Sisyphus has
guards posted at every gate.

(CONTINUED)

21 CONTINUED: 2

21

GABRIELLE

You know the castle. Tell me how I can get in.

TALUS

(hesitating, then)

I'll do better than that. I'll show you.

GABRIELLE

Talus, this is very dangerous. We may come in contact with Death herself.

TALUS

I assure you, Gabrielle. I'm not afraid of her.

Gabrielle gives Talus a look and then they exchange smiles. Gabrielle nods and they take off together.

CUT TO:

22 EXT. RIVER STYX - THE UNDERWORLD

22

A heavy mist. Hades stands on the shores of the river with CHARON, the boatman. There's no one else in sight.

CHARON

No one! And winter is our busy season.
(then)

By the way, who did you send to rescue her? Hermes? No, Ares, right?

HADES

Xena.

CHARON

A mortal? Are you crazy?
(off Hades' glare)
I mean, a mortal. How interesting.

HADES

If the other gods discover that my sister was stolen, I'll be laughed off of Mount Olympus. I sent Xena so no one will be the wiser.

CHARON

But what if she fails?

HADES

Then it will be just you and me for all eternity.

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED:

22

Charon smiles nervously, turning away from Hades.

CHARON
(quietly cheering)
Come on, Xena.

CUT TO:

23 INT. CASTLE DUNGEON - DAY

23

Xena enters a dimly-lit chamber adorned with statues, icons and weaponry. The SOUND of EERIE MUSIC fills the room. Xena turns, looking for its source. In the middle of the room sits a large CRATE, opened to show it is empty. Xena draws her sword and approaches cautiously. She pokes her sword inside, nothing there.

As she turns, a FLASH lights the crate and SISYPHUS APPEARS out of thin air.

SISYPHUS
Welcome back, Xena.

Xena looks him, thoroughly unimpressed.

XENA
Always a grand entrance.
(then)
We need to talk.

Sisyphus approaches Xena. He wears a long CAPE.

SISYPHUS
What shall we talk about? Care to
relive old battles?

XENA
Let's talk about Death.

SISYPHUS
Must we? So depressing.

XENA
Don't you realize the pain you've
caused?

SISYPHUS
Nonsense. My subjects are overjoyed.
Their king has given them eternal life.

XENA
You're blinded by your selfish desire
to live, Sisyphus.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

23 CONTINUED:

23

XENA (cont'd)
(drawing her sword)
Now, tell me where she is, or I'll make
your eternity a living hell.

SISYPHUS
Still favoring brawn over brains, Xena?
(then)

Think about it. You must have loved
ones... somewhere. You'll never have
to leave them, or watch them leave you.
You'll have eternal bliss.

(then)
Perhaps you should take some time.
Mull it over a while.

XENA
Sorry, Sisyphus. Time is one thing I
don't have.

SISYPHUS
On the contrary. Time is the only
thing you have.

Just then, Sisyphus swings his cape off his back and covers
himself with it. Then, in an instant, the cape drops to the
floor. He has VANISHED!

Xena looks around, then suddenly the floor beneath her OPENS
UP. She plummets into darkness!

CUT TO:

24 INT. SHAFT - DAY

24

Xena falls until she reaches out and catches something. She
looks up to discover that she's clinging to the leg of a
SKELETON chained to the wall. Off this grisly sight, we:

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

25 INT. PIT - DAY

25

Xena hangs precariously from the skeleton leg. She looks down into the deep recesses of the pit. The leg bone CREAKS, then BREAKS, and she plummets downward. She lands hard on the dank, dark floor.

CUT TO:

26 EXT. CASTLE WALL - DAY

26

Gabrielle and Talus arrive at a secluded wall of Sisyphus' ancient castle. They search for an entrance.

TALUS

I found an escape tunnel back when my mother worked in the castle. Nobody knew about it except for us children.

(then)

It's around here somewhere.

GABRIELLE

Wait. What's this?

She taps a stone at the foot of the wall. It slides out, making a small tunnel entrance.

TALUS

That's it!

GABRIELLE

Let's go.

They crawl in. As they disappear, TWO of TOXEUS' THUGS step out of the woods. They nod to a THIRD, who hurries off. The other two head into the tunnel.

CUT TO:

27 INT. CASTLE DUNGEON HALLWAY - DAY

27

A STONE IN THE SIDE OF THE WALL pushes out, followed by Talus, then Gabrielle. They look around the creepy hallway, dark and foreboding. Gabrielle brushes away cobwebs.

GABRIELLE

Not much of a housekeeper, is he?

As they start down the hall, Gabrielle turns to Talus.

(CONTINUED)

27 CONTINUED:

27

GABRIELLE

This place could be dangerous, Talus.
You should go back.

TALUS

And leave you alone?

GABRIELLE

There's no reason for both of us to
risk our lives. Xena is my friend.
It's got nothing to do with you.

TALUS

I'm not leaving you, Gabrielle. I've
never met a girl who knew every
Sophocles poem by heart...

(taking her hand)

...and I'm not gonna let anything
happen to her.

GABRIELLE

(flustered)

Thanks. I'd rather not be alone in a
place like this.

Suddenly, the SOUND of FOOTSTEPS ECHOES behind them.

TALUS

No need to worry about that.

Gabrielle and Talus hurry down the hallway, rounding a
corner only to find Toxeus' Thugs, swords drawn. The Thugs
advance, backing them down the hallway.

GABRIELLE

(talking out of it)

You know, there's a high rate of
infection in wounds left untreated.

TALUS

(off her cue)

Right. Maybe we should find you a
doctor. You can't be too careful.

The Thugs close in.

GABRIELLE

Then again, we could just...

(to Talus)

RUN!

Gabrielle and Talus take off. The Thugs chase after them.

ANOTHER ANGLE

(CONTINUED)

27 CONTINUED: 2

27

At the end of the hall, they come upon a stairway. Gabrielle runs up first with Talus close behind.

CLOSE ON - GABRIELLE'S FOOT

as it touches the top step; it sinks slightly. The stairs collapse, trapping Gabrielle's skirt as they flatten.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Her skirt caught, Gabrielle watches helplessly as Talus loses his footing and slides down the ramp created by the flattened stairs. When he reaches the bottom, a trap door opens and he falls in.

GABRIELLE

Talus!

Just as quickly, the trap door closes and the stairs reappear. Gabrielle considers going after him, but the Thugs arrive, chasing her back up the stairs.

CUT TO:

28 INT. PIT - DAY

28

Xena searches the damp walls of the pit for a way out. Then, she HEARS a ROARING sound. She turns, SWORD in hand, and in flies Talus! Xena spins, ready to strike --

TALUS

Wait! It's me!

XENA

Talus?! What are you doing here?

TALUS

Gabrielle wanted to tell you not to touch Death...

XENA

Of course not. Where is she? I told her to stay out of trouble.

*
*

TALUS

But she was concerned about you. I don't know where she is now. We ran... and there were these tall ugly guys who looked like they were dead... then I fell in here...

*
*
*
*
*

Xena starts looking for a way out.

(CONTINUED)

28 CONTINUED:

28

XENA

They were Toxeus' men. We've got to get out of here.

TALUS

It's all my fault. I never should have let her come.

XENA

When Gabrielle sets her mind on something, nothing can change it. You'll learn that soon enough.

TALUS

We've got to find her.
(looking around)
I've never seen this part of the castle before. We must be in one of the King's traps.
(discouraged)
We'll never get out.

XENA

Wait. Listen.

A silent beat as we HEAR the sound of WATER dripping through the pit.

TALUS

It's water.

Xena finds a damp wall and moves to a corner.

XENA

It must drain somewhere...

She kicks away debris and uncovers a STEEL GRATE.

XENA

Found it!

She pulls off the grate and uncovers the ventilation hole. *

XENA

Let's go.

Xena jumps down. Talus is right behind her.

CUT TO:

29 INT. DUNGEON HALLWAY

29

Gabrielle arrives back at the tunnel entrance where she and Talus started.

(CONTINUED)

29 CONTINUED:

29

Just then, she hears a NOISE -- someone's coming out. Gabrielle looks around for a place to hide and SPOTS a large SHIELD leaning next to the wall.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Out from the tunnel entrance comes a NUMBER of Toxeus' Thugs, followed by Toxeus himself. They are greeted by the first two Thugs, still looking for Gabrielle and Talus.

TOXEUS

Where are they?

THUG

We cornered the girl, but...

TOXEUS

You lost her?! Fools!

(to the others)

Search the castle. Find Death and bring her to me.

The Thugs scatter, but Toxeus stops as he HEARS a suspicious SOUND. He NOTICES the shield leaning against the wall and approaches it, sword drawn.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Behind the shield, Gabrielle pulls herself in tight, holding her breath. A RAT crawls into her lap. Her eyes widen. Gabrielle struggles against the scream building inside of her, then nudges the rat away.

GABRIELLE'S P.O.V.

She peers out from the darkness to see Toxeus searching the shadows.

RESUME TOXEUS

He's about to uncover Gabrielle, when the rat crawls out from behind the shield. Toxeus scowls. He turns to walk away, then quickly spins and PULLS THE SHIELD FROM THE WALL.

Nothing. Gabrielle is gone! Toxeus throws the shield to the ground, then starts down the hall.

Stay on the wall a beat, then a STONE POPS OUT. Gabrielle peeks her head through and taps on the shield and nods, as if to say "cool."

CUT TO:

30 EXT. RIVER STYX - DAY

30

CLOSE ON

HANDS playing "CAT'S CRADLE" with a piece of string.

WIDEN TO CHARON

He's the one playing with the string. He offers it to Hades who swats his hands aside. Charon's boat sits idle.

CHARON

I don't know, Hades. Shouldn't Xena have rescued her by now?

HADES

There's still time, Charon. Don't give up your ship just yet.

CHARON

Funny.

(then)

Maybe she's gone soft. You know her business has dropped off lately.

HADES

Perhaps I should send you to fight Sisyphus instead of Xena.

CHARON

Me?! Let's not get hasty there, Hades. We've got time. Besides, I've got to get my boat ready, that first rush is gonna be a killer.

Charon rubs a rag along his boat. Hades looks out over the river, hopeful.

CUT TO:

30A INT. NARROW HALL - DAY (FORMERLY SCENE 35)

30A*

Xena and Talus start down the hallway. They stop as a small stampede of rats scurry past. They continue on.

*

*

Suddenly, a STONE WALL comes out of the floor, blocking their path. They turn, but just as quickly, ANOTHER WALL entraps them. They search for a way out, then HEAR an OMINOUS RUMBLE.

TALUS

What was that?

The WALLS start MOVING IN!

(CONTINUED)

30A CONTINUED:

30A

XENA

Watch out!

Xena and Talus push against the walls, but there is no stopping them. Then, Xena notices something else --

XENA'S P.O.V.

Dark shapes scurry in through a crack in the wall. MORE RATS! Dozens of them. *

ANOTHER ANGLE

As the sea of rodents closes in on Xena and Talus, we:

FADE OUT. *

END OF ACT THREE *

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

30B INT. NARROW HALL/SISYPHUS' TRAP - DAY (FORMERLY SCENE 36)

30B*

CLOSE ON Xena and Talus' feet, COVERED by scores of teeming, hungry RATS! It's as if they're multiplying, becoming two, then three deep; the rat level rising like water in a well.

As the walls continue to close in, Talus presses against them, trying to hold them back. Xena searches the wall and finds a wooden door. Locked and strong, it's going to take time to break it down. Thinking quickly, she grabs her sword and WEDGES IT between the approaching wall and the wooden door.

Talus, exhausted by his efforts, collapses into the rodent pool. The rats swarm near his fallen body. Xena sends a few flying with a kick from her foot as she watches the sword start to bend, then hold. A beat, then the door BURSTS OUTWARD from the pressure. Xena grabs Talus.

CUT TO:

31 INT. GRAND HALLWAY - DAY

31

Xena and Talus climb down to a grand hallway. Large MURALS line the walls. Xena spots a mural of SISYPHUS AND A CENTAUR, then, a little farther down, a mural of a WARRIOR PRINCESS with her Army (Xena). Vaguely familiar. She continues down the hall.

XENA

Stay behind me, Talus.

But Talus falters, losing his balance. Xena catches him.

XENA

Talus?

TALUS

I'm all right.

(avoiding eye contact)
I guess I'm not used to this much excitement.

Xena looks at him, sensing something.

XENA

Why were you headed to Corinth?

TALUS

I grew up there. I guess I wanted to see it...

(CONTINUED)

31 CONTINUED:

31

XENA

...one last time.

Talus finally looks at Xena, he can't fool her anymore.

XENA

Is there anything I can do?

TALUS

No. But thanks.

XENA

Does Gabrielle know?

TALUS

(shaking his head "no")
I should have told her, I know. But I've been down for so long, and then I meet someone special like Gabrielle, I just wanted to forget for a while.

XENA

How long have you known?

TALUS

I started having the pains about a year ago. It's been getting worse ever since.

Xena looks at him sadly, then:

XENA

I understand.

(then)

But it makes my job a lot harder.

TALUS

It's the right thing to do. There are too many people who need her.

XENA

(with a sad smile)

Now I see why Gabrielle thinks you're so special. Come on.

Xena helps Talus up and they continue down the hall.

ANGLE ON - SOMEONE HIDING BEHIND A NEARBY CURTAIN

But it's not Sisyphus this time, it's Karis. She considers what she has just seen, then hurries off. *

CUT TO:

32 INT. CASTLE CHAMBER - DAY

32

CLOSE ON CELESTA'S CANDLE

Still burning. Only one-quarter remains.

ON CELESTA

She grows weaker.

WIDEN TO INCLUDE

Sisyphus preparing a set of metal bindings. Karis joins him. *

KARIS

I have to talk to you. *

SISYPHUS

Not now, Karis. Xena has proven to be more of a challenge than I thought. *

KARIS

What we've done is wrong. I realize that now. *

SISYPHUS

We've cheated Death. How can that be wrong?

KARIS

What about those who need her? The people who are in pain? *

SISYPHUS

I have given them life. Isn't that what they want?

Karis grabs a nearby dagger and points it at herself. *

KARIS

And if I gave myself a mortal wound? Would you have me suffer as well? *

Sisyphus hesitates. Is she getting through to him? Then he reaches out and takes the dagger from Karis' hand. *

SISYPHUS

Enough of your nonsense. If Xena wins, I will die.

With that, Sisyphus leaves. Karis is helpless to stop him. *

CUT TO:

33 INT. DUNGEON HALLWAY - DAY

33

Gabrielle slowly moves along the shadowy wall, keeping as silent as possible.

As she watches her back, we SEE her head towards a table on which sits an ANCIENT MARBLE GAME (antiquity's answer to Chinese Checkers). Gabrielle mistakenly walks into the table, nearly knocking over the game and sending dozens of marbles to the floor, but she catches it just in time.

GABRIELLE

That was close.

She looks at the marbles, then gets an idea. She puts them in her pockets and rushes down the hall.

CUT TO:

34 INT. GRAND HALLWAY - DAY

34

In the ornate hall, Xena and Talus pass a number of LIFELIKE MURALS with battle scenes painted on them. As they continue, we SEE something frightening behind them. One of the wall murals seems to come to life! What looks like a painting is in fact a bas-relief camouflage for

LIVE WARRIORS!

Three of them, one with a WHIP, one with a SCIMITAR and one with a small collection of KNIVES, step out. The Whip Warrior cracks his weapon, Xena spins to face them.

XENA

(aside to Talus)

Wait here.

Xena approaches them, drawing her sword.

XENA

Talk about ugly art.

Suddenly, the Warriors attack. Xena easily fends off the Scimitar Warrior with her sword, until the Whip warrior, cracks his whip around Xena's wrist. Xena counters by switching hands -- she's ambidextrous!

She knocks the Scimitar Warrior unconscious with the blunt end of her sword, then does a back somersault, yanking the whip out of the Whip Warrior's hands! Left unarmed, the Whip Warrior flees. She turns to face off against the Knife Warrior.

Shirtless, this warrior wears a vest made of leather straps holding an arsenal of deadly blades. He flings two daggers at Xena.

(CONTINUED)

34 CONTINUED:

34

She DROPS HER SWORD and catches them in her bare hands! The Knife Warrior rearms, but Xena reacts quickly. She charges at him, flying in the air and landing a kick right to his jaw.

The Knife Warrior flies back into the painting, out cold. Xena rejoins Talus.

XENA
We don't have much time.

TALUS
(gesturing)
This hall leads to Sisyphus' private chamber.

XENA
Good. Let's go.

Xena and Talus hurry down a narrow hallway. She drags him to a safe spot. Then, out of the shadows, steps Karis. *

KARIS
Hello, Xena. *

Xena spins around.

XENA
Who are you?

KARIS
I am Queen Karis. *

Karis crosses over to Talus. She looks in his eyes, and wipes his brow, then turns back to Xena. *

KARIS
I want to help. *

XENA
Why?

KARIS
Because what he's doing is wrong. *

Xena remains suspicious.

KARIS
Look, you can't defeat my husband without me. Even if you survive his traps, you'll never reach Celesta in time. *

(CONTINUED)

34 CONTINUED: 2

34

XENA

Thanks for the advice. Now get out of our way.

KARIS

Wait. Please. There may be another way.

Xena looks into Karis' eyes. There's something there.

CUT TO:

35
THRU OMITTED
37

35
THRU
37

38 INT. CASTLE ENTRY - DAY

38

THREE of Toxeus' Army of the Dead search the area for...

GABRIELLE (O.S.)

Yoo, hoo! Fellas!

GABRIELLE

stands at the far end of the room, waving at them. Has she lost her mind? The Thugs charge after her; Gabrielle doesn't move.

ANOTHER ANGLE

As the Thugs are almost upon her, we CLOSE IN ON THE FLOOR. MARBLES! The Thugs unwittingly land on them, sending the Thugs high in the air, then crashing to the ground.

GABRIELLE

Yes!

As Gabrielle turns to head down the hall, she SPOTS Toxeus and more Thugs. Gabrielle takes off.

CUT TO:

39 INT. DUNGEON CHAMBER - DAY

39

Celesta's candle fades to almost nothing. She can barely move.

WIDEN TO INCLUDE SISYPHUS

wearing his sword and royal battle gear.

(CONTINUED)

39 CONTINUED:

39

SISYPHUS

Not much time left. And with my next trap, Xena will have no hope of releasing you.

Celesta tries to respond, but she is too weak. Sisyphus looks at her, guiltily.

SISYPHUS

I am sorry, Celesta. I didn't want it to go this far. I thought Zeus would come to make a deal. But now I'm left with no choice.

Sisyphus exits.

CUT TO:

40 INT. DUNGEON LABYRINTH - DAY

40

CLOSE ON - XENA'S ARM

She approaches the DOOR to Sisyphus chamber. As she reaches to it with her hand...

ANOTHER ANGLE

CHAIN LOCKS quickly PIN HER to the door. HER HANDS, then HER FEET, become locked in STEEL CUFFS!

ANOTHER ANGLE

Sisyphus walks out of a nearby door, smiling, sword in hand.

SISYPHUS

Well, well, Xena. It seems the spider has finally caught the fly. I guess it's time to...

Suddenly, Sisyphus' face drops. His expression changes from glee to confusion.

SISYPHUS

What's the meaning of this?

ANOTHER ANGLE

REVEAL that locked in the chains is not Xena, but KARIS. *

KARIS *

It's time for you to listen to reason, Sisyphus.

Just then, from behind Sisyphus, enters Xena.

(CONTINUED)

40 CONTINUED:

40

XENA

I agree.

SISYPHUS

(turning)

Xena!

KARIS

Your people are suffering. *

XENA

It's time to let Death go, Sisyphus.

Sisyphus draws his sword.

SISYPHUS

Not without a fight. Draw your weapon, Xena.

XENA

No weapons. There's someone you should meet.

Talus comes out of the shadows.

TALUS

Do you remember me, Your Highness? My mother and I lived in the castle when I was a small boy.

A wave of recognition washes over Sisyphus' face.

SISYPHUS

Talus?! How are you, son?

TALUS

Not well, Your Highness. I'm dying, or at least I should be. You were very good to my mother and I. But now I ask for one more act of kindness. Let Celesta go.

SISYPHUS

You don't understand. If I release her, I will die.

TALUS

You shouldn't fear it. I did for the longest time. But my suffering has grown so real and deep that now I know death can be a friend, a resting place.

(CONTINUED)

40 CONTINUED: 2

40

SISYPHUS

I'm sorry, Talus, but you have to understand, I'm not suffering. My life can still be good.

TALUS

I don't believe that. When the good King Sisyphus sees all the pain and misery he's brought to the world, he'll die inside a million times in regret for what he's done. Don't you see? It's not how long you live that matters, it's how well you live.

(then)

Please. Let her go.

XENA

You're a great king, Sisyphus. Be remembered that way.

A wave of remorse passes over Sisyphus.

SISYPHUS

I was so concerned about my own life, I forgot about the rest of the world. I've been such a fool.

KARIS

It's not too late.

*

Sisyphus looks into Karis' eyes, then nods, sadly.

*

CUT TO:

41 INT. DUNGEON CHAMBER - DAY

41

Sisyphus enters with Karis. Xena follows with Talus. They cross to Celesta. Her candle is nearly burned to the nub. Sisyphus starts to unlock her, but Karis stops him, tears in her eyes.

*

*

KARIS

I will miss you.

*

SISYPHUS

Don't count me out yet.

She holds him in a loving embrace.

XENA

(noticing the candle)

Sisyphus. There's not much time.

(CONTINUED)

41 CONTINUED:

41

Sisyphus turns to the THREE locks on Celesta's bindings when suddenly, Gabrielle rushes in through the doorway! *

GABRIELLE

Xena! Talus!

TALUS

Gabrielle!

GABRIELLE

Hurry! They're right behind...

But before Gabrielle can finish her sentence, Toxeus arrives with his Thugs. Xena spots them, immediately kicking away Toxeus' sword. Toxeus responds by grabbing Gabrielle.

TOXEUS

(to Sisyphus)

Stay away from those chains, or I promise you, this young thing will be Death's first victim.

TALUS

(rushing towards him)

Let her go!

Xena stops him.

XENA

Talus... Let me.

(to Toxeus)

Shouldn't you be looking for a shallow grave somewhere?

Toxeus notices the CANDLE. It's flickering out.

TOXEUS

Just a few more minutes...

Celesta's strength is fading fast. Xena looks around the chamber, and spots something. She turns to Sisyphus.

He backs off towards the wall. *

ANOTHER ANGLE

Toxeus GLANCES at Celesta's candle as he holds Gabrielle. When he turns back, Xena stands before him.

XENA

Come now, Toxeus. Wouldn't you rather have me by the throat than that scrawny little girl?

(CONTINUED)

41 CONTINUED: 2

41.

TOXEUS

Are you offering to join me?

XENA

Run me through and I'm yours.

GABRIELLE

No, Xena. Don't!

Toxeus looks around the room for Sisyphus, but he's not there. He smiles to himself; he knows they're up to something. Just then, he releases Gabrielle and grabs a cohort's SWORD.

GABRIELLE

Noooo!

His sword connects with a THUNDERING CRASH! Glass flies everywhere. It's a MIRROR! Toxeus turns back around...

TOXEUS' P.O.V.

Xena's foot comes flying right into his face.

RESUME SCENE

Toxeus goes down.

XENA

Surprise.

Xena is joined by Sisyphus.

SISYPHUS

That turned out well.

XENA

You unlock Celesta, I'll handle the others.

As Xena prepares to battle the Thugs, Sisyphus hurries to Celesta. He finds his KEY, then starts on THE FIRST LOCK.

ON XENA

She takes on THREE SOLDIERS at once. She disables the first by trapping his sword WITH HER BARE HANDS. Then, using him as a shield, she blocks the attack of the other two.

When she's disarmed them all, she delivers a roundhouse kick, disabling all three.

ON SISYPHUS

(CONTINUED)

41 CONTINUED: 3

41

As he unlocks the SECOND LOCK, Toxeus recovers, then pushes him away from Celesta.

Talus rushes Toxeus, but the evil warrior swats him away like a fly. Gabrielle pushes Toxeus from behind. Toxeus turns, grabs her, takes out his KNIFE, and just as he's about to stab her...

ON XENA

Too far away to save Gabrielle, she reaches for her chakram and tosses it.

FOLLOW THE CHAKRAM

The lethal disc misses Toxeus, but scores a direct hit on THE THIRD LOCK, releasing Celesta from her bindings. As she is freed, Celesta suddenly regains her strength. She picks up her CANDLE, and it becomes newly RESTORED.

ON TOXEUS

He is about to stab Gabrielle when the pain of his lethal wound overcomes him. He drops his knife, falling to his knees. The rest of the Army of Death collapses as well.

ON CELESTA

She looks around, then circles the room, delivering the touch of death to each of the Thugs, and finally, to Toxeus. Xena crosses back to Gabrielle who stands near Talus.

XENA

Are you all right?

GABRIELLE

That was a little too close.

Celesta crosses to Sisyphus.

SISYPHUS

I'm ready, Celesta.

CELESTA

Your time will come. But first, someone else needs me.

Celesta turns towards Xena and the others, then glides by to reach for Talus.

CLOSE ON GABRIELLE

as she realizes the awful truth. She rushes over between Talus and Celesta.

(CONTINUED)

41 CONTINUED: 4

41

GABRIELLE

Wait. There's been some kind of mistake.

TALUS

No, Gabrielle. It's no mistake. I have to say good-bye.

GABRIELLE

Good-bye? I don't understand.

Xena approaches Gabrielle and puts a hand on her shoulder.

XENA

Talus is very sick. He has been for some time.

GABRIELLE

(upset)

But I didn't know...

(through tears)

No. You can't.

As Celesta comes closer, Gabrielle blocks her path. Her eyes fill with tears.

GABRIELLE

(to Celesta)

You don't have to take him.

(pleading)

We saved you. You owe us. Please.

Celesta hesitates. Talus puts a loving finger to Gabrielle's lips, quieting her. Then --

TALUS

I should have told you. Forgive me, Gabrielle. All I wanted was a memory of you.

GABRIELLE

This can't be happening.

TALUS

We'll see each other again someday... on the Other Side.

GABRIELLE

You won't forget me?

TALUS

How could I?

Gabrielle looks into Talus' eyes. They embrace gently.

(CONTINUED)

41 CONTINUED: 5

41

Talus crosses to Celesta. She looks at him, smiles, then takes his arm. They head out the door together, a warm glow surrounding them. As they reach the door, they are met by a

BLINDING WHITE LIGHT

Talus takes a last LOOK at Gabrielle, as if to memorize every detail, then he crosses into the LIGHT.

ANGLE ON XENA AND GABRIELLE

Both a little teary-eyed as they watch him go. Xena puts her arm around Gabrielle, pulling her close, as we:

FADE OUT.

THE END