

XENIA

WARRIOR PRINCESS

The Royal Couple of Thieves

BY
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Episode #17

Prod. #76922

XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"The Royal Couple of Thieves"

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SHOOTING DRAFT
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XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"The Royal Couple of Thieves"

CAST LIST

XENA
GABRIELLE

AUTOLYCUS
PROGNESE
MAGMAR
KELTON
ARKE
MALTHUS
BELART
SINTERES

XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"The Royal Couple of Thieves"

SET LIST

INTERIORS:

TAVERN
DRESSING ROOM
SHIP HOLD
BEDROOM
BANQUET HALL
CAVE

EXTERIORS:

MARKET SQUARE
ALLEYWAY
CLEARING #1
CLEARING #2
CLEARING #3
DOCK
BOW OF SHIP
SHIP AT SEA
SIDE OF BOW
CASTLE
COURTYARD
ROAD

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XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"The Royal Couple of Thieves"

CHRONOLOGY

DAY 1	SCENES # 1 - 6
NIGHT 1	SCENES # 7 - 22
DAY 2	SCENES #23 - 32

XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"The Royal Couple of Thieves"

TEASER

FADE IN:

1 EXT. MARKET SQUARE - DAY - CLOSE ON DIAMOND

1

This is a big mother, about the size of a wadded-up ferret; it sits on a velveteen pillow.

WIDER

This is a fairly good-sized market square where the principal occupation seems to be laundry. There are tubs of soapy water all about. At the moment, the people stand stock still as they stare at a line of priests. The priests are all cloaked so we can't see any features, but they walk with a reverence as the lead priest carries the jewel pillow high up. The people go to one knee. Obviously this jewel has some sort of religious significance.

The line of priests is walking slowly toward a large, carpeted stairway which leads up into a temple. Overhead hangs the various laundry of these people. Blankets, etc.

WINDOW

Up one story. A mysterious cloaked figure appears and checks out the view. Perfect. He reaches inside his cape and comes up with a tiny crossbow. Aiming carefully, he fires the arrow...

WALL ACROSS SQUARE

...into the opposite wall with a "THUNK." We can see that the arrow trails a line parallel to the laundry lines.

BACK TO FIGURE

as he ties off the line to an overhead railing. He looks down and sees

THE PROCESSION

is almost under the line; the diamond still being held high.

THE FIGURE

finally removes his hood. AUTOLYCUS has a smile on his face. He rubs his fingers together, brushes the tip of his moustache, throws a large belt over the arrow-line and jumps off the ledge!

(CONTINUED)

1 CONTINUED:

1

Autolyucus YELLS as he flips upside down, putting his legs through the belt, and sails down the line heading toward the diamond. The people look up, shocked.

As he slides by, he plucks the gem from the pillow!

People begin to react and run under Autolyucus. He reaches the end of his line and, before he drops to the ground, he CUTS THE LAUNDRY LINE! Blankets drop all across the square, covering people in wet laundry. Autolyucus drops down into an alleyway. He blows a kiss to the flailing crowd, then takes off up the alley.

2 EXT. ALLEYWAY - DAY

2

Autolyucus has moved to this small area which has some clothes hanging on a line next to a tub of soapy water. He hangs his outer cape over the line as he removes his disguise. He juggles the diamond as he quickly changes.

He reaches for his cape. It's gone! Then, someone hands it to him. As he grabs it, he notices the hand on it. He looks up to see:

WIDER - INCLUDE XENA

She has a stern smile on her face. Autolyucus grins his charming grin.

AUTOLYUCUS

Thank you, my dear. And, I know what you want. But, I'm afraid a broken heart is all I can provide at the moment.

He pulls on the cape, but she pulls back, spinning him right into her fist. He recoils, sagging against the tub and spilling the water over him.

XENA

We need to talk.

AUTOLYUCUS

Talk is cheap. I have an expensive ear.

With that, he turns and runs. Determined, Xena sets off after him.

3 EXT. MARKET SQUARE - DAY

3

as he runs/slides across the area toward the carpeted stairway. He slides past Gabrielle and hits the steps.

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED:

3

Regaining his balance, he runs up a few steps.

Xena enters the area, launches herself in a flip, and lands at the bottom of the stairway. Autolykus pauses and turns, holding up the diamond.

AUTOLYCUS

You are a really interesting person.
But, this is mine. I stole it, I have
uses for it.

XENA

Why would I want a melted chunk of rock
sugar?

Autolykus looks to his hand. The "diamond" has melted to slag from the water. He looks back to her, surprised. GABRIELLE steps up, still with her priest's robe on. Behind her, we see the other priests (we will soon know them as KELTON and his people).

GABRIELLE

Sure looked like a diamond, didn't it?

Autolykus realizes: it's a trap. He recovers and smiles again.

AUTOLYCUS

I applaud your attempt. But it's not
that easy to catch... The King of
Thieves!

With that, he turns and lifts his arm. A GRAPPLING HOOK shoots from his sleeve toward a balcony. Just as he is about to swing, the chakram flashes through the air and CUTS THE CABLE. Autolykus drops on his butt. He recovers and starts to run. Xena calmly reaches down and picks up the carpet. She gives it a jerk. Step by step, the wooden nails come out and the carpet straightens.

Until it gets to Autolykus. The carpet straightens out underneath him and he falls flat. As his hands vainly try to grab purchase and he starts to slide backward...

AUTOLYCUS

This is not good...

And he slides down toward the waiting Xena, his chin bouncing on each step!

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED: 2

3

AUTOLYCUS

(THUD!)

Ow!

(THUD!)

Ow!

(THUD!)

Ow!

And so on as he rolls over and slithers to a stop between her legs. He looks up; she looks down. Finally:

AUTOLYCUS

Not easy, but not impossible.

XENA

On your feet.

AUTOLYCUS

This is fine. You had better have a very good reason for this, young...

XENA

I want you to steal the most valuable object in the world.

He considers.

AUTOLYCUS

Hmm. Things are looking... up.

As he innocently gazes up at her from between her legs, we:

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

4 INT. TAVERN - DAY

4

Autolycus is led by Xena to a table. His hands have been tightly bound. Xena places his grappling hook on the table and sits him down. She drives a dagger into the table between his hands, locking them down. Gabrielle signals to the Tavern Keeper.

AUTOLYCUS

Tying my hands is really unnecessary.
I said I would listen to your
proposition.

XENA

And it's not like you would lie to us,
now, would you?

AUTOLYCUS

I haven't so far. Besides, could a
face like this be dishonest?

(to Xena)

Didn't Hercules tell you I was an
honorable man?

(nothing)

This is ridiculous. At least cover my
hands. It's embarrassing, for Zeus'
sake!

Xena casually throws a rag over his hands.

AUTOLYCUS

Thank you. Now. Aside from those
beautiful eyes of yours, what is it you
think is the most valuable object in
the world?

The Tavern Keeper comes over and places mugs on the table and fills them. While her view is blocked, Autolycus quickly touches his moustache, rubbing back it's grain. When done, he puts his hand back under the rag. Gabrielle's eyes widen. She pulls the rag away. The hands are still tied. As Gabrielle replaces the rag in confusion...

XENA

Do you know Malthus?

AUTOLYCUS

The Warlord Malthus, I'm guessing.
Yes. His island is just off the coast.
I don't steal from him, by the way.

(CONTINUED)

4 CONTINUED:

4

GABRIELLE

Afraid?

AUTOLYCUS

No. We have an arrangement. I don't steal from him, he doesn't slit my eyelids open. It's worked out so far.

Autolycus "accidentally" hits the grappling hook with his elbow, knocking it to the floor. Xena gives him a look, then bends down to pick it up. Autolycus takes that moment to grab one of the mugs and take a drink. He winks at Gabrielle as he quickly replaces his hands. Gabrielle can only point to his hands as Xena comes back up.

XENA

Malthus stole a valuable chest. He's going to auction it off this week.

AUTOLYCUS

And what makes this chest so valuable?

XENA

Two things. It's covered with embedded jewels and gold leaf. That, alone, is worth a king's ransom. And... it contains the most powerful weapon this world has ever seen.

AUTOLYCUS

And what kind of weapon?

XENA

I don't know. I just know it exists. So does Malthus. The people coming to bid are the most ruthless and evil people in the known world. I want that chest.

AUTOLYCUS

You hardly seem like the mercenary type. Actually, you seem exactly like the mercenary type. Which is why I don't think you are.

XENA

It's very important to some friends of mine. I promised to return it. Will you do it?

AUTOLYCUS

No. Not because I wouldn't want to do your bidding; that's another subject. But, as I told you, Malthus and I have an arrangement.

(CONTINUED)

4 CONTINUED: 2

4

With that, he removes his hands from under the rag (free, of course), tosses her the rope that was binding his wrists and stands to leave.

AUTOLYCUS

The dagger was a nice touch. It took me... oh... all of four seconds to work around it.

Gabrielle reacts to his leaving. Xena seems strangely calm. Autolycus turns, and falls flat on his face! Someone has tied his feet together.

AUTOLYCUS

That, however, was very good.

He starts to untie the rope as Gabrielle turns to Xena.

GABRIELLE

Maybe this guy isn't all that Hercules said he is. A really good thief would jump at the chance to steal from Malthus.

XENA

Only if he deserved the reputation as the greatest thief who ever lived.

GABRIELLE

I thought Hercules said it was this guy?

XENA

Apparently Hercules was wrong. I've heard Melatius of Amphisa is good and available.

AUTOLYCUS

You're trying to use my ego against me.

GABRIELLE

I didn't think it'd work.

AUTOLYCUS

No, it worked. I'll do it. Not for money, though I'll take a reward. But mainly because...

He stands and touches his moustache in a dramatic pose.

AUTOLYCUS

...I am the King of Thieves!

(CONTINUED)

4 CONTINUED: 3

4

GABRIELLE

(beat)

I thought that was Cadmus.

AUTOLYCUS

(shaken out of it)

Thieves! Not Thebes! King of...

Oh, never mind!

He turns and walks out. Gabrielle and Xena stand. Xena gives Gabrielle a "good job" smile.

CUT TO:

5 EXT. CLEARING - DAY

5

Xena, Gabrielle and Autolyclus are facing a small group of bedraggled people led by KELTON, a man in his sixties. These are all the people we saw as priests earlier.

KELTON

(to Autolyclus)

You will certainly have the gratitude of my people.

AUTOLYCUS

Your gratitude is all any man could want. However, this particular man has financial needs...

GABRIELLE

Is money the only thing in your life?

AUTOLYCUS

(thinks; then)

I believe so. Anyway, we were talking about a reward.

XENA

Half of it now, the rest after.

Kelton hands Autolyclus a purple pouch. Autolyclus looks at the people. They look lost, but still hopeful as they stare at him. A beat, then:

AUTOLYCUS

This... "thing"... means a lot to you, doesn't it?

KELTON

It's hard to explain. Have you ever known anything that defines what you are? As a person? And a people?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED:

5

KELTON (cont'd)

It may just be metal, jewels and stone to others, but to us... it's who we are.

Autolycus looks to Xena, then back to Kelton.

AUTOLYCUS

You've hired the best. You'll get it back.

CUT TO:

6 INT. DRESSING ROOM - DAY

6

Some sort of clothing store. Autolycus is wearing some very expensive finery. It drapes over him with stylish folds and makes him look almost regal. He turns to let them admire it. Xena and Gabrielle appraise it.

XENA

Sinteres is rich and he's feared. He hires himself out as the ultimate assassin. If anyone could afford this auction, he could. That's why you're going as him.

AUTOLYCUS

A reputation and wealth. Good cover. And where is our friend at the moment?

XENA

He's wrapped up with an overthrow of Haitilis. We should be done before he's finished.

Gabrielle steps back and looks at him.

GABRIELLE

It looks good. Sinteres dresses very well. I really like that pendant.

AUTOLYCUS

That's mine. I got it from a beautiful princess.

GABRIELLE

Oh, it was a gift?

AUTOLYCUS

(smiling)

You're so young. So, tell me more about this Sinteres.

(CONTINUED)

6 CONTINUED:

6

GABRIELLE

Well, I've only heard a few stories, but he's known as The Warrior Philosopher. Everything he says sounds philosophical. He always chews on toothpicks. But he's deadly. He once killed a man with only a rose petal!

AUTOLYCUS

Hmmm... Interesting. Toothpicks, eh?

He casually picks a piece of wood from a chair and sticks it in his mouth, chewing on it experimentally.

XENA

I'll be going as your assistant. Sinteres isn't known to have one, but I don't think anyone will ask questions.

AUTOLYCUS

Let's hope he's at least as debonair and charming as I am or no one will be fooled.

He walks off.

GABRIELLE

(to Xena)

This guy is incredible. I mean, he's good looking, but, please, give me a break!

XENA

If it all works out, we should be back in three or four days, and we'll be done with him. I want you to stay here and...

Autolycus comes walking back over, holding up a frilly little next-to-nothing number.

AUTOLYCUS

(to Xena)

I think I found your disguise. The assistant to Sinteres would wear no less.

GABRIELLE

(eyeing the outfit)

Any less and there wouldn't be.

Xena takes the frilly thing, looks at it, then to Autolycus.

(CONTINUED)

6 CONTINUED: 2

6

XENA

Stick to the philosophy. Not the
fantasy.

She tosses it on a pile of clothes and walks away.

CUT TO:

7 EXT. DOCK - NIGHT

7

An establishing matte with a small building next to a dock
with a waiting ship. Moonlight reflects in the water.

8 EXT. BOW OF SHIP - NIGHT

8

Where we find a group of people standing around, packs and
luggage nearby. A few men of working class order move
about. The standing group are dressed better and tend to
keep an eye on the other people around them. The common
trait of villains: paranoia.

Into this group walks Autolycus, playing his new role to the
hilt. He walks with an air of superiority. The others
check him out, but pay him no special attention. Xena comes
up. She is dressed in a fairly conservative dress, similar
to the one that Gabrielle used to wear, except nicer. She
is carrying two packs.

XENA

Is this the boat, Lord Sinteres?

At the mention of the name "Sinteres," the crowd stops to
take notice, a few of the lookies whispering to each other
and pointing to him. One of the men is PROGNESE, a scarred
man wearing crossed leather belts across his chest, joined
by a metal buckle over his heart. Autolycus makes a show of
opening his cape, selecting a choice toothpick from several
in a pocket, and putting it in his mouth.

AUTOLYCUS

Yes, I believe it is. But "a boat with
no passengers, is a vessel with...
empty people."

Stepping up to Autolycus is ARKEL, a commanding figure,
second-in-command to Malthus, the warlord.

ARKEL

Lord Sinteres... Malthus will be very
pleased that you are arriving. We were
told you were delayed in...

(CONTINUED)

8 CONTINUED:

8

AUTOLYCUS

Yes, yes, talk, talk, talk. What you heard is not true, is it? "Word of mouth is only the... tongue wiggling about... a bit."

ARKEL

(beat)

Yes, of course.

Arkel turns to address everyone.

ARKEL

The journey to the island will take until this evening. My master, Malthus, has provided food for the journey. We leave momentarily.

PROGNESE

Tell us about the weapon.

ARKEL

(grim)

Malthus will answer your questions. I will answer none.

And he walks off. A beat, then MAGMAR, a sturdy old man with an eye patch, walks up to Autolyclus and peers through his remaining orb.

MAGMAR

I'm Magmar of the Gauls! I once worked for the Warlord Malthus! And I'm not afraid of you, Sinteres!

XENA

You worked for Malthus?

MAGMAR

Aye. And I've heard all the stories about you, and I want you should know... I don't fear you!

Autolyclus takes a beat, then leans forward and, quietly:

AUTOLYCUS

Boo!

Magmar jumps ten feet back, drawing his sword. Even Autolyclus is impressed. Xena quickly steps between them.

XENA

You must excuse my Lord. It's been a long journey and we're very tired.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

8 CONTINUED: 2

8

XENA (cont'd)
(confidentially)
The fact that he plays with you is a
good sign. It means he likes you.

Magmar takes this info, and looks up at Autolykus, who is
standing behind Xena and smiling. A beat, then Magmar
chuckles and sheaths his sword.

MAGMAR
Very well. Strange humor, but Magmar
can tell a joke from a challenge.

AUTOLYKUS
"A challenge with humor brings... mirth
without blood."
(re: Xena)
May I present my assist... uhm...
concubine, Cherish.

Xena freezes. Concubine? Cherish? She turns and stares
daggers at him. He winks at her.

AUTOLYKUS
She's never been on a ship before, so
she's a bit nervous. I even bought her
some clothes for the journey.

He reaches into one of the packs and pulls out the frilly
next-to-nothing we saw in the store. Xena's eyes widen.

AUTOLYKUS
Why don't you go below decks and slip
into this, my dear. You'll feel much
better.

People are watching. Autolykus is really using the crowd to
his advantage. Xena is frozen. He holds out the outfit.
Finally, she grabs it out of his hand.

DISSOLVE TO:

9 EXT. SHIP AT SEA - NIGHT

9

Establish.

10 EXT. BOW OF SHIP - NIGHT

10

The people all stand about, near the railings, talking in
small groups. The largest of the groups is around Autolykus
as he goes on about his "adventures."

(CONTINUED)

10. CONTINUED:

10

AUTOLYCUS

Of course, the trick in killing someone with an apricot is really the wrist. The drawback is that it kills instantly. No time to gather information. For situations like that, I recommend using a muffin.

PROGNESE

Is that what you used to kill Neolos?

AUTOLYCUS

(stumped)

Neolos... I have to tell you, I've killed so many so many ways. Apricots, muffins, those little things that hold your shirt together instead of buttons... I can't recall. But I'm sure that bastard Neolos died a death that was long and painful.

PROGNESE

He was my brother.

AUTOLYCUS

(beat)

I must be thinking of another Neolos...

PROGNESE

Perhaps you were.

Autolyucus accepts the smile nervously. He looks over to see Xena coming out from the below decks. She is now dressed in the next-to-nothing. If not next-to-nothing, it is certainly next-to-edited. It is very sexy with a layered veil effect. Autolyucus is taken by surprise.

AUTOLYCUS

Whoa! Very nice!

(realizing; philosophy)

Uhm... "Like the gentle dew of the morning breath, clinging softly to... your heaving... shapely..."

She grabs him.

XENA

(tense)

May I have a word with you alone, Lord Sinteres?

She moves him to the railing.

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED: 2

10

XENA
What are you doing? "Concubine?"

AUTOLYCUS
Oh, come on. Did you really think they
would believe someone like Sinteres
would have someone like you without...
"having"... someone like you?

XENA
Just watch it.

AUTOLYCUS
(looks her over)
That really is a good look for you.

XENA
Don't start with me!

PROGNESE
Sinteres! This is for Neolos!

They turn to see Prognese standing across the deck, holding a hanging block in his hand. He swings it toward Xena and Autolycus. Xena immediately moves, but Autolycus blocks her, trying to push her out of the way. The result of Autolycus' well-meaning, but ill-advised attempt, is that he gets clocked on the skull and tips over the side. Xena makes a grab for him (notably his wrist) and his weight pulls them over the side!

11 EXT. SIDE OF BOW - CLOSE - ON AUTOLYCUS' WRIST

11

Xena's grip tightens, triggering the grappling hook.
It explodes out of the sleeve and hits:

THE RAILING

It secures itself.

XENA AND AUTOLYCUS

get pulled up short as the hook tightens. As they hang,
with the water churning (blue screen) below them, we:

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

12 EXT. SIDE OF BOW - NIGHT .

12

As before: Xena holds onto Autolykus as they dangle over the water. Autolykus comes to, looks down, then, noticing Xena's embrace:

AUTOLYKUS

This wouldn't be just an excuse to get into my arms, would it?

XENA

Important point: Don't try to save me. I can take care of myself.

AUTOLYKUS

Any plans? Or are we going to hang here for the rest of the journey?

13 EXT. BOW - NIGHT

13

Prognese is bragging of his victory.

PROGNESE

No one kills a member of my family with out paying the price!

AUTOLYKUS

You should raise your prices.

Everyone turns to see Autolykus standing calmly near the railing. Shock is a good word for all.

AUTOLYKUS

(pondering)

Now, my problem is a vexing one. Kill you and ruin a beautiful starry night? Or, just injure you to prove a point?

Autolykus takes a toothpick from his cape and places it carefully in his mouth, as if positioning it. Prognese shakes off his initial reaction and pulls his sword.

PROGNESE

You're still more myth than man. And I'm the one to prove it.

XENA

During all this challenge and counter challenge, Xena has pulled herself up over the other side of the railing directly behind Prognese.

(CONTINUED)

13 CONTINUED:

13

She takes the grappling hook and hooks it to Prognese's leather vest belt. Just in time, for he starts to move forward, dragging the grappling line behind him.

BACK TO SCENE

Everyone's eyes are on Prognese and Autolykus. No one sees Xena peering from her spot on the other side of the railing.

Prognese raises his sword over his head and charges.

Autolykus calmly draws his toothpick from his mouth and flicks it at Prognese. It hits him square in the chest.

Xena leaps off the side, pulling the grappling cable with her.

The metal buckle SLAMS into Prognese chest. He FLIES BACKWARDS into the railing, knocking him unconscious.

The people are stunned. Autolykus walks over Prognese. He picks up his toothpick and places it back into his cape. Turning, he smiles at the crowd.

AUTOLYKUS

Well... that worked up an appetite. "Hunger is the gods' way of saying... eat."

He walks off. We PUSH IN on the grappling cable. It moves back and forth as if someone was trying to signal someone else...

CUT TO:

14 INT. SHIP HOLD - NIGHT

14

Set up for dinner. A long table with our people sitting around and eating. Autolykus has a seat near the front of the table. No one seems to want to sit near him. Still, he is lording over his position with these people.

MAGMAR

(looking around)

Where's your woman? Did she drown?

AUTOLYKUS

I didn't drown. She didn't drown. She should be here momentarily. She's newly conquered territory, you know how it is.

MAGMAR

Virgin ground to be ravaged?

(CONTINUED)

14 CONTINUED:

14

He howls with raucous laughter.

AUTOLYCUS

"A woman's chastity is like a new hat.
A precious thing that's..."

Xena enters. She is soaking wet!

AUTOLYCUS

"...going to kill me."

Magmar looks at him quizzically as Xena walks over to him.

AUTOLYCUS

What took you so long, my dear?
Finishing up my laundry?

XENA

(tense)

Yes. You left something... hanging
on the line.

AUTOLYCUS

Ah. Well, I knew you would take care
of it. Come. Sit. And grab those
grapes while you're at it.

Once again, she is caught. She picks up a bunch of grapes
and sits on the chair between Autolycus and Magmar, who
leers at her.

At that moment, Prognese comes in. Still wobbly and in
pain. He gives a look to Autolycus who merely smiles in
return. Prognese sits at the end of the table.

XENA

So, Lord Sinteres, what do we know of
this weapon?

(to Magmar)

I mean, something that important must
be kept in a secret place. Under
careful guard.

AUTOLYCUS

Does it matter?

She gives him a glare, then sweetly turns back to Magmar.

MAGMAR

If I know Malthus, and I told you I
worked for him, he's probably got it
hidden in plain view. He's a tricky
one, he is.

(CONTINUED)

14 CONTINUED: 2

14

XENA

He sounds powerful. Probably doesn't need a lot of guards, does he?

MAGMAR

(to Autolycus)

She asks a lot of questions for a bed wench.

AUTOLYCUS

Too many. Cherish, the grapes..

He opens his mouth, indicating she should feed him! She takes a grape and drops it into his mouth. Magmar opens his mouth as if she should feed him, too. She pauses. Autolycus smiles, nods, and indicates that she should. Like a disgusted bird feeding her young, she drops grapes into their waiting mouths, as we:

CUT TO:

15 EXT. CASTLE - NIGHT

15

Another matte painting to show a large castle on this island.

16 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

16

Finely appointed with a SINGLE bed with a curtain that can be drawn around it. The door opens and Autolycus and Xena (carrying the luggage) are shown in by a guard (BELART) and Arkel.

AR KEL

Malthus will be greeting his visitors in one turn of the sandglass. If you need anything, knock on the door and ask the guard for me.

He leaves them and LOCKS THE DOOR. Xena drops the packs she is carrying. Xena checks the door.

XENA

Arkel doesn't want us wandering about his master's castle.

AUTOLYCUS

Nice. Comfy. Malthus certainly is the host.

(CONTINUED)

16 CONTINUED:

16

XENA

We're not here to enjoy ourselves. Any ideas on how you're going to get the chest?

AUTOLYCUS

I haven't seen it yet. Any ideas on how to get it off the island?

XENA

Once we have the chest, we tie it to the anchor rope of that boat. When we sail off, we take it with us.

AUTOLYCUS

What makes you think Malthus will let everyone go, once it's missing?

XENA

From talking to Magmar. He told me his former boss has a big ego. Almost as big as yours.

AUTOLYCUS

Nothing is as big as mine. Go on.

XENA

When he discovers the weapon gone, he'll call off the auction without an explanation and send us all home.

AUTOLYCUS

Meanwhile, his treasure is dangling from an anchor line. I like it. But, you started by saying "Once we have the chest."

XENA

That's your department. We need to find out what we can when we meet Malthus.

AUTOLYCUS

We have some time to rest before the banquet. Hmm... only one bed.

XENA

Don't even think it.

He takes out a dinar.

AUTOLYCUS

Far from it. Flip you for it? Tails.

(CONTINUED)

16 CONTINUED: 2

16

He flips the dinar high in the air. As it sails upward, Xena grabs his arm and FLIPS HIM. He hits the floor with a solid "THUMP" as she neatly catches the dinar and pats it onto her arm. Looking at it:

XENA

Heads it is.

A GROAN is heard from the ground, as we:

CUT TO:

17 INT. BANQUET HALL - NIGHT - ON MALTHUS

17

A robust man in his late fifties, MALTHUS has the confidence and demeanor of a man who could conquer the world. Next to him, always alert, is Arkel. They stand in front of a curtain. NOTE: A large key hangs from Malthus' belt.

MALTHUS

The power to rule the world. What is it worth? How much would you pay?

INCLUDE - THE BUYERS

All of the people we saw on the boat. Including Xena and Autolykus, who is slightly bent over, favoring a bad back. This room is huge and has large candles all over the place. NOTE: Xena wears the same next-to-nothing that we saw earlier.

MALTHUS

You are all here because you possess two things I value: wealth, and greed for power. I possess the answer to both.

Xena digs her elbow into Autolykus and nods toward Malthus.

AUTOLYCUS

Lord Malthus, if this weapon is so powerful, why are you selling it?

MALTHUS

Because I don't fear it. I know its secret. So don't even think about buying it and using it against me.

(then)

And now, let's take a look at why we're here.

With that, the curtain behind him opens.

THE CHEST

(CONTINUED)

17 CONTINUED:

17

A beautiful, ornate chest about the size of a footlocker suspended about four feet off the ground by ropes leading to the ceiling. The chest is covered with gold leaf and decked out with jewels ranging from pebble size to baseball. It is latched shut by a simple tongue latch without a lock. Guards stand nearby, their weapons at the ready. People start to move forward, but Malthus stops them.

MALTHUS

Please note... Invisible threads...
made from human hair and spider's silk.
If one is broken... it sets off an
alarm of my design.

He moves carefully around the strings we can't see.
Autolycus smirks to Xena.

AUTOLYCUS

Invisible... right.

Malthus gets to the chest and puts one finger under it.

MALTHUS

Counterweight balance. The slightest
change, heavier or lighter...

He pushes with his finger and:

CLOSE - ON HUGE CHURCH BELLS

in a belfry above. Gears turn and the bells begin RINGING
LOUDLY!!!

BACK TO SCENE

as everyone holds their ears. Malthus motions to someone
OFF CAMERA. The RINGING STOPS.

MALTHUS

No one gets near the chest without me
knowing about it. That's assuming
anyone could even gain entrance to this
room.

He pats the key on his belt and moves back out from the
invisible threads.

MALTHUS

The weapon will be demonstrated
tomorrow at noon. But, now... enjoy my
hospitality!

He claps his hands and servants appear with food. MUSIC
begins playing. The people start to mill about. Xena turns
to Autolycus.

(CONTINUED)

17 CONTINUED: 2

17

XENA

Let's get to work. I got you here.
Now what?

AUTOLYCUS

Now, I need a distraction while I work.

Off her look, he turns to Malthus and, loudly:

AUTOLYCUS

Lord Malthus... your hospitality is
graciously accepted. But, please,
accept a gift of my own... for the
entertainment of all. My very own
"Cherish" and her dance of the...

He quickly counts the number of veils wrapping her.

AUTOLYCUS

...eight veils!

Everyone applauds.

AUTOLYCUS

(sotto; to Xena)

Keep them interested and... make me
proud.

XENA

(grim)

You've got seven veils to finish!

Autolycus steps away. Xena begins to dance. A wild,
sensual dance that soon has everyone entranced. They
stare at her as she moves among the crowd, touching beards,
teasing everyone except Prognese, who refuses to be swayed.
All eyes are on her as she slowly removes veil after veil...

Unnoticed, Autolycus moves toward the chest. He is stopped
by guards. He smiles and looks up toward the rafters, then
scans the room. Finally, he goes over to one of the large
candles and scoops off a handful of wax. He hides it in his
hand as he then steps up to Malthus.

Meanwhile, Xena is losing veil after veil... we are getting
critical here.

AUTOLYCUS

I lost count. Where are we?

MALTHUS..

She's on her sixth veil... Amazing!
How much did you pay for her?

(CONTINUED)

17 CONTINUED: 3

17

Unseen by Malthus, Autolykus grabs the key tightly in his grasp and squeezes it into the wax.

AUTOLYCUS

I'll let you set the price. She might be that added incentive to my bid on the chest. Hmmm?

Malthus nods, interested. Xena glares at Autolykus as the seventh veil drops to the floor. He stands there, not moving an inch. It looks like he is going to let her go all the way. Xena floats over to a table with fruits and melon. She picks up a melon... smiling, she waves it about as a part of her dance, draping the end of the remaining veil over it... then pounds her fist into it! Still smiling... the meaning is clear to Autolykus...

AUTOLYCUS

That's enough for now, Cherish!
(to Malthus)

If she has interest as a bargaining chip... well, there should remain some mystery.

And, with his trademark grin, he walks over to Xena. Xena glares at him.

AUTOLYCUS

What?

Off this, we:

DISSOLVE TO:

18 INT. BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

18

It is dark with only the moonlight as source from the windows. A beat, then the door opens and Autolykus ducks inside, shutting the door quickly. The curtain hiding the chest is closed. Autolykus is dressed in his normal clothes (which we saw at the beginning of the show) and is pulling on his black cape. He looks about, then hears a noise... he ducks back behind the door as Xena enters. Xena wears her black nightgear (basically her normal outfit without the brass). Her sword dangles over her shoulder. As she turns and wedges a torch stand against the door:

XENA

It's all set. I stole a chariot from the stable. By the time anyone notices it's missing, we'll have the chest tied to the anchor. Now, the hard part.

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED:

18

AUTOLYCUS

Hard for you, simple run-of-the-mill for me. There are seven alarm bells, three are connected to those ropes. As soon as I secure the three bells, move quickly and stay low.

XENA

What about the spider silk threads?

AUTOLYCUS

"Invisible" threads? That's the oldest trick in the book. There are no threads, trust me.

Xena moves to the curtain and draws it back. Beat, then:

XENA

It seems it's a little crowded up there.

Autolycus looks to see:

MALTHUS

He is lying where the chest once rested on the suspended platform. Except the chest is gone and Malthus has an arrow in his back. Autolycus steps forward. Xena starts to grab him but... we hear a TWANG!

ALL HELL BREAKS LOOSE

as the alarm goes off! The remaining four bells are more than enough!!

XENA

(yelling)

No threads? Trust you??

Someone starts POUNDING ON THE DOOR! Xena and Autolycus react, as we:

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

19 INT. BANQUET HALL - NIGHT - AS BEFORE

19

The alarm is going off, as we left it. The torch stand wedge finally gives away and three guards rush into the room, followed by Arkel. They see Malthus' body. What they don't see, however, is:

HIGH WINDOW

A rope being quickly pulled up and out the window.

CUT TO:

20 INT. BANQUET HALL - LATER - NIGHT

20

Arkel stands in front of all the damage and, of course, Malthus' body. Also here are the buyers, in their regular clothes, looking sleepy.

A beat, then Xena and Autolykus (in their Sinteres and Cherish outfits) are brought in by guards. They look sleepy and are trying to button up.

AUTOLYCUS

What is all this about, Arkel? I have a few complaints to give Malthus about you.

AR KEL

Malthus is dead.

He indicates the lifeless body.

AUTOLYCUS

Well... you're off the hook this time.

AR KEL

Somebody in this room killed him and stole the chest. Maybe more than one person.

PROGNESE

Take care who you insult. Malthus was a fool. He didn't fear the truth, but he turned his back on an assassin.

AUTOLYCUS

Then I guess the auction's off, isn't it? A shame. Well, we'd better pack our bags. What time is the boat leaving?

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED:

20

AR KEL

The boat has already left. And it's going to stay away until I have either the chest or the murderer.

He walks away. Autolycus turns to Xena with a smile and:

AUTOLYCUS

I'm out of here.

He walks off. Xena takes a beat, then follows.

21 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

21

The guard opens the door. Autolycus enters, followed quickly by Xena. (NOTE: The curtain on the bed is drawn.) The door is shut and locked behind them.

XENA

What do you mean you're out of here?

AUTOLYCUS

Malthus' ego was important to our plan. He's dead; so is his ego; so is our plan. A good thief knows when to back off and pick another pocket.

XENA

I can't give up. This chest is too important to my friends.

AUTOLYCUS

Some advice from me to you: find less demanding friends.

XENA

There was a time... when I was young... I was wounded in battle. These people found me. They cared for me, they fed me and, when my enemies came to find me... one of them died protecting me.

(then)

They didn't know anything about me, they never asked. They knew I needed help. And they need my help now.

(finally)

I can't expect you to understand.

AUTOLYCUS

Understand? What, because I'm just a thief? No matter how or why?

(CONTINUED)

21 CONTINUED:

21

XENA

I just figured you learned it from your father.

AUTOLYCUS

My father? Now, that would be an interesting subject. Except that he was killed before I was born. My mother died when I was eight. It was just my older brother to take care of me. Like those people took care of you. And when he was killed... You do what you can to survive.

A long beat. Then:

AUTOLYCUS

If we find who killed Malthus, we'll find the chest.

He looks at Xena. She smiles.

XENA

Then we'd better get started.

AUTOLYCUS

First, I have got to get some sleep. I get the bed this time.

He opens the curtains to find:

THE CHEST

sitting neatly on the bed. A beat... A KNOCK is heard at the door. They freeze and look at each other.

XENA

Who is it?

BELART'S VOICE

Arkel sent us to search the room!

Autolycus panics. He grabs up the chest and runs around the room, looking for someplace to hide it.

AUTOLYCUS

A multi-million dinar castle and no closets??

Finally, he throws the chest on the bed and tries to pull the curtain back around the bed. In his haste, he pulls too hard and the whole curtain FALLS TO THE GROUND! He takes a beat, then:

(CONTINUED)

21 CONTINUED: 2

21

AUTOLYCUS

I've never been dead before, this should be interesting.

A THUD is heard at the door.

BELART'S VOICE

Open up!

XENA

A minute!

She turns, ripping open her clothes, then ripping Autolykus' clothes. He can only stare as she grabs the curtain, then grabs him, and pulls him on top of her as she drops onto the bed, pulling the curtain on top of them both (and the chest). She plants a big kiss on him as the door bursts open! Belart and the guards enter, but freeze when they see the scene.

XENA

I told you to wait!

(to Autolykus)

Please don't be angry with them, Lord Sinteres.

AUTOLYCUS

(recovering)

What? Yes! I'm enraged! If there was ever a moment that would enrage me more, I haven't found it!

BELART

(nervous)

I apologize, Lord Sinteres. Arkel issued specific orders...

AUTOLYCUS

Orders? For this? I'm more than enraged! I'm enraged big time! Where are my toothpicks...

Autolykus jumps off Xena, leaving her covering the chest with the curtain, and starts looking through his cape for toothpicks.

XENA

(to Belart)

You've better go. Hurry!

Autolykus has found a toothpick. He puts it in his teeth. Belart does a quick look around the room, and:

BELART

This looks secure. My apologies.

(CONTINUED)

21 CONTINUED: 3

21

Belart ducks out and slams the door behind him. A BEAT.

AUTOLYCUS

They might come back any minute. Maybe we'd better continue...

XENA

Get mortal.

She pulls the curtain off the chest and examines it. It has writing on the side.

XENA

(reading)

"Don't fear the Truth. Face it, for to turn away from Truth is death." Face fear... That's strange... what did Malthus say about not fearing the weapon?

AUTOLYCUS

Who cares? We have the chest but how are we going to get the boat back?

XENA

Simple. We put the chest back where it came from.

Off his look, we:

CUT TO:

22 INT. BANQUET HALL - NIGHT - WINDOW

22

The same window they escaped from. Autolycus and Xena are there with the chest. Xena has a rope.

XENA

The trick will be to get it lowered into place.

She takes the free end of the rope and throws it at the chandelier. It drapes over it and down.

AUTOLYCUS

Out of curiosity, why not just toss the thing into the hallway?

XENA

Whoever did this thinks he's got the upper hand on us. Putting it right back where he got it will make him think twice.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED:

22

XENA (cont'd)

Besides, this is the only place the guards aren't searching.

AUTOLYCUS

Good point. Now, for me.

Autolycus holds up his arm and the grappling hook shoots out and wraps around the dangling end of the rope.

XENA

That's a handy little device.

AUTOLYCUS

One of my own making. I improved it after my run-in with Hercules. Throwing it by hand took too long.

He starts to pull the rope to him.

AUTOLYCUS

Hercules didn't mention you.

XENA

I didn't realize you were a confidant of his.

AUTOLYCUS

Well, we were close. Fairly close. Friends. We respect each other. Actually, I kind of like the big guy.

XENA

Me, too.

He gives her a look as they tie the rope to the chest.

AUTOLYCUS

You and he didn't...

XENA

Mind your business, Autolycus.

AUTOLYCUS

I didn't think so.

XENA

(re: chest)

We're secure. What's next?

AUTOLYCUS

I'm having to think in reverse here... I lower myself down there. You push the chest over when I give the word.

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED: 2

22

He shoots the grappling hook to the chandelier. It hooks. He grabs the cable firmly, then turns to her...

AUTOLYCUS

A kiss before I...

She pushes him. He swings out to the chandelier and begins to lower himself through the delicate "invisible" threads to the suspended table (which, of course, has no body). Autolycus tests the table... no alarm. He tightens up the rope and signals her. She pushes the chest over. It swings to the middle of the room and Autolycus begins to lower it. Then:

ARKEL'S VOICE

Make sure the dock is secure. I'll check the banquet room.

Xena and Autolycus freeze. Xena then leaps to the rope leading down to Autolycus and slides down, landing on top of him. She hops off.

XENA

Keep lowering!

She runs to the door, just as it opens. Arkel starts in when Xena flies in front of him, looking shy and seductive.

ARKEL

What are you doing here?

XENA

I'm here because someone was killed here! In this very room. The very thought of it makes my blood race!

ARKEL

I should expect no less from a concubine of Sinteres.

XENA

And, also... because I knew you'd be here eventually. You've seen a lot of danger in your life, I'll bet.

ARKEL

A fair share. And then some. Won't Sinteres be missing you?

XENA

I left him passed out in our room. All his energy goes into fighting. He's not much of a lover.

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED: 3

22

Autolyucus reacts, but continues lowering the chest.
He looks up to see:

THE ROPE

starting to fray a bit.

Autolyucus reacts; what else could go wrong? He starts to let the rope out faster, not noticing the loose rope around his feet...

Xena has Arkel's complete attention.

XENA

Tell me, do you like to walk in the moonlight?

ARKEL

Are you sure Sinteres is asleep?

XENA

Positive.

She looks past him to see Autolyucus hanging upside-down! The chest is on the table, but Autolyucus is helpless. He shrugs at her. Arkel starts to turn his head. She grabs Arkel's face, pulls it back and kisses him! Even Autolyucus reacts... Arkel's scarred features don't lend themselves to easy kissing. Meanwhile, she reaches behind her and pulls out her chakram. Acting as if she was intent on him, she flips it at:

THE ROPE

It slices through it. Autolyucus drops. He hits the ground with a soft "THUD" as the chakram returns to Xena's hand. Arkel starts to look, but Xena pulls him back and stares into his eyes.

XENA

You're an animal. I like that.

Autolyucus crawls through the threads and heads over to them. He keeps to Arkel's back as Xena turns him so that Autolyucus can slip out the door.

ARKEL

(hot)
Come with me. My room isn't far.

AUTOLYUCUS' VOICE

Cherish? Where are you?

Arkel immediately pushes Xena away. She smiles.

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED: 4

22

XENA

In here, My Lord.

Autolycus enters.

XENA

Arkel and I were just talking.

ARKEL

Nothing harmful in that. Absolutely nothing!

XENA

He didn't even think of seducing me. Undressing me slowly... ravaging me...

Arkel's eyes widen.

AUTOLYCUS

Good. I've killed men for less. Come now.

Xena exits with Autolycus, giving Arkel a sexy look. When gone, Arkel breathes a sigh of relief, then turns. His eyes widen as he sees the chest...

DISSOLVE TO:

23 EXT. SUNRISE - DAY

23

To establish.

24 EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

24

A long table has been set up for breakfast. Everyone is here. Xena and Autolycus enter and sit.

MAGMAR

Did you hear? The chest has been returned! After breakfast, Arkel's going to demonstrate this thing and we can get into it.

PROGNESE

They should have found Malthus' killer. Who's to say who's next?

MAGMAR

I don't care if a hundred people die. By tomorrow morning, I'll be the most powerful person in the world!

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED:

24

At that moment, an enclosed cart drives up. Arkel sits on it, along with a distinguished and well-dressed man in his middle-thirties. They get down.

ARKEL

Attention, please. As you all know, the chest has been recovered. We will have a demonstration of its deadly power this morning. A fishing village, not too far from here. But, first... I want to introduce someone.

Arkel opens the back of the cart and out flops Gabrielle! Apparently unconscious.

Xena reacts, leaping across the table, knocking a guard on his butt. SINTERES crosses two fingers on his hand and touches Gabrielle's temple. Xena freezes.

SINTERES

Very good. You understand about pressure points.

(then; loudly)

I am Sinteres. The real Sinteres.

Reactions, then:

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

25 EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

25

As we left it. Sinteres still holds his fingers to Gabrielle's temple. She comes to in time to hear:

SINTERES

This little girl tried to stop me from coming here. She's brave, but...

GABRIELLE

I'm sorry, Xena! I had to do something...

Sinteres starts on the name "Xena."

XENA

I was getting tired of this game, anyway. Yes. I'm Xena.

SINTERES

The Warrior Princess! I finally meet you! No wonder you understand. And you?

A beat. Then Autolycus raises himself up and, proudly:

AUTOLYCUS

I... am Autolycus. The King of Thieves!

MAGMAR

(beat)

I thought that was Cadmus.

PROGNESE

Impostor! Allow me the honor of killing them both! To avenge the murder of Malthus!

XENA

A murder you committed yourself.

PROGNESE

That's insane!

XENA

When we were told Malthus had been killed, you said something about him not fearing the truth. That's a quote from the writing on the chest. Now, how could you have known that if you hadn't stolen it?

(CONTINUED)

25 CONTINUED:

25

Prognese is frozen. No escape with all the guards.

ARKEL

You're a dead man, Prognese.

SINTERES

Arkel... Allow me. I need to stretch a bit after the journey. Hold a dagger on this young one. Otherwise Xena might feel bold.

Arkel puts a knife to Gabrielle's side. Sinteres approaches Prognese with deadly intent.

PROGNESE

I'll kill you.

Prognese slashes at him. Sinteres ducks under his arm and, using those two crossed fingers, jabs him lightly in the armpit. Prognese screams and drops his sword. (NOTE: this battle should have the feeling of a mantis playing with its prey. Prognese is wild in his attacks; Sinteres is precise and deadly.)

During this, Xena grabs Autolykus' wrist. He looks at her quizzically, but doesn't object.

SINTERES

Painful, isn't it?

He holds his other hand, crossed fingers, up like a bird about to strike. It jabs forward, into Prognese's chest. Prognese screams again and falls to his knees.

SINTERES

Excruciating pain... and, as you feel the blood drain out of your lifeless heart... I explode your brain.

He opens his fingers into a "V" shape and jabs at Prognese's forehead. Prognese grabs his skull and screams as if, indeed, his brain has exploded. Blood pours from his nose and ears. He falls over, dead. Sinteres looks to Arkel.

SINTERES

(re: Gabrielle)

You can kill her now.

Xena reacts, bringing Autolykus' wrist up and FIRING THE GRAPPLE. It flies out and SNARES ARKEL'S WRIST. She pulls and he drops to the ground. Gabrielle immediately rolls to the side. Guards rush Xena and Autolykus. Xena kicks them down as Autolykus grabs Gabrielle and they all run. The guards start to pursue, but Arkel stops them.

(CONTINUED)

25 CONTINUED: 2

25

ARKEL

Wait! Get more men. Find the three of them and bring me their heads.

(to the rest)

We have a demonstration to attend.

SINTERES

You're foolish to let her go, you know that.

ARKEL

It is my decision to make, Lord Sinteres. My men will take care of them. Right now, I want to test this marvelous weapon.

Off this, we:

26 EXT. CLEARING - DAY

26

Xena, Autolykus, and Gabrielle enter and stop. They crouch low as Xena looks behind them. Satisfied they aren't in immediate danger, she turns to them.

AUTOLYCUS

Just out of curiosity, why did we run? I don't disagree, but it's not really your style.

XENA

We came to get the chest. That hasn't changed.

(to Gabrielle)

How's your head?

GABRIELLE

Have you ever had a headache that was so painful you wanted to be dead? Well, I wish I had one of those right now.

XENA

Here... lean forward.

She does. Xena touches the back of her head, then "pops" her fingers on the back of Gabrielle's neck. Gabrielle opens her mouth wide again, as if trying to pop her ears.

GABRIELLE

Now, I do want to be dead. Which is still an improvement.

(CONTINUED)

26 CONTINUED:

26

XENA

It will take some time to lose it.
You're very lucky. Sinteres knows how
to kill using pressure points.

GABRIELLE

Is it the same stuff you know?

XENA

Yes. It just depends on what you do
with it.

AUTOLYCUS

I don't want to be a nag, but what's
our next move?

XENA

Arkel said he was going to round up the
villagers. We need to know where he's
taking them.

(to Gabrielle)

Follow them and mark the trail.

GABRIELLE

What about you two?

XENA

I've got to get my sword and chakram
from the room. Don't worry about us.
Just be careful.

Gabrielle nods, then heads off.

AUTOLYCUS

Can I ask you something? Is your
life always like this?

XENA

Pretty much.

She moves off, Autolycus following.

CUT TO:

27 EXT. ANOTHER CLEARING - DAY

27

Gabrielle moves towards several horses. She looks about...
no one to be seen.

GABRIELLE

I can't believe I'm about to do this...

(CONTINUED)

27 CONTINUED:

27

But, just before she can get on a horse, a spear JAMS INTO THE GROUND NEXT TO HER. She spins and finds two guards approaching.

Gabrielle grabs up the spear, slams the tip into the ground to break off the blade, then sets herself in a fighting position.

GABRIELLE

Don't mess with me. I have a huge headache and I'm just not in the mood.

The guards smile and charge her. Gabrielle reacts, sweeping the legs out from under the first guard as she spins the staff over her head and brings it down into the chest of the second, knocking him back.

GABRIELLE

I warned you! I have a headache!!

Another spin and the staff comes down on the first guard's head, dropping him to the ground. Gabrielle takes a beat, opens her mouth wide as before to ease the pain. She then turns to a horse and, clumsily, jumps on board. She spurs it and, as the horse takes off, does her best to hold on.

CUT TO:

28 INT. BEDROOM - DAY

28

A beat, then Xena crawls through the window. Xena immediately goes to her gear and begins to put it on. Autolycus appears at the window and strenuously pulls himself through.

AUTOLYCUS

I'm a thief, not a human fly.

XENA

Hercules said you were good at this.

AUTOLYCUS

If I had known his high esteem for me was going to land me in this situation in the first place...

He starts to put on his regular Autolycus clothes.

XENA

I didn't say he had high esteem for you. Just that you were good.

(CONTINUED)

28 CONTINUED:

28

AUTOLYCUS

It's pretty obvious that Hercules doesn't know a diamond in the rough when he sees it. I mean, look at you.

XENA

You want to explain that?

AUTOLYCUS

Hercules could have any woman he wanted. Obviously he passed you up.

XENA

Was that supposed to be a compliment?

AUTOLYCUS

No, just a fact. If he let someone like you get away, he must be...

(then)

Okay, so, yeah, it was a compliment.

XENA

Hercules isn't as blind as you think. But neither one of us wants to fool ourselves.

AUTOLYCUS

(beat; then)

And, then, there are those of us who live to fool ourselves...

Xena moves back to the window.

AUTOLYCUS

Excuse me... there is a door here.

She looks at him, smiles, and heads to the door. He follows.

CUT TO:

29 EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

29

Xena and Autolycus rush out of the building and find six guards.

XENA

We don't have time for this...

The first couple of men charge, Xena and Autolycus knock them about. When there is a moment's rest, Autolycus yells:

AUTOLYCUS

Go! I'll hold them off.

(CONTINUED)

29 CONTINUED:

29

XENA
Are you kidding me?

AUTOLYCUS
I think I'm kidding myself. Go! Save those people!

Then, with a scream, he charges into the fray. Xena takes a beat, then jumps a horse. Riding out, she manages to knock three of the men down to give Autolyclus a fighting chance.

AUTOLYCUS
Thanks! Come back when you're done!

He gets hit from behind. He stumbles, but turns to fight off the remaining three men.

CUT TO:

30 EXT. ROAD - DAY

30

The villagers are being marched along in a line. Several of the guards poke and prod the people to keep them moving. Arkel and Sinteres are riding horses. The rest of the group is in a cart.

GABRIELLE

is watching from a distance. As the group passes, she steps out and places three large stones, one on top of the other, on the side of the road, then places a smaller one on the side of the pile in the direction they went. Done, she turns to head back into the wood when she sees:

SINTERES

waiting patiently for her. Off this, we:

CUT TO:

31 INT. CAVE - DAY

31

Sinteres standing in the middle of the cave; Gabrielle being held under guard with the villagers off to the side; and at one end, Arkel and the group with the chest.

Xena walks calmly into the cave and faces him. Sinteres smiles.

SINTERES
You said you were looking forward to this.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

31 CONTINUED:

31

SINTERES (cont'd)

I plan to make you happy, even though
it will be the last bit of joy you have
on this earth.

With that, he brings his hands up in a martial arts pose,
his fingers crossed. Xena does the same. In fact, this
entire fight should consist of quick, direct strikes with
the fingertips following into flowing defensive moves.
Akido meets acupressure.

Sinteres darts his hand forward, toward Xena's chest. She
blocks it and counters, he blocks that. They are probing...
Sinteres makes another feint to the chest. Xena blocks,
counters and is struck in the upper arm!

Xena reacts, backing off, her arm hanging loose. She tries
to shake it off, applying her own pressure to ease the pain.
With renewed vigor, she enters the battle again. This time,
it's fast and furious. Darting hands, quick moves. Both
make contact. Finally, Xena manages to get a quick strike
to Sinteres' neck. Blood flows from his ear. In pain, he
strikes low, catching Xena's leg. She drops to one knee,
her leg helpless. Sinteres stands above her. He holds his
hand high, his fingers in a "V" for the coup de grace.

SINTERES

Good-bye, Xena.

His hand comes down toward her forehead. She quickly moves
her hand up and places it against her head in a vertical
salute which splits the "V" and stops his fingers short of
their goal. He takes a beat of surprise as Xena jams her
fingers into his chest. He staggers backward, the surprise
of his death still on his face. Blood flows from his nose.
He touches it, looks at the blood, and falls over backwards.
Dead.

Xena stands, wearily, and faces the group.

ARKEL

Whoever kills her will get half their
bid returned!

Magmar and all the rest draw their swords. Gabrielle kicks
the guard nearest to her and takes the spear. As another
draws his sword, she HITS HIS WRIST sending the sword
flying...

GABRIELLE

Xena!

...into Xena's hand. She sets herself for battle. Just
before they get to her, a YELL is heard.

(CONTINUED)

31 CONTINUED: 2

31

AUTOLYCUS swings into the picture on his grappling line and slams into the group, knocking them about like bowling pins. He drops to the ground next to Xena.

AUTOLYCUS

I made it.

XENA

I knew you would.

AUTOLYCUS

Should I concentrate on anyone in particular, or do we hate them all?

XENA

Every last one of them.

And they are into it. Even in her weakened state, Xena can take these people on. Autolycus doesn't do too bad, either. Xena does a flying kick into Magmar that sends him into the guards in front of the villagers. Gabrielle takes the opportunity to grab a spear (breaking the point) and start into them.

GABRIELLE

(to villagers)

Run! Get out of here!

The villagers all scatter out of the cave. Now it is only Xena, Gabrielle, Autolycus and the heavies fighting it out.

Except for Arkel. He stands next to the chest, watching with disgust. He looks at the chest and touches the lid... he is tempted... Xena sees it.

XENA

Arkel! Don't!

AR KEL

Let's see what this weapon can do!

With that, he opens the lid.

Everyone freezes and stares at it as a BALL OF LIGHT glows from inside. One of the soldiers turns to run and a BOLT flies out and drops him. The glow gets stronger. Arkel backs away in fear.

XENA

Gabrielle! Autolycus! Don't fear the truth, face it! Don't run!

The three of them stand facing the chest. The heavies, including Arkel, turn and run.

(CONTINUED)

31 CONTINUED: 3

31

A FLASH OF LIGHT flares out from the chest, moving quickly through the air, past our heroes. As it hits each of the fleeing heavies, it DISSOLVES THEM into ashes.

Play this effect just enough to break the budgets of the next two episodes until the Light retreats back into the chest and... it is quiet. Xena, Gabrielle and Autolykus are unharmed. All that is left of the others is little piles of ash.

GABRIELLE

That... that was incredible!

They walk slowly toward the chest, which still has the lid open.

AUTOLYCUS

And you want to return this to your friends?

XENA

It belongs to them. And, believe it or not... it will be safe with them.

They stand around the chest. Autolykus looks inside. Carefully, he reaches in and pulls out a stone tablet. It has writing on it.

AUTOLYCUS

"Thou shall not covet... thou shall not steal..?" Who could live by these rules?

Off this, we:

DISSOLVE TO:

32 EXT. CLEARING - DAY

32

Kelton and his people are here. They now have the chest which sits in a cart. Xena and Gabrielle watch as Autolykus is paid the other half of his reward.

KELTON

It's all there. All that we have. But money alone cannot repay you for what you've done.

AUTOLYCUS

To be honest, I don't think you have anything that could.

Autolykus takes the money and places it into the purple pouch that we saw earlier.

(CONTINUED)

32 CONTINUED:

32

He jingles it and listens with a smile on his face.

KELTON

Theft is not something we admire,
but... you truly are The King of
Thieves.

AUTOLYCUS

Yes, I am...
(a look to Xena)
We are.

Autolycus walks Kelton back to the cart that holds the chest.

AUTOLYCUS

Just make sure everyone knows about it.
I'm only as good as my reputation.

He taps the chest reflectively, then pats Kelton on the back. Kelton smiles, shakes his hand, and he and his people walk away, pulling the cart with the chest on it.

Autolycus turns to Xena.

AUTOLYCUS

And what could I say to you? I've
never had a partner in crime and after
this... I never will.

Xena smiles and he gives her a hug. Then, he hugs Gabrielle. They both subtly check their belongings.

AUTOLYCUS

I wish I had a more dramatic exit, but
I think I could use a walk.

With a deep bow, he starts to walk away. A beat, then Gabrielle turns to Xena.

GABRIELLE

I hate to admit it, but I like him.
Even though, when you strip it all
away, he was still just a thief for
hire.

XENA

Was he?

She points to:

THE CART

as it pulls away. The purple pouch sits on it next to the chest.

(CONTINUED)

32 CONTINUED: 2

32

XENA AND GABRIELLE

Gabrielle spins around, but Autolykus is gone.

GABRIELLE

I wish I had known he was going to do
that. I wouldn't have taken this.

She holds up the jeweled pendant from Autolykus' cape.
Gabrielle gives a smile. Xena laughs.

XENA

Come on.

They start to walk off. As they CROSS FRAME, we HOLD on
Autolykus watching from the trees with a smile on his face.
Then, he moves away, leaving us on Xena and Gabrielle, as
we:

FADE OUT.

THE END