

XENIA

WARRIOR PRINCESS

Altared States

BY

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Episode #22

XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"Altared States".

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Directed by
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Revised Page: 33

Executive Producers
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SHOOTING DRAFT
February 20, 1996
Rev. February 23, 1996 - Pink
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Rev. February 26, 1996 - Yellow

XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"Altaered States"

CAST LIST

XENA
GABRIELLE

ANTEUS	(ANN-tee-us)
MAELL	(MAY-ell)
ICUS	(EYE-kus)
ZORA	
ZEALOT #1	
SENIOR ZEALOT	
BRAWNY ZEALOT	
ZEALOT GUARD	

Referred to in dialog: _____

Zealot (ZELL-ut)

XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"Altared States"

SET LIST

INTERIORS:

ANTEUS' HOUSE
XENA'S HIDEOUT CAVE
ABANDONED WELL

EXTERIORS:

ANTEUS' HOUSE
ROAD BEYOND ANTEUS' HOUSE
LAKE
WOODS
WOODED TRAIL

NEAR AN ABANDONED WELL
DILAPIDATED STONE SHRINE
MOUNTAIN
FOOT OF MOUNTAIN
NEAR MOUNTAINTOP
NEAR MOUNTAINTOP ROPE BRIDGE
MOUNTAINTOP
ROCKY MOUNTAIN PASS
NARROW MOUNTAIN PASS
MOUNTAIN SLOPE

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Prod. #76926

XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"Altered States"

CHRONOLOGY

DAY 1

SCENES #1 - 42

XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"Altered States"

TEASER

FADE IN:

1 INT. ANTEUS' HOUSE - DAY

1

A prosperous, middle-aged woman, ZORA, is desperately putting provisions in a sack while her 12-year-old son, ICUS, looks stunned.

ICUS
It's not true! It can't be!

ZORA
Icus, he told me himself.

ICUS
But Mother --

ZORA
There's no time to argue. Now, get your coat while I pack some food. You're bound to get hungry.

Icus reacts as he gets his coat while Zora puts fruit, meat, nutbread, etc. in the sack.

ICUS
How long must I be gone?

ZORA
Until it's safe for you to return.

ICUS
But Mother, I don't understand.

Eyeing her son, Zora stops and pulls him close.

ZORA
Neither do I, love...
(imploring the heavens)
...neither do I.

An approaching SHOUT from outside interrupts them.

MAELL (O.S.)
(calls)
Icus? You home?

Reacting, Zora thrusts the sack of provisions into Icus' hands and rushes him to the back door.

(CONTINUED)

1 CONTINUED:

1

ZORA
(opening door)
Run! Find a place to hide and stay
there. I'll find you when it's safe.

ICUS MAELL (O.S.)
But -- Icus?

ZORA
Go!

And with a last look, Icus is gone.

CUT TO:

2 EXT. A LAKE - DAY

2

As Argo grazes by some bushes from which hang Xena's and Gabrielle's clothes, a SPLASH draws the camera PANNING toward the water while we hear:

GABRIELLE (O.S.)
Sorry. How was that? *

XENA (O.S.)
Very good. *

GABRIELLE (O.S.)
Really? It felt a little awkward. *

XENA (O.S.)
No, you're getting the hang of it. *

With that, the camera FINDS AND HOLDS on Xena and Gabrielle. They stand in the water. Both of them are buck naked. They're staring down into the water.

XENA
Now, reach under the rock, give it your
best shot.

Gabrielle bends over, disappearing for a moment under water. Then she pops up -- A LARGE CATFISH appended to her hand. She just shoved her fist into the fish's mouth.

GABRIELLE
I did it!

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED: 2

2

Suddenly, Xena bursts from the lake like a murderous siren, tears Icus away from the Zealot, and tosses him back into the lake while...

...the stunned Zealot's gaze drops to focus, transfixed, on Xena's chest.

XENA (O.S.)
(dripping both water and
contempt)
Didn't your mother ever tell you it's
rude to stare?

*
*

And hauling back, she takes him out with a single punch.

ON XENA'S TUNIC

*

Her hand grabs it as we see in the background:

*

THREE MORE ZEALOTS

*

emerging from the woods.

*

ON XENA

*

Now in her tunic, she grabs a LINE ON WHICH THREE FISH
HANG. Using it as a bolo, she begins whacking these guys.

*
*

Meanwhile, Gabrielle slips on her dress and turns to Icus,
who is still in the water, cautioning:

*
*

--- GABRIELLE
Stay where you are. You'll be safer.

*

*

Xena is dispatching another slack-jawed Zealot with a kick
that shuts his jaw with a teeth-shattering CRUNCH while --

*

-- behind her, another Zealot is sneaking up on Xena when --

Gabrielle launches an attack with her staff, catching him
under the chin with a clean blow.

*
*

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED: 3

2

More Zealots charge Xena. Springing into the air, she somersaults over their heads, landing behind them so that, as they turn...

*

*

...Xena slaps the faces of all three with the fish-bolo in one fluid move before coming back from the other direction with a punch that knocks them out: one, two, three.

*

But as Xena spins again, she suddenly stops, finding herself face-to-face with...

...MAELL, clearly the leader of these Zealots, a muscular man in his 20's whose eyes burn with the icy fire of an ambitious fanatic. Completely unmoved by Xena's appearance, he keeps his eyes locked on hers.

MAELL

I don't know who...

(cool once-over)

...or what you are. But this business is none of yours.

XENA

My name is Xena. And the way I see it, half-a-dozen men going after one small, defenseless boy kinda makes it my business.

(facetious)

Call it my maternal instinct.

*

*

ICUS

Don't let him take me! Please!

XENA

(to Icus; her eyes never leaving Maell)

Nobody's taking you anywhere.

Maell returns her gaze as his men begin reviving. Then:

MAELL

This isn't over. What must be, will be.

And motioning his men to follow, Maell exits.

Xena watches them go, then turns to Icus.

XENA

What was that all about?

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED: 4

2

ICUS
(hesitates; then)
He wants to take me to be sacrificed.

GABRIELLE
Sacrificed?! You mean, like on an
altar... with a knife?
(off his unhappy nod)
But that's barbaric!

XENA
(skeptical)
Who'd want to do such a thing?

ICUS
(sadly bewildered)
My father.

And ON the women's reactions, we:

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

3 EXT. WOODS - DAY

3

Xena scans the area searchingly as she takes Icus (who carries his sack) and Gabrielle (who leads Argo) through the woods.

ICUS

I know how it looks. But my father's a good man.

(off their dubious faces)
Really, he is. Once when I was very sick, he stayed by my bed night and day. Never left 'til I was feeling better. He's always been like that.

*
*
*
*
*

XENA

Then why'd he send that thug after you?

*

ICUS

Thug? Oh, you mean my brother, Maell.

*

XENA

Your brother?!

GABRIELLE

Nice Family.

*

--- ICUS

Maell and his men are very strong in their faith. Maell helped my father teach our people new ways to farm. Now we grow twice as much as we used to.

*
*
*
*

XENA

What about your mother? You said she warned you. How does she feel about this?

ICUS

I don't know. She's mixed up about all of this, too, I guess. My father's never hurt anyone, ever.

*
*

Seeing his pained confusion, Gabrielle eyes him kindly.

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED:

3

GABRIELLE

Then I'm sure there's an explanation,
and we'll find it...

(turning)

...right, Xena?

Reacting, Gabrielle stares to find... Xena's gone.

GABRIELLE

Xena?

XENA (O.S.)

(calling)

In here. I found it.

Surprised, Gabrielle and Icus scan the woods.

GABRIELLE

Found what?

Xena emerges from a small cave hidden behind a tangle of vines.

XENA

My army came through here once a
couple of years ago. I used this cave
as a shelter for my wounded men.
You'll be safe here, so you two make
camp.

*
*
*

(crossing to Argo)

I'll be back as soon as I can.

GABRIELLE

Where're you going?

XENA

(mounting Argo)

To have a talk with Icus' family, find
out for myself what kind of father'd
want to kill his own son.

CUT TO:

4 INT. ANTEUS' HOUSE - DAY

4

CLOSE ON ANTEUS, an elderly patriarch whose noble face is
creased with concern.

ANTEUS

Are you telling me you don't have
Icus?!

WIDEN to include Maell who scowls, briefly conceding:

(CONTINUED)

4 CONTINUED:

4

MAELL

At the moment, no. But don't worry.
My men and I'll get him back if we have
to die doing it.

ANTEUS

(suddenly agitated)

No!

His agitation surprises even Anteus who frowns, confused.
Noting his father's bewilderment, Maell eyes him closely.
But, pulling himself together, Anteus continues, explaining:

ANTEUS

There's been too much violence already.
That's not our way.

MAELL

Nor would I choose it. But this Xena's
left me no alternative. These are new
times, Father. They demand new ways.

ANTEUS

To follow a path of peace is new. We
teach by example, not by force.

MAELL

But Father, when the truth can help so
many, surely we're honorbound to spread
it the most aggressive way we can!

— — XENA (O.S.)

One that includes killing children?

Whirling, Maell and Anteus react to see...

...Xena has joined them, standing by the door.

Instantly, Maell draws his sword. But Anteus stops him.

ANTEUS

No.

(as Maell hesitates;
imperious)

I said no.

A BEAT. Then Maell sheaths his sword. But as Anteus turns
to Xena, he winces at a sudden pain in his head. Seeing
this, Xena instinctively starts toward him.

XENA

You better lie down. You don't look
well.

*
*

(CONTINUED)

4 CONTINUED: 2

4

MAELL

(intercepting her)

My father's health, like everything else here, is not your concern. Just let us have Icus, and move on. That's all we want.

Hearing that, Anteus looks up eagerly, dismissing his pain.

ANTEUS

You have Icus?! How is he?

Noting his genuine concern, Xena's surprised to find he's not the monster she had envisioned.

XENA

Confused. He doesn't understand how his father could love him one day, and want to kill him the next.

ANTEUS

(becoming agitated)

But I don't want to kill him. Surely he knows that.

Xena notes his odd agitation before asking:

XENA

Then why are you doing this?

Controlling himself with effort, Anteus is sad, but resolved.

ANTEUS

Because God has commanded it.

XENA

God?! Which god? Ares? Zeus?

MAELL

(righteously)

There's only one true Supreme Deity. The Almighty God of my father, the One whose voice speaks only to him.

XENA

Uh-huh. And this one god -- this all-powerful deity -- he told you to kill an innocent boy?

(shaking her head)

And I thought Ares was cold.

(turning to Anteus)

Why's he want you to do this?

(CONTINUED)

4 CONTINUED: 3

4

Anteus' anguish makes it clear he doesn't know as Maell steps between them, eyeing Xena coldly.

MAELL

Our Holy One is not accountable to anyone, let alone a nonbeliever.

XENA

Then you'd better pray he has a change of heart. Because until he does, Icus stays with me.

She turns to exit. But as she does, Maell draws his sword and Xena spins back, fully alert, only to see --

-- the sword halts, stopped by Anteus' grip on Maell's arm.

ANTEUS

Enough! She leaves unharmed. I'll pray to God for guidance. But until I get it, there'll be no more violence...

(to Xena; a vow)

...of any kind.

A BEAT. Then, once again, Maell puts up his sword. But the look he levels Xena as she exits is as lethal as they come.

CUT TO:

5 EXT. NEAR AN ABANDONED WELL - DAY

5

Still on Maell's menacing scowl as he states flatly:

MAELL

She's got to die.

PULL BACK to see he's talking to his troop of Zealots.

ZEALOT #1

But how? You said, yourself, Anteus forbids it.

MAELL

My father is a wise man. But he is also an aging man in failing health. No doubt that's why he doesn't see Xena for what she truly is: a trial sent by the Almighty One to test our resolve.

The crowd's MURMURS suggest they never looked at it that way.

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED:

5

MAELL

(playing them)

Can you doubt it? All you have to do is look at her to see she's unnatural -- an affront to God! A woman with the strength of ten men -- out in the world alone, save for her scrawny little companion. She's a complete abomination!

The Zealots MUTTER their increasing disgust.

MAELL

(really working them)

And to think this freak of nature has my brother! A boy so innocent and pure that the All-Powerful One has called him to His side at the tender age of twelve!

(off the crowd's rising RUMBLES)

How do you think the Supreme Deity feels about that? Leaving His chosen one in the hands of a woman whose gods are as primitive as she is?!

ZEALOT #1

(erupting fanatically)

Xena must die!

The others join him in SHOUTS of "Kill the harlot!", "She's a freak!", "Pagan bitch!", etc. as through the COMMOTION and NOISE we find and HOLD on Maell's satisfied smile.

CUT TO:

6 INT. XENA'S HIDEOUT CAVE - DAY

6

Filtered sunlight illuminates Icus who seems miles away as he sits listening to Gabrielle's exciting story.

GABRIELLE

...when, suddenly, the soldiers burst out of the wooden horse, surprising everyone!

(noting Icus' absent gaze; testing him)

And so then the Trojans turned into...

(searching for a big enough surprise)

...growling, monstrous lions.

(MORE)

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*

(CONTINUED)

6 CONTINUED:

6

GABRIELLE (cont'd)

(upping the ante)

There was blood dripping from their lips.

(this'll get him)

Then the Greeks brought in their army of firebreathing, ten-headed, crazed hydras... Pretty interesting, huh?

(in his face)

...Right?

*
*
*
*
*

(CONTINUED)

6 CONTINUED:

6

ICUS
(abruptly coming to)
Huh? Oh! Uh -- right!

GABRIELLE
(not unkindly)
You haven't heard a word I've said,
have you?

ICUS
(hesitates; then)
Sorry. You tell a great story. It's
just, I can't stop thinking about my
father, and wondering why he'd wanna.--

He stops, reluctant to even say it.

GABRIELLE
(sympathizing)
Yeah... But it's no good speculating.
We'll know a lot more when Xena gets
back.

(crossing to peer past the
vines)
I just hope she thinks to bring some
food. I'm famished.

ICUS
I've got food.

GABRIELLE
(crossing back)
You do?

ICUS
(opening cloth sack)
My mother packed it for me. See?
(removing each item)
Apples, pears, cheese...

GABRIELLE
(spotting it)
Is that nutbread? Yummm...! I haven't
had any of that since I was home.

ICUS
Help yourself. I'm not hungry.

GABRIELLE
Well, if you're sure...
(taking large piece)
...but you're making a big mistake.

And as she starts to eat it --

CUT TO:

7 EXT. A DILAPIDATED STONE SHRINE - DAY

7

ON SOME NUTBREAD being placed as an offering.

PULL BACK to reveal... Zora, kneeling in supplication.

ZORA

Hestia, goddess of hearth and home, it has been many years since I have honored you. But, please, hear my prayer. Protect my son, Icus.

XENA (O.S.)

Don't worry. Icus is safe.

Startled, Zora turns to see...

...Xena emerging from the surrounding woods to join her.

ZORA

(rising eagerly)

You know my Icus? Where is he? Who are you?

XENA

My name is Xena. Icus is staying with me and a friend 'til we can sort this thing out. That's why I came to talk to you.

ZORA

But how did you know I was here?

XENA

When I saw you weren't at home, I asked myself where a mother who loves her son enough to defy her husband would go.

(indicating shrine)

The patron goddess of families seemed like a good place to start.

ZORA

(looking guilty)

If Anteus knew I'd turned from his God back to the old ones, it would kill him.

XENA

Tough choice, seeing his god wants to kill Icus. Just answer me this: how can he follow a god who needs to murder children?

(CONTINUED)

7 CONTINUED:

7

ZORA

He never has before! And what's even stranger, not two months ago, our Supreme One told Anteus to break with tradition and make Icus our next leader, not our oldest son, Maell.

XENA

(reacting)

Did Maell know about this?

ZORA

I don't know. Lately, Anteus has been so secretive and strange. I'm afraid he confides more in his God than in me.

(appealing to Xena)

That's why you have to try and reach him, Xena. Please -- to kill a child, it can't be right, no matter what god you follow.

XENA

I'll speak to Anteus. But it's probably better if we go separately. It may not be good for your health to be seen with me.

*
*
*
*
*

But as Xena starts off --

(CONTINUED)

7 CONTINUED: 2

7

ZORA

Wait.

(reaching into a pocket)
I have a little more nutbread. Would
you take it to Icus?

(handing it to her)
I packed some in his sack, but you know
how children are about nutbread. And
Maell had this one specially made, so I
thought --

XENA

-- Wait!

(sniffing and tasting a
pinch of nutbread)
Did you say Maell had this made?

ZORA

(nods)
It's one of the special treats he's
been bringing Anteus lately.

Xena frowns, reacting to the nutbread's taste and smell as
Zora turns to get her shawl.

ZORA

Still, I don't think Anteus would mind
Icus having some, do you?

Getting no answer, Zora turns back to find... Xena's gone.

CUT TO:

8 INT. XENA'S HIDEOUT CAVE - DAY

3

Thrusting back the vines, Xena rushes into the cave to
see...

...Gabrielle lying on the floor, with Icus nowhere in sight.

Racing to Gabrielle, Xena kneels to check for life, only to
stare as she sees... the remains of the nutbread lying
beside her.

ON Xena's worried face, we:

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

9 INT. XENA'S HIDEOUT CAVE - DAY (CONTINUOUS) 9

Xena checks Gabrielle for signs of life, relieved to hear her heartbeat, feeling her pulse, seeing her pupil contract when she pries up one of her eyelids.

XENA
Gabrielle?! Gabrielle, can you hear me? Wake up! Are you all right?

Staring up through one eye, Gabrielle gives a loopy smile.

GABRIELLE
Great... just great.
(rolls her one open eye;
starting to panic)
...Only I can't see so good.

XENA
Try using both eyes.

Reacting, Gabrielle opens her other eye and beams, rolling them around together.

GABRIELLE
Oh, yeah... Good idea. This is much better --

She stops, staring up at Xena, transfixed.

XENA
(concerned)
What? What is it?

GABRIELLE
By the gods, Xena...
(dazed smile)
...you're beautiful!

XENA
Uh-huh. And you are drugged...
(showing her nutbread
crumbs)
...with henbane, if I'm not mistaken.
So the effects should be temporary.
But we need to get you moving. Think
you can stand?

GABRIELLE
You mean, I'm not?

(CONTINUED)

9 CONTINUED:

9

With a look, Xena hauls Gabrielle to her feet and starts walking her around the cave.

XENA

Now, I want you to concentrate, okay?

GABRIELLE

Okay. But I think it's a big waste of time. I've been walking since I was one.

XENA

This isn't about walking, Gabrielle. It's about Icus. You remember Icus?

GABRIELLE

(with a look)

Well, of course I remember Icus.

XENA

Good. Do you know where he is?

GABRIELLE

Where?

XENA

No -- I'm asking you: where's Icus?

GABRIELLE

(blinking)

I don't know...

(looking around)

Icus? Icus?

(checks her pockets)

Icus, you in there? Icus...?

(back to Xena; appalled)

I've lost Icus!

And with that, Gabrielle bursts into tears, throwing herself in Xena's arms. Knowing a drug-induced crying jag when she sees one, Xena pats Gabrielle's back as she devises a plan. Then:

XENA

(disengaging)

Gabrielle... Gabrielle, calm down. I'm sure you didn't lose Icus. He probably saw you pass out, and went for help.

(almost afraid to ask)

By the way, how much nutbread did Icus eat?

(CONTINUED)

9 CONTINUED: 2

9

GABRIELLE

(embarrassed)

None.

(defensive)

I wanted to share. But it was just so good -- and he said he wasn't hungry -- 'til before long, it was gone...

(tears welling)

...just like Icus.

XENA

(forestalling more tears)

It's okay! There's no sign of a struggle. My guess is he went to get his mother. Aside from us, she's his only ally.

GABRIELLE

(instantly cheered)

Then what are we waiting for? Let's go!

(turns to empty cave behind her)

The rest of you -- follow me!

But as Gabrielle whirls and starts for the entrance, Xena stops her.

XENA

Hold it.

GABRIELLE

(quick; behind her)

At ease.

XENA

(vamping as she goes)

I've got a better idea... I'll go get Icus while you and the... uh...

(indicates empty cave)

...'others'... stay here and try to, uh... try to --

GABRIELLE

(venturing eagerly)

-- work on our song?

(confidentially)

Between you and me, the altos are slightly flat.

(CONTINUED)

9 CONTINUED: 3

9

XENA
(why not?)
Perfect! But above all:
(straight into her face)
Do not leave the cave. Understand?
Stay here until I get back. Have I
made myself clear?

GABRIELLE
(staring hard)
No. But you're getting sorta fuzzy at
the edges, so keep trying, you'll get
there.
(then; turning to empty
cave)
Okay, fellas -- from the top...

As Gabrielle conducts a chorus only she can hear, Xena looks
torn -- hating to leave, but having no choice.

CUT TO:

10 INT. ANTEUS' HOUSE - DAY

10

Icus dogs Zora's heels as she rushes to collect her
medicines:

ICUS
Hurry, Mother! I think she's really
sick. She started talking all strange,
and then she fell asleep, and I
couldn't wake her!

ZORA
All right, I'm coming! But I'll be no
good to this Gabrielle without my
medicines, now will I?
(handing him a vial)
Here -- go get me some bitterwort from
the garden.

The look on her face brooks no protest, so Icus takes the
vial and exits.

*

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED:

Zora picks up another empty vial and heads outside.

10

*

ZORA
(calling)
Icus? I need some helianthus, too.
Icus...?

CUT TO:

11
THRU OMITTED
12

11*
THRU
12*

13 EXT. ANTEUS' HOUSE - DAY

13

Zora emerges from the house.

ZORA
Icus, you hear? I said --

She stops, horrified to see --

-- A group of Zealots have grabbed Icus, covering his mouth
so he can't scream, and are taking the struggling boy away!

ZORA
(a primal cry)
NO!

*

(CONTINUED)

13 CONTINUED:

13

She charges. Biting and clawing and scratching and hitting, Zora fights like a mother tigress to try and free Icus. But it's clearly no use as, growing tired of her nuisance...

*

...a BRAWNY ZEALOT shoves her hard and Zora falls down.

*

Seeing this, Icus wrenches his mouth free and screams:

ICUS

Mother!

(then; to Zealots)

Please -- don't hurt her! I'll go with you. Just don't hurt her. Please!

A SENIOR ZEALOT motions his men to take Icus away. Then, glancing down at Zora, who is scrambling to her feet, he turns back to the Brawny Zealot.

*

SENIOR ZEALOT

Make sure she stays here.

*

And turning, he strides off while the Brawny Zealot turns toward her.

*

*

BRAWNY ZEALOT

Don't give me any trouble.

*

*

Off Zora's pained look, we:

*

CUT TO:

14
THRU OMITTED
15

14*
THRU
15*

16 EXT. WOODED TRAIL - DAY

16*

Xena rides Argo hell-for-leather round a bend in the trail that leads to Anteus' house, reacting to see...

*

...an enormous twenty-foot barricade of logs has been constructed, creating a cul-de-sac into which she's riding.

Looking behind her, Xena sees a group of Zealots moving in to close the trap as --

-- Argo continues galloping toward the barricade.

Then, at the last possible moment, Argo balks (just as Xena had anticipated) so that, using her tremendous forward momentum...

(CONTINUED)

16 CONTINUED:

16

...Xena somersaults high over the barricade...

...to land on the other side and take off running without ever breaking stride!

CUT TO:

17 EXT. ANTEUS' HOUSE - DAY

17

The Brawny Zealot is watching Zora. She sits on a stump by her house. The Zealot hears a NOISE and glances in a different direction.

*
*
*

ON ZORA

*

She grabs a shovel that leans against the house and swings it at the Brawny Zealot. He turns to see it and manages to deflect it off his arm. He growls in pain, jerks the shovel out of her hands and slams her to the ground.

*
*
*
*

BRAWNY ZEALOT

(looks at his bruised arm)

You old hag.

*
*
*

He raises his arm to give her a slap. Then suddenly he stops.

*
*

BRAWNY ZEALOT

Ahhhhhh!

*
*

Immediately WIDEN to see Xena has come up behind him and is applying a paralyzing hold on a pressure point in his neck.

XENA

(to Zealot)

Looks painful.

(more pressure)

You really ought to see a doctor.

As he blacks out from pain, Xena lets him drop and quickly moves to Zora.

XENA

(untying her)

What happened? Are you all right?

ZORA

Don't bother with me. The Zealots took Icus. You've got to stop them!

XENA

Where? Took him where?

(CONTINUED)

17 CONTINUED:

17

ZORA
To the mountain...
(fearful)
...to Anteus.

CUT TO:

18 EXT. MOUNTAINTOP - DAY

18

Hands clasped in reverent supplication, Anteus kneels at the foot of a sacrificial altar built among the boulders at the mountain's peak.

MUMBLING fervent, indecipherable pleas, he rocks and sways in growing anxiety as...

...camera PANS across the altar, past a ceremonial strip of silk, to find and HOLD on... the sacrificial knife.

CUT TO:

19 EXT. A ROCKY MOUNTAIN PASS - DAY

19

Icus is being taken through a rocky pass, followed by the Senior Zealot and the rest, as we PULL BACK to reveal...

...Xena covertly keeping pace along the boulders ABOVE them.

BELOW, the Zealots reach a bend. But as they start around it, all react to hear --

-- the sharp CRACK of stone hitting stone somewhere behind them.

Whirling, the Zealots turn toward the sound (which effectively puts Icus at their backs) as, motioning for quiet, the Senior Zealot listens hard while we PULL BACK to include...

...Xena standing ABOVE them, holding a large rock which she heaves out of sight, creating another sharp CRACK.

BELOW, the Senior Zealot reacts and nods to some men to check it out.

As they obey, all the others stare after them, unaware that, behind them...

...a rope drops from the boulders above -- lassoes Icus -- and pulls him up like a yo-yo on a string as --

-- the investigating Zealots return, shrugging their puzzlement as we PULL BACK to see...

...Xena and Icus on the boulders ABOVE.

BELOW, the Senior Zealot is immediately suspicious.

SENIOR ZEALOT
It's some sort of trick. Keep
moving -- hurry!

But as the men turn to do so --

(CONTINUED)

19 CONTINUED:

19

ZEALOT GUARD
He's gone! Icus is gone!!

For a beat, confusion reigns among the Zealots as --
Xena and Icus watch from the rocks ABOVE when, suddenly --
THUNDER sounds from the mountaintop.

19A INT. CAVE - DAY

19A*

Gabrielle is still conducting the invisible choir.
Suddenly, the crashing sound of THUNDER ripples through the
cave. Gabrielle stares out into the night.

*
*
*

GABRIELLE
Wow! Great percussion.

*
*

19B EXT. ROCKY MOUNTAIN PASS - DAY

19B*

The Zealots are in a panic. They SHOUT: "The Holy
One!", "He's angry we lost Icus!", "Run! One look at Him
and you're a burnt offering!", etc.

*

Senior Zealot in the lead, the men race off while --
ABOVE, Xena shakes her head as she watches them go.

XENA
I used to think our gods were harsh...
She and Icus continue on.

*
*

CUT TO:

20 EXT. MOUNTAIN SLOPE - DAY

20*

THUNDER rumbles on as we find Anteus prostrate on the
ground.

*

ANTEUS
(hoarse from prayer)
Please... Please, O Mighty God, You
alone know how I've struggled to follow
You always. I have given You my life
to use however You will. And it is
Yours even now, to take or leave as You
choose. But my son...
(hesitates; then, in
anguish)
Please... don't take Icus.

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED:

20

A CLAP OF THUNDER makes him look up as a loud, distorted VOICE that seems to come from everywhere as it echoes off the rocks, speaks to him imperiously.

VOICE (MAELL)

How dare you deny me anything!

(THUNDER building)

Either sacrifice Icus before the next sun...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED: 2

20

VOICE (MAELL) (cont'd)
(THUNDER growing)
...or I will turn my face from you and
your people forever!

The THUNDER is deafening as Anteus stares skyward, tears
coursing down his face as we WIDEN to reveal...

...Icus, staring with a look that makes it clear he heard
the Voice, too, while we PULL BACK to include...

...Xena. As we HOLD on her appalled incredulity:

*

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

21 EXT. MOUNTAINTOP - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

21

The THUNDER FADES and Anteus collapses at the altar. Icus and Xena rush to him.

ICUS
Father! Father, what is it?!
(to Xena)
What's wrong with him?

XENA
(checking Anteus)
The strain must have been too much.
(gently rousing him)
Anteus? Anteus...?

ICUS
Father, it's me.

Groggily reviving, Anteus reacts to see Xena and Icus.

ANTEUS
(confused)
How -- Why are you --

XENA
Shhh... Don't try to talk. You're
ill. We'll get you home.

But as she starts to raise him, Anteus grips her arm, his eyes searching hers intently.

ANTEUS
You heard it, too, didn't you? The
Voice? You heard!

XENA
Yes. But, unlike you, I don't believe
everything I hear.

CUT TO:

22 INT. XENA'S HIDEOUT CAVE - DAY

22

CLOSE ON GABRIELLE who tilts her head, enquiring:

GABRIELLE
What did you say?

PULL BACK to see she's addressing... a rock. She listens gravely, then nods.

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED:

22

GABRIELLE

That's what I thought you said.

(rising)

Thanks. I'm on my way.

And grabbing her staff, she exits.

CUT TO:

23 EXT. MOUNTAIN PASS - DAY

23

Although Anteus seems better as Xena helps him down the mountain, flanked by Icus, the elderly man's ragged breathing concerns her. Spotting some rocks, Xena halts.

XENA

Let's rest here a moment. No sense killing ourselves...

(hearing herself; drily
ironic)

...so to speak.

Noting her tone, Anteus gives her a look as he and Icus settle on the rocks nearby.

ANTEUS

You don't think much of us, do you?

XENA

(correcting him)

I don't think much of your god, or any god who'd want to kill a child. But then, I'm not convinced he does.

(loosening his collar)

Here, this will ease your breathing. Now, lean forward.

As he does, Xena places her fingertips at pressure points on Anteus' temples.

XENA

(gently, but firmly)

Anteus, I know your mind is hazy, but haven't you ever stopped to wonder why he'd ask you to do such a thing?

Reaching up, Anteus captures Xena's hands in his own, looking up to eye her levelly.

ANTEUS

Only every waking moment of every day since it happened.

Releasing her hands, he shakes his head, confounded.

(CONTINUED)

23. CONTINUED:

23

ANTEUS

I keep wondering, is it me? Have I done something wrong, and now He's punishing me? Or is it some sort of test to see how far I'll go to prove my faith?

Anguished, he turns to Icus who returns his gaze, taking in his words with wide-eyed gravity.

ANTEUS

Or maybe He's angry at how much I love you.

(turning to Xena)

Or maybe His love demands the best and brightest.

(frustrated)

You see? It never stops!

Xena kneels to talk with him earnestly, face-to-face.

XENA

You could stop it. You're still leader here. You don't have to do it.

ANTEUS

You're asking me to deny my God?!

XENA

I'm asking you to spare your son!

ANTEUS

And teach him what? That faith is only for the times when it's convenient to believe? That when it's hard and it hurts to keep faith, you let it go 'til it gets easy again?

Rising, Anteus seems stronger than we've ever seen him as he insists:

ANTEUS

That's not sparing him. That's robbing him of the very thing that gives life meaning!

Xena eyes him, torn between frustration and a grudging respect.

XENA

You know I'll stop you.

(CONTINUED)

23 CONTINUED: 2

23

ANTEUS
I know you'll try.
(unhappily)
And God forgive me, deep down, a part
of me hopes you succeed.

Then, turning, Anteus moves down the pass as Xena follows;
while, behind her... Icus brings up the rear, looking somber
as he digests what he's heard.

CUT TO:

24 INT. ANTEUS' HOUSE - DAY

24

Zora paces anxiously, when a glance out the window makes her
gasp and, rushing to the back door, she throws it open as --
-- Icus rushes in and straight into her arms.

ICUS
Mother!

ZORA
(hugging him)
Icus! You're safe!

Xena appears in the doorway, supporting Anteus as they
enter.

ZORA
(crossing; concerned)
Anteus! What is it? What's wrong?

XENA
(seating Anteus)
Nothing some rest and a change of diet
won't cure. He's being drugged.
That's why he's seemed so strange to
you lately.

ZORA
Drugged?! I don't understand. Who'd
want to --

A KNOCK at the front door interrupts her. Instantly alert,
Xena draws her sword, positioning herself by the door before
nodding for Zora to answer it.

ZORA
(crossing; nervous)
Yes... Who's there?

A BEAT. Then:

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED:

24

GABRIELLE (O.S.)
(outside door)
Ma'am, you don't know me, but I'm
looking for a woman named Xena...

Knowing Gabrielle's voice at once, Xena sheaths her sword,
opens the door, and pulls her inside, closing the door and
pinning her to it, as she angrily demands:

XENA
What're you doing here? I thought I
told you to stay in the cave.

GABRIELLE
And I did... until a rock told me to
find you.

XENA
A rock... spoke to you?

GABRIELLE
(nods)
His voice was a little gravelly, but I
understood.

Xena turns to Anteus.

XENA
You see? Even she's hearing voices --
and all because she ate some of the
drugged food meant for you.

ON ICUS

He looks out the rear window and sees:

ICUS' POV - MAELL AND THE ZEALOTS

approaching.

ON ICUS

He turns and runs out the front door.

ON XENA

She sees him go and follows him.

CUT TO:

*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*

25 EXT. ANTEUS' HOUSE - DAY

25

Xena catches up to Icus in a few strides and grabs him. *

XENA
Where are you going? What's the
matter? *

Icus hangs his head. Concerned, Xena bends to him. *

XENA
What is it? *

He remains stone silent. *

XENA
Icus, I can't help if you won't tell me
what's wrong. Now, what is it?

ICUS
(softly)
You. It's God's command I should die. *
But as long as you're free, we can't
obey Him. *

Xena is hit by a blinding realization. Whirling, she draws
her sword as she races back to: *

CUT TO: -

26 INT. ANTEUS' HOUSE - DAY

26

-- As Xena bursts through the door, she reacts to see...

...Maell is holding Gabrielle captive, a knife pressed to
her throat, as other armed Zealots stand ready, while Zora
and Anteus look on, cowed and distressed.

(CONTINUED)

26 CONTINUED:

26

MAELL
One move and I kill her.

ANTEUS
(protesting)
Maell!

MAELL
(snapping sharply)
Quiet, Father! The time for peaceful
ways is past..

GABRIELLE
(to Xena)
He was outside. The moment you ran for
Icus, he --

MAELL
(jerking her roughly)
Silence!

XENA
All right, you've made your point.
Just let her go, and I'll come with
you.

GABRIELLE
No!
(to Maell; a stoned
confidence)
She always gets to go everywhere. Take
me instead: --

MAELL
(thrown; then)
I don't bargain with savages.

XENA
And what are you? Drugging your
father, trying to kill your own
brother --

MAELL
(furious)
Enough! One more word, and she dies, I
swear it.

ICUS (O.S.)
No!

As all react, Icus pushes past Xena to run to Maell.

ICUS
Stop. There's no need to hurt them.

(CONTINUED)

26 CONTINUED: 2

26

MAELL

And I won't...

(to Xena; menacing Gabrielle
with knife)

...as long as they cooperate.

Xena's eyes blaze with fury. But she contains it for Gabrielle's sake as she returns Maell's look.

XENA

What do you want us to do?

SMASH CUT TO:

27 INT. AN ABANDONED WELL - DAY

27

Xena comes shooting down the shaft. But as she whizzes past the old well rope, Xena grabs it -- halting her fall halfway down. She's holding onto the very end of the rope.

Gabrielle comes shooting by. Xena grabs her by the hand as she passes and breaks her fall. They dangle there for a moment. Here's another fine mess they've gotten themselves into.

CLOSE ON XENA AND GABRIELLE'S HAND CLASP

Gabrielle holds on for dear life.

(CONTINUED)

27 CONTINUED:

27

*

MATCH CUT TO:

ICUS' HAND REACHING FOR ANTEUS' HAND
as we PULL BACK to reveal we are: .

28 EXT. FOOT OF MOUNTAIN - DAY

28

Icus eyes his father earnestly, ready to face his fate.

ICUS

Come, Father.

(as Anteus hesitates;
simply)

God's waiting.

Heart breaking, Anteus takes Icus' hand, and the two start
up the mountain, as we:

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

29 EXT. ABANDONED WELL - DAY

29

The place looks deserted... except for the quivering tension on the well rope, as we hear:

XENA (O.S.)
(from inside well)
Okay, Gabrielle. Climb up over me.

*

CUT TO:

30 INT. ABANDONED WELL - DAY

30

Xena and Gabrielle are in approximately the same position that we left them in.

*

*

*

Gabrielle grabs Xena's belt and starts to crawl, slide, and slither up every inch of Xena's shapely body until she reaches her neck, around which Gabrielle wraps her arms as she locks her legs around Xena's waist. Then:

*

*

GABRIELLE
(panting; anxious)
I didn't hurt you, did I?

(CONTINUED)

30 CONTINUED:

30

XENA

You kidding? I've taken worse punishment from a lumpy mattress.

*
*

Gabrielle holds fast as Xena starts hand-over-hand up the rope.

GABRIELLE

(shaking her head as if to clear it)

How'd we get here, anyway? And why do I feel like I've been kicked in the head by a Centaur?

*
*
*
*
*

XENA

Do you? Good. The henbane must be wearing off.

*
*
*

GABRIELLE

Henbane?

*
*

XENA

Long story.

*
*

As she continues up the rope, we:

*

CUT TO:

31 EXT. MOUNTAIN - DAY

31

Icus helps Anteus up some rocky ground. Then, seeing his father is steady, Icus continues his ascent, oblivious to the anguish... and the growing reluctance... reflected in Anteus' eyes as he trails after him.

CUT TO:

32 INT. ABANDONED WELL - DAY

32

With Gabrielle clinging tight, Xena continues her hand-over-hand up the rope, unaware that...

...NEAR THE TOP OF THE WELL, the rope is starting to fray from the strain of Xena's climb.

BELOW, Xena keeps coming, one hand at a time...

ABOVE, the rope starts breaking, one strand at a time...

CUT TO:

33 EXT. NARROW MOUNTAIN PASS - DAY

33

Icus and Anteus have reached a narrow pass. But as Icus starts through it --

ANTEUS

Icus -- wait!

Turning, Icus reacts to see his father's tormented face.

ICUS

(crossing; anxious)

Father, what is it? Are you ill again?

ANTEUS

(sick at heart, but...)

I can't do this, Icus. I know what I said about faith. But it's too hard, too much to ask. I'm old and... I can't.

(CONTINUED)

33 CONTINUED:

33

As Icus reacts, Anteus turns and starts back down the mountain when, suddenly --

-- THUNDER sounds from the mountaintop, halting Anteus.

ICUS

Please, Father, it's okay. Really it is.

Turning back, Anteus sees Icus' open face and hesitates as another roll of THUNDER sounds, and we:

CUT TO:

34 EXT. NEAR MOUNTAINTOP - DAY

34

-- where we discover the source of the THUNDER is... Maell who produces it by shaking a large metal sheet as he stands hidden among some boulders, staring down at:

MAELL'S POV - ANTEUS AND ICUS

stopped at the narrow pass. As Anteus continues to hesitate:

BACK TO MAELL

who frowns and makes a louder roll of THUNDER, on which we:

CUT TO:

35 EXT. NARROW MOUNTAIN PASS - DAY

35

Unable to withstand both the THUNDER and Icus' entreating face, Anteus capitulates. But as they start through the pass:

CUT TO:

36 INT. ABANDONED WELL - DAY

36

ON THE WELL ROPE whose last strand finally breaks!

A SCREAM STARTS, then STOPS abruptly as, instantaneously --

-- a hand shoots up from the well, grips the rim, and holds on as it's joined by its mate. A beat, then...

...Xena slowly emerges from the well, lifting both herself and Gabrielle who remains clenched around her.

(CONTINUED)

36 CONTINUED:

36

XENA
(clearing well)
Okay, we're out.

Releasing her, Gabrielle hops down.

GABRIELLE
Thanks for the lift. Where to now?

Before Xena can respond, the sound of distant THUNDER answers the question.

CUT TO:

37 EXT. MOUNTAINTOP - DAY

37

Anteus is bowed in silent prayer as Icus finishes setting up the sacrificial altar.

Stepping back, he stares at it a BEAT, his eyes betraying the frightened boy beneath the dutiful son. Then, scared, but resolved, Icus crosses to...

...Anteus who remains bowed in prayer. Icus hesitates, then gently puts his hand on his father's shoulder.

There is a BEAT. Then, head still bowed, Anteus reaches up, covering his son's hand with his own. They remain that way a moment. Then Icus helps Anteus to rise and they cross to...

...the SACRIFICIAL ALTAR where they halt. Lifting his head, Anteus stares up, still hoping for a reprieve, his face a battlefield of pained despair.

A tug at his sleeve brings him to and, looking down, he sees...

...Icus who reverently offers him the sacrificial knife.

Devastated, Anteus freezes, unable to make himself reach for the knife and, in that moment, a THUNDER CLAP BOOMS!

CUT TO:

38 EXT. MOUNTAIN - DAY

38

The BOOM continues REVERBERATING as Xena and Gabrielle halt their ascent to listen.

Tracking the sound, Xena leaves the path, hurrying toward the boulders up on top as Gabrielle scrambles after her.

CUT TO:

39 EXT. NEAR MOUNTAINTOP ROPE BRIDGE - DAY

39

From a new vantage point -- reached by a primitive three-rope bridge strung across a deep chasm -- Maell watches the altar beyond him as he shakes his "THUNDER" sheet and reaches for... a crude megaphone.

CUT TO:

40 EXT. MOUNTAINTOP - DAY

40

Prompted by the THUNDER, Anteus reluctantly picks up the knife. But as Icus lies down on the altar, he whispers:

ICUS
I love you, Father.

Then, closing his eyes, he lies ready... while Anteus stands rooted in place.

Suddenly, a stern, distorted VOICE overrides the THUNDER as it commands:

VOICE (MAELL)
Anteus -- hear me, and obey...

CUT TO:

41 EXT. NEAR MOUNTAINTOP - DAY

41

Maell watches Anteus and Icus from his concealed position as he continues speaking into the megaphone.

MAELL
I am your true God, the One who should be first in your heart and your affections. Yet you love Icus more...
(bitterly)
...you always have.
(then)
Therefore must you obey this command:

XENA (O.S.)
(calling)
Tell him to stop.

Whirling, Maell sees --

-- Xena hurrying toward the rope bridge, flanked by Gabrielle.

XENA
Make him let Icus go.

Lifting the megaphone, Maell turns, shouting to Anteus:

(CONTINUED)

