



"THE DEBT I & II"

**Story by
Rob Tapert & R.J. Stewart**

**Teleplay by
R.J. Stewart**

**SEASON 3
EPISODE #6 & 7**

Prod. #V0406

XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"The Debt"

a.k.a.

"Betrayal"

Story by

Robert Tapert & R.J. Stewart

Teleplay by

R.J. Stewart

Directed by

Oley Sassone

Revised Pages: Cover, 1

Executive Producers
Sam Raimi & Robert Tapert

SHOOTING DRAFT
June 30, 1997
Rev. June 09, 1997 - Pink
Rev. July 14, 1997 - Blue
Rev. Oct. 14, 1997 - Yellow
Rev. Oct. 15, 1997 - Green

XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"The Debt"

CAST LIST

XENA
GABRIELLE

BORIAS	
MING TZU	(ZOO)
MING T'IEN/12 YEARS OLD*	(TEE-enn)
MING T'IEN/ADULT	
LAO MA	(LAU MAR)
CHUANG	(CHWONG)
MESSENGER	
SHOPKEEPER	
SOLDIER	

*

* non-speaking

XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

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SET LIST

INTERIORS:

GENERAL STORE
BORIAS' YURT
LAO MA'S YURT
MING'S PALACE - MING TIEN'S BEDROOM
 - BIRDCAGE CORRIDOR

LAO'S PALACE - BATHING ROOM
 - DRESSING ROOM

CAVE

*

EXTERIORS:

CAMPSITE
CLEARING
EVERYWHERE - ESTABLISHING SHOTS
PLAIN
TRAIL
PORT
COUNTRY ROAD #1
SHIP'S DECK
SECTION OF THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA
FIELD
BORIAS' YURT
COUNTRY ROAD #2
WOODS
FOREST
FOREST EDGE
LAO'S PALACE
MING'S PALACE
LAO MA'S YURT

*

XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"The Debt"

CHRONOLOGY

NIGHT 1	SCENES # 1 - 2
DAY 2	SCENE # 3
DAY 3	SCENE # 9
DAY 4	SCENE #14 SCENE #16
DAY 5	SCENE #20
DAY 6	SCENES #21 - 22
NIGHT 6	SCENES #26 - 29 SCENE #31 SCENE #33 SCENE #35 SCENES #37 - 38
DAY 8 (FLASHBACK)	SCENE # 4
DAY 9 (FLASHBACK)	SCENES # 5 - 8
DAY 10 (FLASHBACK)	SCENES #10 - 11
NIGHT 10 (FLASHBACK)	SCENES #12 - 13 SCENE #15
DAY 11 (FLASHBACK)	SCENES #17 - 19
DAY 12 (FLASHBACK)	SCENES #23 - 24 SCENE #36
NIGHT 12 (FLASHBACK)	SCENES #24 - 25 SCENE #30 SCENE #32 SCENE #34

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XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"The Debt" *

TEASER

FADE IN:

1 EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT 1

Xena lies asleep next to Gabrielle's empty bedroll. Suddenly, Xena stirs as she instinctually realizes something isn't right. She sits up and notices Gabrielle is gone.

XENA

Gabrielle?

Xena stands and walks to:

2 EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT 2

Gabrielle, illumined by the moonlight, sits on a rock looking very reflective. Xena approaches her.

XENA

Everything all right?

GABRIELLE

Oh, yeah. Just thinking.

(beat)

Thank you.

XENA

Me? For what.

GABRIELLE

You've stuck by me through everything.

XENA

Same thing coming right back at you.

GABRIELLE

I hope I never let you down, Xena.

XENA

Impossible.

GABRIELLE

Oh, I've learned anything's possible.

She stares ahead sadly into the darkness for a moment.
Then:

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED:

2

GABRIELLE

(softly)

There's somebody in the shadows by the poplar tree.

XENA

I know. He's moving to our left.

Suddenly, Xena leaps to her left and grabs out of the bushes:

AN ASIAN MESSENGER

A nasty wound oozes blood from his chest. Xena grabs him and eases him to the ground.

MESSENGER

Xena?

XENA

Yes.

MESSENGER

I was sent by the Weak One...

Xena has a strong reaction to this.

MESSENGER

Who is soft as water and...

XENA

(says it simultaneously
with the Messenger)

...hard as the raging flood.

MESSENGER

...hard as the raging flood.

Before the Messenger can continue, the night is filled with WARCRIES as:

SIX CHINESE WARRIORS

explode out of the trees and try to kill off the Messenger. These Warriors are dressed in classic Chinese style.

ON XENA

She swings her leg out to catch one of the Warriors with the back of her calf. She then does a scissors kick to take out two others. But these guys are no slouches and land some punches of their own. Their fighting style is classically Asian - kung fu, tai chi, karate, judo, Hong Kong chop saki, etc. We should establish here a different style in fighting, one that pushes Xena to the max.

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED: 2

2

A WARRIOR

does a flying kick into Xena's stomach, knocking her into a back flip. As she brings her feet up, she kicks the Warrior in the jaw. She twists and lands on her feet, grabs another Warrior and slams him to the ground with a judo move, then neutralizes him with an elbow to his throat. Another Warrior drops and tries to hit Xena with a sweeping leg kick. She does a forward flip to avoid the leg sweep and comes down with both feet on his groin.

ON GABRIELLE

She stands over the Messenger with her staff, guarding for any possible attack.

ANOTHER WARRIOR

lands a kick to Xena's temple. Xena stumbles and seems stunned. The Warrior charges but Xena was just playing opossum. She uses the Warrior's charge to lead him onto the sword of Another Warrior whom she fells with a head butt.

ONE LAST WARRIOR

The ultimate martial arts Warrior, he stands swinging a pair of short swords, doing every ASIAN WARCRY imaginable. He stands about ten feet away from Xena, poised for the attack. He's ready for the ultimate test of martial arts skills.

ON XENA

She eyes him for a moment and then shrugs indifferently, a la "Indiana Jones," grabs her chakram and throws it into the Last Warrior's forehead. She then turns back to the Messenger.

XENA

I'm afraid I can't help you, friend.
Your wound is too severe.

MESSENGER

(gasping with his last
breath)
I bring a message...

XENA

I'm listening.

MESSENGER

(with his final breath)
The Green Dragon has become too large.
It must be made small.

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED: 3

2

Then the Messenger dies. Xena closes his eyes with her palm and stands.

GABRIELLE
The Green Dragon? What --

XENA
Gabrielle, I'm going on a long journey.

GABRIELLE
What do you mean, you're going on a long journey? What happened to "we"?

XENA
This time's different.

Xena grabs her saddle and throws it on Argo. Gabrielle confronts her.

GABRIELLE
What's so different about it?

XENA
I'll have to travel toward the rising sun for days.

GABRIELLE
Come on, Xena. You know that's not a problem for me.

XENA
I'm going to a land as different from ours as night is to day. The Kingdom of Chin.

GABRIELLE
You think that's an argument against me coming. It sounds fascinating.

Xena eyes Gabrielle for a moment before she suggests one more reservation.

XENA
If you come, you can't get in my way.

GABRIELLE
What are you saying? I'm a nuisance?

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED: 4

2

XENA

No. But you won't like what I'm going there for.

GABRIELLE

What's that?

Xena doesn't answer.

GABRIELLE

Let's skip the cryptic part. Are you going up against a dragon?

XENA

Nope.

GABRIELLE

Then is the Green Dragon a person?

XENA

Yeah. It's a person.

GABRIELLE

Well, which person?

XENA

The one I'm gonna kill.

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

3 INT. GENERAL STORE - DAY

3

Xena is shopping for a long trip.

GABRIELLE

Look, maybe there's something I don't understand. Some subtlety I'm not getting. I'll tell you what it looks like on the surface. You plan on traveling a long, grueling distance for the sole purpose of killing someone.

XENA

That sums it up pretty well.

Xena picks up some cold weather things: blankets, furs, etc.

GABRIELLE

You can't do that.

XENA

Like I said, it's best you don't come. *

GABRIELLE

Try and stop me. Come on, Xena. You've got to at least tell me why.

XENA

You'll never understand.

Gabrielle is hurt.

GABRIELLE

After all we've been through, you can say that?

XENA

(to the Shopkeeper)
How much for the lot?

SHOPKEEPER

Twenty dinars.

Xena reaches for her dinar pouch.

GABRIELLE

Hey, wait a minute.
(to the Shopkeeper)
Do we look stupid? Twenty dinars for this?

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED:

3

SHOPKEEPER

Fifteen?

GABRIELLE

(to Xena)

Give him twelve and that's more than
it's worth.

Xena throws twelve dinars on the counter.

XENA

Thanks, Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE

You're welcome. I'm glad to help you
get a deal on the things you need to
commit a murder!!! What are you doing,
Xena?

Xena starts to exit. Gabrielle positions herself in front
of her.

XENA

Gabrielle, it's just something I have
to do.

GABRIELLE

Then explain it to me. Who do you have
to kill and why?!

CLOSE ON XENA, as she shuffles through some memories.

XENA

To understand what I have to do, you
need to understand what was left
undone.

CUT TO:

CLIP MONTAGE FROM "DESTINY" - INCLUDE CUTS OF CAESAR AND
XENA IN A ROMANTIC POSE, CAESAR HOLDING THE KNIFE TO XENA'S
THROAT, THE CRUCIFIXION, THE BREAKING OF THE LEGS, AND THE
"KILL THEM ALL" MOMENT.

XENA'S VOICE

Many years ago, as you know, Caesar
left his mark on me.

4 EXT. EVERYWHERE - ESTABLISHING SHOTS - DAY

4

Cool vistas. Xena travels along these vistas, becoming more
and more of a savage as she does.

(CONTINUED)

4 CONTINUED:

4

XENA'S VOICE

With shattered legs and crippled soul,
I went East to lose myself in
vengeance. Not against Caesar...
but the entire human race.

CUT TO:

5 EXT. PLAIN - DAY

5

A group of FIFTEEN MOUNTED WARRIORS are pursuing a group of TEN SOLDIERS across the plain. The Warriors look different than what we're used to. Some of them are Asian and all of them are dressed like Warriors of the Steppes. Some wear scarves over their faces to protect them from the dust. The Soldiers who are being pursued are all Asian.

ON BORIAS

The lead Warrior. Handsome and smart, he draws down on the Soldiers like a falcon on a rabbit. His horse outstrides the mounts of the Soldiers. He then cuts in front of them, sword drawn, forcing the Lead Soldier to pull up. The other Warriors swarm onto the Soldiers, hacking at them.

THE BATTLE

The Warriors kill eight of the Soldiers in short fashion. The other two are knocked off their steeds by the Warriors. Both of the dismounted Soldiers raise their hands in surrender. One, the Second Soldier, a mustachioed man with a distinctive face, drops to his knees.

ON BORIAS

as he eyes their surrender with satisfaction. But suddenly:

A FIERCE WARRIOR

rides toward the two surrendering Soldiers. This Warrior wears a scarf over his face. He gallops toward the First Soldier who still has his hands up and sinks a sword deep into the surrendering man's chest.

THE SECOND SOLDIER

This is the one who dropped to his knees, the mustachioed man with the distinctive face. He tries to get up and run but stumbles and falls.

THE FIERCE WARRIOR

brings his horse around and seems intent on trampling this helpless man to death.

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED:

5

ON BORIAS

He rides between the Fierce Warrior and Second Soldier.

BORIAS

No. We don't slaughter them.

ON THE FIERCE WARRIOR

He tears off his face scarf - wait a minute - it's not a man at all - IT'S XENA.

XENA

I'm telling you, Borias, the best way to get this scum to do our bidding is through terror.

BORIAS

And if you kill them all, who's left to be terrified?

Xena and Borias face off against each other. Borias' stare is relentless. Xena sheathes her sword. Clearly, Borias has won the pissing contest for now.

BORIAS

(to the Second Soldier)

Tell Ming what happens to his soldiers when he sends them against Borias.

XENA

Borias.

BORIAS

Yeah?

XENA

I want the dead.

BORIAS

The dead?

She nods toward the corpses.

XENA

Yeah. These here and the other ones back on the battlefield. I'm gonna put them to work.

Borias looks at his ghoulish lieutenant with something close to disgust in his eyes.

BORIAS

Fine. Do what you will with them.

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED: 2

5

He then turns and gallops off with thirteen of the fifteen Warriors. Remaining behind with Xena is a well-muscled brute named CHUANG. Xena watches Borias ride off. WE CLOSE on Xena's face. Her eyes are burning with fury.

CUT TO:

6 EXT. GREAT WALL OF CHINA (MATTE) - ESTABLISHING SHOT - DAY

6

It looks really cool.

7 EXT. SECTION OF THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA - DAY

7

Xena sits on her horse before the Great Wall, impaling the heads of the dead Soldiers on stakes. Chuang is helping out.

XENA

This will do more to convince Ming to talk than all of Borias' diplomacy.

She spits out the word "diplomacy" as if it sickened her. She gestures toward the rolling hills in the distance.

XENA

We sit out here in the middle of nowhere while all the riches of Chin await us.

She points toward:

MING'S PALACE

which is in view from the wall.

RESUME CHUANG AND XENA

CHUANG

Both families of Chin are very powerful.

XENA

We could take one at a time.
(gestures towards Ming's palace)
Hit Ming first...
(points in another direction)
...and then turn on Lao.

CHUANG

Borias wants to form an alliance with one family first before he moves.

(CONTINUED)

7 CONTINUED:

7

XENA
While he waits, how do we know Lao and Ming aren't forming an alliance with each other? If they don't want to cooperate, I say...

She shoves the last head on a stake. It's the head of the mustachioed man with the distinctive face.

XENA
...kill them all.

CUT TO:

8 INT. BORIAS' YURT - DAY

8

Borias sits at a table waiting for something. Xena paces behind him, HER LIMP very evident.

BORIAS
(forcefully)
Sit down.

Xena reluctantly sits at the table. A moment later, the flap to the yurt opens and an ELEGANTLY ATTIRED (FULL CHINESE COSTUME) GUARD appears. The Guard nods to Borias and then searches the yurt. He's like a mobster clearing a meeting place for the Godfather who's about to enter. He's satisfied and exits.

XENA
Did you see what he was wearing? Pure silk, and he's just a lackey. I'm telling you, these people are soft and ripe for --

BORIAS
Quiet.

ON MING TZU

He appears at the door with a little boy of twelve, MING T'IEN. Ming Tzu is forty, plump and very accustomed to being rich and powerful. Ming T'ien, his son, wears an almost angelic expression. He's a sheltered, innocent boy, full of integrity and ideals.

BORIAS

leaps to his feet and bows to Ming Tzu.

BORIAS
My humble yurt is unworthy of your presence, Ming Tzu.

(CONTINUED)

8 CONTINUED:

8

MING TZU

Not at all, Borias.

Xena gives a disbelieving SIGH. Borias throws her an angry look. Reluctantly, Xena stands and bows to Ming Tzu and then sits back down.

MING TZU

This is my son, Ming T'ien. He's here to learn how to deal with thieves.

BORIAS

Insults aren't the best way to begin a negotiation, Ming Tzu.

MING TZU

Oh, you misunderstand. I have the greatest respect for thieves. Every man born to wealth has a good thief somewhere among his ancestors.

(to Ming T'ien)

Remember that, Ming T'ien.

Ming T'ien nods but he's become fascinated with Xena.

BORIAS

Have a seat.

MING TZU

Thank you, but I'd rather stand. I'm not staying long. Your offer sounds simple enough. You raid Lao's province and I remain neutral.

BORIAS

And in return you receive one-third of our loot.

MING TZU

One-half.

XENA

No deal.

Borias flashes another angry look at Xena. Ming T'ien is completely transfixed by Xena now.

MING TZU

This woman is in charge?

BORIAS

(half to Xena)

No, she's not.

(to Ming Tzu)

But your offer --

(CONTINUED)

8 CONTINUED: 2

8

MING TZU

It's not an offer. It's a statement of fact. If you want my cooperation, you'll pay me half of what you steal.

Borias ponders this for a moment.

BORIAS

Half, huh?

XENA

You're not really going to give this pig half, are you?

MING TZU

I'm sorry to have wasted your time, Borias. Clearly your friend isn't interested in doing business.

BORIAS

Wait a minute. Don't listen to her.

Ming Tzu and his entourage exit. Borias glares at Xena and then exits after Ming Tzu.

BORIAS

Ming Tzu.

ON XENA

She throws a cruel little smile toward Ming T'ien just before he exits. Then she pours herself a glass of wine and is about to drink when the glass is slapped out of her hand.

ON BORIAS AND XENA

as they face off against each other.

BORIAS

He's gone.

XENA

Because I called him a name? Then he's too soft.

BORIAS

You don't understand these people. No matter what, you have to always let them save face.

XENA

Saving his fat face wasn't what I had in mind. Besides, what kind of deal was that? We do all the dirty work and he gets half.

(CONTINUED)

8 CONTINUED: 3

8

BORIAS

You're a fool. Whatever deal I made with him, I'd then go to Lao and make a better one.

XENA

I don't know why we need either one of them. When Ming sent his soldiers after us, we chopped them up good.

BORIAS

We held our own. But what if Lao and Ming were to ally against us, Xena?

XENA

Then I'd say --

GABRIELLE'S VOICE

Kill them all.

CUT TO:

9 EXT. TRAIL - DAY

9

Xena and Gabrielle both ride Argo along the trail.

XENA

Yeah. That's what I said.

GABRIELLE

Of course, you did. That was obviously your solution to everything in those days. I can't believe that's the same Borias that later helped the centaurs.

XENA

We were quite a pair in those days.

GABRIELLE

And to think two people like that could make a beautiful kid like Solan.

*

XENA

You haven't heard the worst of it yet.

GABRIELLE

I don't think I want to hear any more of this story of war, and greed, and hate.

XENA

It's not about hate. It's about love.

(CONTINUED)

9 CONTINUED:

9

GABRIELLE
Love? Sure it is.

They ride on in silence for a few more strides. Then:

GABRIELLE
Well?

XENA
Well what?

GABRIELLE
Whose love?

CUT TO:

10 EXT. FIELD - DAY - CLOSE ON XENA AND BORIAS

10

Face-to-face, having sex. This ain't love. This is old-fashioned lust. They're trying to devour each other in an aggressive, almost angry way.

WIDER TO REVEAL

They're sitting on Xena's horse. Chuang gallops up to them.

CHUANG
Lao approaches.

Borias immediately reacts. He tries to get off the horse but Xena pulls him back and pins him onto the horse with her legs.

XENA
Let him wait.

BORIAS
Come on, Xena. We can do this anytime.

XENA
Don't be so sure.

She moves her legs. Borias leaps onto his horse which is a few feet away. He looks back at Xena.

BORIAS
I don't want you messing this one up.

He gallops off.

XENA
Run to your master, puppy.

CUT TO:

11 EXT. BORIAS' YURT - DAY

11

Borias gallops up just as:

A LITTER

carried by FOUR HULKING SERVANTS approaches. An armed guard escorts this elegantly appointed, canopied litter. Borias approaches the litter and bows.

BORIAS

Borias extends the sincerest welcome
to the Head of the House of Lao.

The curtain covering the canopy is pushed aside revealing:

LAO MA

A heartbreakingly beautiful woman, age thirty. Borias is stunned by the surprise of finding a woman in the litter, as well as by her beauty.

ON XENA

as she gallops up. She too is surprised to see Lao Ma.

ON LAO MA

She steps out of the litter and approaches Borias.
She bows.

LAO MA

I am Lao Ma, wife of the great Lao.
Forgive my husband for sending his
insignificant wife to handle such
difficult affairs of state. But
he is very ill.

BORIAS

I'm sorry to hear that. You're very
welcome, of course.

Lao Ma blushes and smiles, going out of her way to seem small and insignificant, but her great beauty won't let her be commonplace.

LAO MA

I know you're a great warrior, Borias,
but I've heard you're also a man of
honor.

Xena SNICKERS. Lao Ma throws a look at Xena. For a moment they stare each other down.

LAO MA

You must be Xena.

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED:

11

XENA

You heard of me?

LAO MA

Oh, yes. They say you're a dangerous woman.

XENA

Well, they're right.

Lao Ma smiles a serene smile as she eyes Xena.

BORIAS

You have nothing to fear, Lao Ma.

(flashes a warning look at Xena)

We will negotiate in honor and with fairness.

(back to Lao Ma)

I hope we'll find common ground on which to stand.

CUT TO:

12 INT. BORIAS' YURT - NIGHT

12

Borias and Lao Ma sit around eating Mongolian Barbecue. Other people sit in the room: members of Lao Ma's entourage, Borias' lieutenants, and musicians who are playing exotic instruments. Xena sits across the table, staring at Lao Ma and Borias. She's sucking on a bottle of wine and playing with a hookah pipe. Lao Ma and Borias are TALKING QUIETLY with each other. Xena can't hear what they're saying but to her paranoid, drug-altered, alcohol-soused brain, they're obviously flirting. Borias whispers something to Lao Ma that causes Lao Ma to LAUGH coquettishly. She reaches across the table for something.

ON XENA

She pulls her knife and drives it down at Lao Ma's hand.

ON LAO MA AND BORIAS

as they stare in shock at Xena.

ON LAO MA'S HAND

It lies on the table top next to a lamb chop. Xena's knife has pierced the lamb chop and pinned it to the table.

ON XENA AND LAO MA

(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED:

12

XENA

That's my piece of meat you're reaching for.

She picks up the chop and bites into it.

LAO MA

You're wrong. I don't eat meat.

She reaches past the lamb chop and picks up a loaf of bread. She tears off a piece and takes a bite. She then turns her attention back to Borias. They continue their chatting in a warm, cordial manner with ever so subtle signs of sensual attraction, especially on Borias' part.

ON XENA

She becomes uncomfortable and exits.

CUT TO:

13 INT. LAO MA'S YURT - NIGHT

13

Lao Ma is shown in by Borias.

BORIAS

I apologize for this simple dwelling. *

LAO MA

It's an honor for me to accept whatever hospitality you can spare.

BORIAS

What we talked about tonight will benefit us both.

LAO MA

Yes. It's an agreement that will make my husband most happy.

Borias is very charmed by Lao Ma's modest beauty. He exits with a smile. Lao Ma begins to undress. Suddenly, she becomes aware of something in the room. She spins to see:

XENA

stepping out of the shadows. She's holding two knives. *

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

14 EXT. COUNTRY ROAD #1 - DAY

14

Xena and Gabrielle walk along, leading Argo. Gabrielle is appalled.

GABRIELLE
You wanted to kill that poor innocent woman... out of jealousy.

XENA
Jealousy? Over Borias? You got to be kidding. No, Borias and I were just using each other.

GABRIELLE
Then why...?

XENA
I wanted to kill Lao Ma because I knew, in my heart, she'd be a civilizing influence on him and I liked him wild... like I was. An animal, living from one moment to the next... driven by desire alone.

They walk on a few strides.

GABRIELLE
And did you kill her?

ON XENA'S FACE

As she thinks about this question, a mysterious smile drifts onto her face.

CUT TO:

15 INT. LAO MA'S YURT - NIGHT

15

Xena moves toward Lao Ma with the knives. Lao Ma stares at her with wide, vulnerable eyes. *

XENA
I don't know if you people pray to your gods, but if you don't, this wouldn't be a bad time to start.

Xena throws both knives toward Lao Ma's chest. *

ON LAO MA

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED:

15

She turns, picks up a hair brush and blocks the knives with the brush, at the same time brushing her hair. It's as if she doesn't take Xena seriously as a threat. This enrages Xena. She charges Lao Ma who dodges her, matador-style. Xena crashes into one of the yurt supports. Once more she charges Lao Ma who dodges her again. This time Xena crashes into the door. Xena turns to charge Lao Ma. Lao Ma projects the palms of her hands toward Xena.

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15A EXT. LAO MA'S YURT - NIGHT

15A*

Xena explodes out of the yurt entrance and lands in a lump. She's semiconscious. Lao Ma comes out of the yurt, reaches down, pulls a hair brooch with a crow design out of Xena's hair and throws it at a barrel of water. The brooch sticks in the barrel and water flows out onto Xena's face, bringing her back to consciousness.

*
*
*
*
*

ON BORIAS

He rushes up to Lao Ma.

*

LAO MA
I'm sorry, Borias. I'll be leaving immediately. I don't think an alliance is appropriate now.

*
*
*

She starts to exit and then pauses by Xena. Xena looks up at her. Lao Ma squats down next to Xena and WHISPERS something into her ear. Then she exits.

BORIAS
(to Xena)
It's over, Xena. You have till sunrise to get out of this camp. After that, I'll kill you on sight.

He exits. We stay on a thoughtful Xena.

GABRIELLE'S VOICE
So what did she say?

CUT TO:

16 EXT. COUNTRY ROAD #1 - DAY

16

Xena and Gabrielle continue their walk and talk, trailed by Argo.

GABRIELLE
When she whispered in your ear, what did she say?

(CONTINUED)

16 CONTINUED:

16

XENA

She said, "Fill yourself with desire
and see only illusion. Empty yourself
of desire and understand the mystery of
things."

(CONTINUED)

16 CONTINUED: 2

16

GABRIELLE

That's good. I take it you didn't listen to her.

XENA

No. Not then. Not for a long time. I decided I was going to accomplish what Borias only dreamed of. Get rich with the help of one of the great houses of Chin. I was gonna make Ming Tzu my creature.

GABRIELLE

How were you going to do that?

XENA

By appealing to his sense of family values.

CUT TO:

17 INT. MING'S PALACE - MING T'IEN'S BEDROOM - DAY

17

CLOSE ON Ming T'ien, as he plays with toy soldiers. WIDEN to reveal Ming T'ien playing alone in an opulent room. Suddenly, we hear CRIES OF ALARM. Ming T'ien reacts with a curious tilt of his head. The CRIES GET LOUDER, more panicked. The door opens and Ming Tzu enters with TWO SOLDIERS.

MING TZU

Son, there's a fire in the main temple. I suspect arson. These soldiers are going to stay with you until we get this under control.

(to the Soldiers)

If anything happens to him, you'll pay for it with your lives.

He exits.

ON MING T'IEN

as he reacts to the sounds outside.

ON A LARGE WINDOW

Xena bursts through the window on horseback. She kicks one of the Soldiers into unconsciousness, grabs the boy and puts "the pinch" on the other Soldier.

*
*
*

(CONTINUED)

17 CONTINUED:

17

XENA
(to the Soldier)
I've just cut off the flow of blood
to your brain. You'll be dead in a
minute.

SOLDIER
What do you want to know?

XENA
Nothing. I was just letting you know
how long you got left so you can enjoy
it.

Xena rides out the way she came in, carrying the kid. She
leaves the Soldier behind to die a terrible death.

*
*

CUT TO:

18 INT. CAVE - DAY

18

Xena sits in this, her hideout, waiting for something.
Chuang sits at her side. A moment later, a nervous and
angry Borias enters.

BORIAS
You're insane.

XENA
And you're scared. Why is that?

BORIAS
You've got Ming and Lao breathing down
my neck. They think I had something to
do with this.

XENA
Ming and Lao together?

BORIAS
Nothing can bring royal houses together
faster than kidnapped heirs.

XENA
Well, then I'm doubling my demands if
I'm dealing with both of them.

BORIAS
Where's the child?!

Xena CHUCKLES and throws a look toward Chuang.

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED:

18

XENA

Hey, Chuang. He expects me to tell him.

Chuang joins in the LAUGHTER. Xena eyes Borias.

XENA

What I will do, Borias, is cut you in if you set up the exchange. We meet in your yurt on the plains north of the Great Wall. Ming brings fifty of his best horses and twenty-five... No, fifty bags of gold. And then I give him his son. For your troubles, you get five percent. That's not an offer, by the way. It's a statement of fact.

She smiles triumphantly at Borias.

CUT TO:

19 INT. BORIAS' YURT - DAY

19

Borias and Ming Tzu sit waiting for Xena. Bags of gold are piled against one wall. The door opens and Chuang enters. He searches the room like Ming's person did earlier. He then goes to the door and gestures for Xena to enter. Xena walks in and approaches Ming Tzu with a smile.

XENA

(to Chuang)
Check the gold.

(to Ming Tzu)
You got a smart kid. Of course, he got a lot smarter when he was with me.

CHUANG

It's all here.

BORIAS

You saw the horses?

XENA

Oh, yeah. Nice. Chuang. Move out the gold.

MING TZU

The boy!

XENA

Of course. He's on the third pack-horse out there, under some skins.

*

(CONTINUED)

19 CONTINUED:

19

Ming Tzu rushes out.

XENA
(gives Borias a wink)
Nice, huh?

Borias smiles at Xena, takes a step toward her, and kisses her on the lips. She gives him an odd look as she doesn't quite get the intent of that kiss.

A SLIGHT NOISE causes Xena to look up, just as: TWO WARRIORS drop down from above through holes torn in the yurt. Xena is hit by both Warriors, then Borias slams a club into her temple and, as she is about to fall, she throws a look at Chuang for help.

ON CHUANG

as he gives her a vicious kick to the head.

ON XENA AND THE OTHERS

She's down for the count, just as Ming Tzu reenters with his son. Ming T'ien seems disturbed to see Xena in so much trouble.

BORIAS
As promised.

MING TZU
Good. You take the gold and the horses. I get the woman.

Borias looks down at the groggy Xena.

BORIAS
You're going to die, Xena, and that's
a statement of fact.

CUT TO:

20 EXT. PORT - DAY

20

Gabrielle and Xena lead Argo through an exotically (Persian) dressed crowd. They're on the Persian Gulf, looking for a boat that will take them to Chin.

GABRIELLE
You kidnapped that child. And you would have killed him if you didn't get what you wanted.

XENA
Yes.

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED:

20

GABRIELLE

You're right, I can't go back there with you. And I don't mean to the Kingdom of Chin.

XENA

I know what you mean.

GABRIELLE

You're going through with this killing?

XENA

Yes.

Gabrielle nods, sadly.

GABRIELLE

I'm turning back. Tell me. Who is the Green Dragon? It can't be Borias. He's already dead. The other guy who betrayed you? What's his name?

XENA

Chuang? No. I killed him a long time ago.

GABRIELLE

Ming?

Xena doesn't answer.

GABRIELLE

I'm sorry, Xena, but I can't help you commit murder.

Xena gives Gabrielle a sweet and forgiving smile.

XENA

I'm gonna catch a ship here that will carry me close to the Kingdom of Chin. If ever there was a time to turn back, it's now. I understand, Gabrielle.

Xena gives Gabrielle a big hug. Xena takes Argo's rein and starts to walk away.

GABRIELLE

You owe someone so much that you'd throw away these last few years?

Silence for a moment, then:

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED: 2

20

XENA

Yes.

Xena leads Argo toward the harbor, leaving Gabrielle very much alone.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

21 EXT. SHIP - DAY (STOCK) 21
A ship on the sea.

22 EXT. SHIP'S DECK - DAY (PRESENT) 22
Xena sits on the deck, her back pressed against the rail of the ship. CLOSE ON XENA: We hold on her thoughtful face for a moment before we:

CUT TO:

23 EXT. COUNTRY ROAD #2 - DAY 23
Ming Tzu and Ming T'ien ride along. Behind them are several Soldiers dragging:

A CHAINED XENA

who has obviously had a bad time of it since she's been in Ming Tzu's possession.

MING T' IEN

is constantly looking back to Xena. He's still fascinated with her.

ON LAO MA'S LITTER

being carried towards Ming's procession. The litter is put down before Ming. Lao Ma gets out. She holds a folded cloth in her hand. She approaches Ming Tzu. She spots Xena but brings her attention back to Ming Tzu.

MING TZU

Welcome, Lao Ma. I hope you don't mind us hunting so close to Lao territory but the terrain is perfect here.

LAO MA

Perfect for what?

MING TZU

Her.

(points back at Xena)
The woman who succeeded in doing what hundreds of diplomats could not do: make an alliance between our two kingdoms.

(CONTINUED)

23 CONTINUED:

23

LAO MA

You plan to hunt her?

MING TZU

Yes. My men have the hounds already in place.

(to Ming T'ien)

We're going to enjoy this, huh, Ming T'ien?

Ming T'ien isn't so sure.

LAO MA

Well, please do not hesitate to use Lao land for your pleasure.

She walks up to Ming T'ien.

LAO MA

I've brought something for you, Ming T'ien.

She holds out the cloth.

LAO MA

I made it myself.

Ming T'ien takes the cloth and tosses it indifferently to one of the Soldiers. He obviously doesn't like Lao Ma much. Lao Ma is hurt by his indifference but she smiles anyway. She tosses a look back at Xena.

LAO MA

A beaten, half-dead cripple. It doesn't sound very sporting, Ming Tzu.

MING TZU

No. But it will be entertaining.

CUT TO:

24 EXT. WOODS - DAY INTO NIGHT

24

We hear the BAY OF HOUNDS. Then Xena bursts through a thicket running for her life. Her run is awkward on her bad gams.

THE HOUNDS (STOCK)

give pursuit.

ON XENA

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED:

24

She leaps over logs, creeks, and ravines. Once, she stumbles and slides down a muddy hill. The CRY OF THE HOUNDS gets louder. She scrambles to her feet and keeps running.

ON MING T'IEN AND MING TZU

as they gallop in pursuit of the CRY OF THE HOUNDS a la a fox hunt. Ming T'ien pulls up his horse. Ming Tzu reins in his horse and looks back at Ming T'ien.

*
*

MING TZU

She has to die, Ming T'ien. She's your enemy.

*
*
*

ON MING T'IEN

*

He stares at his father for a LONG MOMENT, then spurs his horse forward.

*
*

XENA'S POV

as she runs. She bursts through a line of bushes into a thicket and comes face-to-face with LAO MA.

DIFFERENT ANGLE

Xena strikes out at Lao Ma. Lao Ma catches her arm and holds it with an iron grip.

LAO MA

Come with me if you wish your freedom.

Xena hesitates. The FULL CRY OF THE HOUNDS gets closer.

THE LEAD HOUNDS

explode into the thicket.

Lao Ma steps forward and stares down the lead dog. The lead dog puts on the brakes and WHIMPERS a bit. Lao Ma continues to practice some kind of mind control on this beast. Then the dog turns and runs in another direction. The other hounds follow.

LAO MA

(to Xena)

Hurry. They'll be back on the scent soon.

Xena follows Lao Ma for a few steps.

XENA

Why are you doing this?

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED: 2

24

LAO MA

I have been blessed... or cursed...
with the ability to see into the souls
of others. You don't know it yet,
Xena, but you're a remarkable woman,
capable of greatness.

Xena eyes Lao Ma suspiciously. We hear the CRY OF THE
HOUNDS approaching again.

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED: 2

24

LAO MA
Come, quick. We'll take refuge in my
home.

Xena doesn't have much of a choice here, and follows.

CUT TO:

25 INT. LAO'S PALACE - BATHING ROOM - NIGHT

25

Lao Ma sits by a bath in this spacious room, wetting her long hair and then sprinkling oil on it. We hear the HOWL OF HOUNDS outside. The door to the room opens and Ming Tzu enters with GUARDS and Ming T'ien.

MING TZU
Lao Ma. My hounds have followed
Xena's trail here.

LAO MA
(laughs)
They're probably just hungry.

MING TZU
(to the Guards)
Search the room.

The Guards begin searching the room. Lao Ma continues casually to wet her hair.

DIFFERENT ANGLE

We see that in the tub, under the water, is Xena holding her breath. The Guards continue to search every corner. They find nothing, of course.

LAO MA
Now, if you could respect my privacy.

Ming Tzu snaps his fingers and the Guards leave. Ming Tzu turns to leave.

ON LAO MA

She leans over the tub, ready to give Xena the clear sign.

ON XENA

Clearly she hasn't much breath left.

ON MING TZU

He turns back suddenly.

(CONTINUED)

25 CONTINUED:

25

LAO MA

Lao Ma sticks her head under the water as if she's rinsing out the oil.

UNDERWATER

Lao Ma gives Xena the kiss of life, breathing her breath into Xena's lungs.

ON LAO MA AND MING TZU

as Lao Ma pulls her head out of the water and dries it with a towel.

MING TZU

You better not be hiding her.

LAO MA

(ever so sweetly)

My Lord, I would never hide what is yours.

MING TZU

When I arranged for your marriage to Lao, I expected you to show more loyalty towards me.

LAO MA

I was your courtesan and you sold me. You expected loyalty?

MING TZU

You're a strange woman, Lao Ma. Soft and hard at the same time.

LAO MA

Like water.

She cups her hands and scoops out some water. She tastes it and then lets it run onto her face.

LAO MA

Nothing is softer than water, yet who can stand up to the raging flood?

Ming Tzu stares at her for one last moment and then exits. A moment later, Xena explodes out of the water and gasps for air. She looks at Lao Ma, who smiles that serene smile.

CUT TO:

26 EXT. FOREST - NIGHT - CLOSE ON XENA'S BACK

26*

It's covered only by her undergarment. Her hands reach back and pull the garment up over her head, revealing her naked back.

CLOSE ON A BOWL OF DARK OIL

Xena's fingers dip into the bowl and come out black with oil. The fingers move up to her breast where she starts to apply the oil to cover her skin in a black coating.

CLOSE ON her face, then her legs, and finally her stomach, as she continues to apply this oil.

DIFFERENT ANGLE

Xena stands in the forest, naked, covered with the dark oil. She puts a knife between her teeth and sets out to do the deed. Lightning FLASHES and thunder BOOMS.

*

CUT TO:

27 EXT. FOREST EDGE - NIGHT

27*

Xena creeps out of the forest and stares at:

28 EXT. MING'S PALACE - NIGHT

28*

It sits in front of Xena.

ON XENA

She looks determined, ready to kill.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

29 EXT. MING'S PALACE - NIGHT 29*

TWO GUARDS are on watch between the palace wall and the moat. Their guard responsibilities require them to move apart to check the perimeter. At one point, they're about ten feet apart with their backs to each other. *

ON THE MOAT *

Still water for a moment. Then Xena emerges out of it. She springs up to a ledge above her, disappearing inside an open window. *

CUT TO:

30 INT. LAO'S PALACE - BATHING ROOM - NIGHT 30

Lao Ma is bathing Xena, washing her hair, the whole bit. Xena keeps staring at Lao Ma, wondering what exactly she's up to. Lao Ma only answers with that serene smile.

CUT TO:

31 INT. MING'S PALACE - BIRDCAGE CORRIDOR - NIGHT 31*

WE FOLLOW TWO GUARDS down the corridor past a section of the wall that is covered in shadows. Once they're past the shadows, Xena suddenly steps out of the shadows. *

CLOSE ON XENA *

as she moves down the corridor. *

CUT TO:

32 INT. LAO'S PALACE - DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT 32

Lao Ma dresses Xena in classic Chinese clothing. As we know, Xena cleans up real good.

CUT TO:

33 INT. MING'S PALACE - BIRDCAGE CORRIDOR - NIGHT 33*

Xena edges down the corridor. *

34 INT. LAO'S PALACE - DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT 34
Xena sits on a chair as Lao Ma combs Xena's hair.

CUT TO:

35 INT. MING'S PALACE - BIRDCAGE CORRIDOR - NIGHT 35
Xena makes her way down the corridor. *

36 EXT. COUNTRY ROAD #2 - DAY 36
It's the day of the Xena hunt. This is the country road where Lao Ma approached them to give a gift to Ming T'ien. We're experiencing it from the chained Xena's POV.

ON LAO MA

She throws a sad look at Ming T'ien, then a sympathetic look at Xena. She turns back to Ming Tzu.

LAO MA
I must go. Enjoy your entertainment.

Ming Tzu nods. Lao Ma gets in her litter, which is carried off.

MING TZU
(to Ming T'ien)
You could have at least looked at her gift.

Ming T'ien shrugs indifferently.

MING TZU
(to the Soldier)
Let me see.

The Soldier unfolds the cloth and holds it up so that Ming Tzu can see. We (from Xena's POV) can't see it.

MING TZU
Ah, she knows my nickname for you.
(to the Soldier)
Show it to him.

The Soldier turns the cloth around so that Ming T'ien and we can see it:

(CONTINUED)

36 CONTINUED:

36

CLOSE ON A GREEN DRAGON
looking sad.

CUT TO:

37 INT. MING'S PALACE - BIRDCAGE CORRIDOR - NIGHT

37*

Xena moves down the corridor.

*

THE CORRIDOR - XENA'S POV

There is a candle burning at the end of the corridor. She moves toward it ever so slowly.

ON XENA

Beads of perspiration trickle down her forehead. This isn't the usually cool Xena. This is a seriously conflicted woman. We travel into her thoughts with her.

CLIP - FROM EARLIER IN THIS SHOW

CLOSE ON Gabrielle as she says:

GABRIELLE

You owe someone so much that you'd throw away these last few years.

RESUME SCENE

Xena continues to edge toward the candle.

CLIP - "RETURN OF CALLISTO" - XENA LETS CALLISTO DIE

RESUME SCENE

Xena gets ever so close to that candle.

CLIP MONTAGE - QUICK CUTS FROM PREVIOUS EPISODES:

CLIP - "IS THERE A DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE?" - XENA BRINGING GABRIELLE BACK FROM THE DEAD

CLIP - "MORTAL BELOVED" - XENA "KILLING" MARCUS

CLIP - "DEATH IN CHAINS" - XENA LIBERATING DEATH

CLIP - Once again we see the clip from earlier in this show as Gabrielle asks, "You owe someone so much..."

MORE LIKE THIS.

(CONTINUED)

37 CONTINUED:

37

THESE CLIPS ARE NOT FULL SCENES BUT FRAGMENTS TO SUGGEST XENA'S ALMOST FEVERISH STATE, AS HER INNER CONFLICT IS TEARING HER APART. IT'S STREAM-OF-CONSCIOUSNESS TIME, AND IF THERE'S A THEME THAT HOLDS THEM TOGETHER, IT'S LIFE AND DEATH, RIGHT AND WRONG.

RESUME SCENE

Xena has paused not far from the candle. She takes a deep breath and enters:

38 INT. MING T'IEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

38*

She edges toward the bed, ever so slowly. She raises the knife to strike.

ON THE BED

A figure lies sleeping under the blankets.

ON XENA

She's ready to strike.

ON THE FIGURE

It moves.

ON XENA

She goes to strike.

ON THE FIGURE

The blankets are thrown off to reveal GABRIELLE.

ON XENA

She's frozen like a stone. Suddenly, lights flood the room as:

GUARDS

carrying torches and others carrying spears enter and surround the stunned Xena.

ON GABRIELLE

GABRIELLE

I'm sorry, Xena. I couldn't let you do this.

CLOSE ON A GREEN DRAGON

(CONTINUED)

38 CONTINUED:

38

Not meek and sad like the one Lao Ma had, but this dragon is cruel and ferocious. It's on someone's chest.

WIDER TO SHOW MING T'IEN

He's now twenty-one, haughty, handsome, and refined. He walks up to Xena and wipes some of the oil off her face. *

 MING T'IEN (ADULT)
Lao Ma said you'd return one day.
 (to the Guards)
Lock her up.

ON XENA

As she stares in shock at Gabrielle, we:

FADE OUT.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

THE END