

Prod. #V0407

XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"The Debt II"

a.k.a.

"The Debt"

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  
July 03, 1997  
Rev. July 10, 1997 - Pink  
Rev. July 14, 1997 - Blue  
Rev. Oct. 14, 1997 - Yellow  
Rev. Oct. 15, 1997 - Green

Prod. #V0407 - 7/14/97 - Blue

XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"The Debt II"

CAST LIST

XENA  
GABRIELLE

LAO MA  
MING TZU  
MING T'IEN - 12 YEARS OLD \*  
MING T'IEN - ADULT  
BORIAS  
CHUANG  
JIU  
PRISON GUARD

\*

\* non-speaking

XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"The Debt II"

SET LIST

INTERIORS:

MING'S PALACE - THRONE ROOM  
                  - RUINS  
LAO'S PALACE - MAIN ROOM  
                  - RECEPTION ROOM  
                  - MASTER BEDROOM  
PRISON  
WATERY PRISON  
CAVE

\*

EXTERIORS:

BORIAS' YURT  
COURTYARD

FOREST

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

Prod. #V0407 - 7/10/97 - Pink

XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"The Debt II"

CHRONOLOGY

DAY 1	SCENES # 1 - 2	
	SCENE # 4	
	SCENE # 8	
	SCENE #10	
	SCENE #20	
	SCENES #22 - 23	
ETERNAL NIGHT	SCENE # 3	
	SCENE #11	
	SCENE #14	
	SCENE #24	
	SCENE #26	
	SCENE #31	
DAY 2	SCENE #32	
	SCENE #34	
	SCENE #36	
	SCENE #38	
	SCENE #40	
	SCENES #42 - 45	
DAY 3 (FLASHBACK)	SCENE # 5	
	SCENE # 9	
DAY 4 (FLASHBACK)	SCENE #12	
DAY 5 (FLASHBACK)	SCENE #15	
	SCENE #33	
	SCENE #35	
	SCENE #37	
	SCENE #39	
DAY 6 (FLASHBACK)	SCENES #16 - 19	
	SCENE #21	
	SCENE #25	
	SCENES #27 - 28	
	SCENE #41	
DAY 7 (FLASHBACK)	SCENES #29 - 30	

\*

\*

\*

XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"The Debt II" \*

TEASER

FADE IN:

WE BEGIN WITH A BRILLIANTLY EDITED REVIEW OF LAST WEEK'S SHOW INFORMING THE AUDIENCE WHERE WE'RE AT IN THE STORY.

CUT TO:

1 INT. MING'S PALACE - THRONE ROOM - DAY 1

CLOSE ON THE GREEN DRAGON we got to know last week.

GABRIELLE'S VOICE

I want to see Xena.

WIDER TO SHOW

the Green Dragon is still on the chest of MING T'IEN who sits on his throne, holding a sceptre, looking like a man who enjoys the trappings of power. GABRIELLE stands before the throne, looking like a woman who is not impressed by said trappings.

MING T'IEN

That would be impossible.

GABRIELLE

Why?

MING T'IEN

Our laws say a prisoner charged with a capital offense cannot receive visitors. And I am a man of law.

(CONTINUED)

1 CONTINUED:

1

GABRIELLE

Your Highness, you told me that you'd  
let Xena go if --

MING T'IEN

Gabrielle, I owe you my life. Anything  
in this kingdom you wish is yours.  
But if you think banishing Xena will  
keep her from returning to kill me, you  
don't know her as well as you think.

CUT TO:

2 INT. PRISON - DAY - ON XENA

2

She's thrown to the ground. She's chained to a pillar she  
carries on her back. She's wearing what she was wearing at  
the end of Part One, which ain't much. She's surrounded by  
FIVE GUARDS who torment her. She maintains an oddly stoic  
visage. A Guard leans over and peers into her face.

GUARD

Hey, Xena. I hear you were betrayed  
by a friend.

XENA

No, not by a friend.

She swings the pillar around to crash into the Guard's face.

GUARD

Throw her in.

ANOTHER GUARD pulls aside a metal grating. The First Guard  
kicks Xena viciously in the face and then all five Guards  
throw her into:

A DARK CAVERNOUS PIT

Xena stares up at us, as she disappears in SLOW MOTION into  
the darkness.

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

3 INT. WATERY PRISON - ETERNAL NIGHT (CONTINUOUS ACTION)

3

Xena splashes into the filthy stagnant water. She stands up in this polluted mess and looks around.

THE WATERY PRISON - XENA'S POV

In the shadows she sees the hulking figures of men who have been down here a long time. They're ugly, scrawny, hairy, and mean. Surrounding the polluted water are walls where a series of ledges give some respite to soggy prisoners.

ON XENA

She walks towards one of the ledges. The other PRISONERS scurry like rats at her movement. There are also rats among them, scurrying like prisoners. Xena heads for one ledge in particular. One Prisoner, named JIU, leaps onto that ledge and stares down at Xena.

JIU

This one's mine.

Xena looks around at all the other ledges. As she does, different Prisoners scurry onto them to make their claim. She notices one ledge higher up. She leaps out of the water, does a twisting move, and lands on the higher ledge.

\*  
\*

ON THE OTHER PRISONERS

They liked that!

ON XENA

She's oblivious to her surroundings as she considers her fate.

CUT TO:

4 INT. MING'S PALACE - THRONE ROOM - DAY

4

Gabrielle and Ming T'ien sit at a table, eating. Ming T'ien is having finger-licking fun with some poultry dish. Gabrielle hasn't touched hers. She's too busy talking.

GABRIELLE

So if you had her promise, you would let her go, right?

MING T'IEN

It would take more than that.

GABRIELLE

Xena wouldn't go back on her promise.

MING T'IEN

Of course, she would.

GABRIELLE

(trying a more forceful approach)

I want to see her!

MING T'IEN

Out of the question.

GABRIELLE

You told me I could have anything in your kingdom.

MING T'IEN

Except that.

GABRIELLE

You don't understand. I need to talk to her... explain why I did what I did. I'm terrified of what she might be thinking of me.

MING T'IEN

I can tell you. You betrayed her, therefore you're her enemy. She'd kill you now as soon as look at you.

GABRIELLE

You're wrong. You don't know her.

MING T'IEN

(suddenly cruelly intense)

I know her!!!

(mellows)

Tell me, why did you do it if you love her so?

(CONTINUED)



4 CONTINUED:

4

GABRIELLE

I felt she was betraying herself by going back to the way of murder.

MING T'IEN

Murder is in her blood, Gabrielle, her soul. It's more natural to her than love.

GABRIELLE

Look, I know what Xena did to you was a terrible thing --

\*  
\*

MING T'IEN

No! You're wrong. It wasn't terrible. It changed my life, gave it a meaning and a direction. She taught me how to rule.

\*

CUT TO:

5 INT. CAVE - DAY

5

Xena sits at a table across from Ming T'ien who stares in wide-mouthed horror at Xena, who is giving him a fierce look. A plate of food sits in front of Ming T'ien.

XENA

I'm the scourge of your gods sent to punish your people.

Ming T'ien is about to faint. Then Xena cracks a grin.

XENA

Pretty scary, huh?

Ming T'ien nods his whole-hearted agreement. We hear the ADULT Ming T'ien's VOICEOVER, as we look at Xena cut a piece of meat for the Young Ming T'ien as this bizarre relationship develops.

MING T'IEN'S VOICE

She understood how to send fear flooding into the souls of men, women, and children.

Xena throws a cruel glance at Ming T'ien who gets nervous, then Xena smiles again.

FOOTSTEPS draw Xena's attention to:

CHUANG

who enters, looking concerned.

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED:

5

XENA  
What is it?

CHUANG  
Borias. He's riding this way.

XENA  
With how many men?

CHUANG  
He's alone.

Xena thinks for a moment, then grabs Ming T'ien and throws him into a small hollow in the side of the cave.

ON XENA - MING T'IEN'S POV

We WATCH AS XENA WALLS US UP. She puts one stone after another in front of us. When she's almost gone from sight, she throws us a wink and then puts the last stone in place, blocking the last ray of light.

MING T'IEN'S VOICE  
And when that terror lives deep down  
inside people - then you own their  
hearts... they're your slaves.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

CUT TO:

6 OMITTED

6\*

7 OMITTED

7

8 INT. MING'S PALACE - THRONE ROOM - DAY

8

Gabrielle is appalled by this. Ming T'ien continues to enjoy his meal.

MING T'IEN

My father didn't understand this.  
He was too soft.

CUT TO:

CLIP - "THE DEBT" - XENA COMES TO COLLECT THE RANSOM

XENA

Chuang. Move out the gold.

MING TZU

The boy!

XENA

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

\*

Ming Tzu rushes out.

9 EXT. BORIAS' YURT - DAY

9

Ming Tzu rushes up to the third packhorse. He throws off the blankets. When he see his son, he grabs him and hugs him. Ming T'ien seems coldly indifferent.

CUT TO:

10 INT. MING'S PALACE - THRONE ROOM - DAY

10

Ming T'ien sits quietly, with a slight touch of sadness in his eyes.

GABRIELLE

You can't really fault your father for being emotional at a time like that.

Ming T'ien's look hardens.

MING T'IEN

He was a fraud. Just like Xena said. He cared about me only because a king needs an heir.

GABRIELLE

Where is he now?

MING T'IEN

(indifferently)

Dead.

(smiles cheerfully)

But we're alive, Gabrielle. So let's quit living in the past and celebrate your heroic deed. If it weren't for you, I wouldn't be Emperor of Chin, I would be another of Xena's victims.

\*

He holds up a glass of rice wine.

ON GABRIELLE

She considers his words. She saved this maniac's life.

CUT TO:

11 INT. WATERY PRISON - ETERNAL NIGHT

11

Xena sits on her ledge, staring relentlessly into space. Suddenly, she becomes aware of some movement at her feet. She looks to see an OLD MAN slipping a dirty shirt onto the ledge.

XENA

What do you want, Old Man?

JIU

He's offering you his shirt.

XENA

(to the Old Man)

I don't want your clothes.

The Old Man smiles at Xena and moves away, leaving the shirt behind.

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED:

11

Then ANOTHER PRISONER steps up and leaves a small rag of a cloak on her ledge.

XENA  
(to Jiu)  
What are they doing?

JIU  
Clothing you. It's their way of paying  
tribute.

XENA  
For what?

JIU  
They heard what you did... or tried to  
do. Kill the Emperor.

XENA  
They like that, huh?

JIU  
There's not a man here who hasn't lost  
many of his loved ones at the hands of  
that monster.

XENA  
Where are you from?

JIU  
The Kingdom of Lao.

XENA  
Lao? You know of Lao Ma then?

JIU  
Lao Ma? Of course. The wife of our  
King. Beautiful woman.

XENA  
When did you last see her?

We CLOSE ON JIU'S FACE as he recalls:

CUT TO:

12 EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

12

Lao Ma is escorted into the courtyard by ARMED GUARDS.

ON JIU

He stands in A CROWD OF SPECTATORS struggling to see what  
happens to Lao Ma.

(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED:

12

ON LAO MA

She is escorted to a platform on which stand two tables. One of them is body length. The other is smaller and covered with a black cloth. One of the Guards gestures for Lao Ma to lie down on the larger table. She obeys.

ON THE SMALLER TABLE

A black cloth covers the smaller table. The HANDS OF THE EXECUTIONER (WE NEVER SEE HIS FACE) reach out to pull the cloth aside, revealing:

ASSORTED TOOLS

Hacksaw, scalpel, pliers, corkscrew etc. If it looks like it could cause a lot of pain, it's on this table. The Hands of the Executioner reach out, pick up the hacksaw and hold it a few inches from Lao Ma's skull.

\*

The Executioner moves his arm and we hear LAO MA'S TERRIBLE SCREAM.

\*

\*

CUT TO:

13 OMITTED

13\*

14 INT. WATERY PRISON - ETERNAL NIGHT

14

Xena sits on the ledge, shivering from pain herself, as if she suffered along with Lao Ma.

XENA

Who ordered the execution?

JIU

Emperor Ming T'ien. Like you, many of us had heard of her great powers and thought she would use them to escape. Perhaps, they were all a lie.

XENA

No. Her powers were real.

CUT TO:

15 INT. LAO'S PALACE - MAIN ROOM - DAY

15

Xena sits watching Lao Ma. Lao Ma places a bottle on a table. She nods toward Xena. Xena stands and squares off against the bottle. It's like an old time six-gun practice. Xena leaps at the bottle and smashes it to pieces with a swinging kick. She looks awkward because of her bad leg.

LAO MA

Would you kill a mosquito with an axe?

Xena doesn't get Lao Ma's drift. Lao Ma reaches up toward:

A CROW HAIR BROOCH

in Xena's hair. This is a black ivory brooch, carved to look like a crow, with a sharp needle sticking out of it to hold it in her hair.

ON LAO MA AND XENA

LAO MA

This is very beautiful.

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED:

15

She looks at it and suddenly spins and flips her arm.

ON THE TABLE

The crow brooch sticks into the side of the tabletop. Xena approaches it and pulls out the brooch.

XENA

Amazing.

LAO MA

That could be a very useful weapon,  
if thrown at the right body part.

XENA

You could kill someone with a hair  
brooch?

LAO MA

If necessary. I don't like to kill,  
however.

XENA

Everybody has their preferences.  
I happen to like a good kill.

Lao Ma studies Xena curiously.

LAO MA

You're so full of anger and hate.

XENA

Everybody's got to be full of  
something.

LAO MA

Put up another bottle.

Xena puts another bottle on the table. We totally expect Lao Ma to leap toward the bottle and kick it. But she remains concentrated toward it for the longest time. Then suddenly, THE BOTTLE EXPLODES as if hit by an unseen force.

Xena approaches the shattered bottle. She turns back to Lao Ma in wonder. Lao Ma smiles that peaceful smile.

Xena puts a bottle on the table and turns to Lao Ma.

XENA

Teach me how to do that.

She takes the same stance we saw Lao Ma assume earlier.

LAO MA

Well, try it.

(CONTINUED)



15 CONTINUED: 2

15

Xena stares at the bottle, trying to wish it off the table. Nothing happens. Lao Ma LAUGHS in spite of herself, like parents laugh at children who are pretending to be grown-up.

LAO MA

I'm sorry, Xena. But you're trying to attack the bottle with your will.

XENA

What else is there?

LAO MA

Exactly.

XENA

What?

LAO MA

The entire world is driven by a Will - blind and ruthless. In order to transcend the limitations of that world, you need to stop willing, stop desiring, stop hating!

XENA

How do I do that?

LAO MA

Heaven endures and earth lasts for a long time because they do not live for themselves. Therefore, she who would live a long time should live for others, serve others.

XENA

Yeah? Well, I guess I could wait on you if that's what you mean.

LAO MA

Of course, you could. It's easy to wait on someone who loves you. You feel it will make them love you more. It's like a good business investment. That's not what I'm talking about.

XENA

So I'm supposed to serve someone who hates me?

LAO MA

More than that. You need to serve someone you hate. Ming Tzu.

XENA

Ming Tzu?

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED: 3

15

LAO MA

Yes. The man who had you hunted like  
an animal. He comes here tomorrow with  
his son.

\*

XENA

Serve Ming? I'd rather die.

\*

LAO MA

You've been a dead woman for a long  
time, Xena. I'm offering you a chance  
to live.

FADE OUT.

\*

END OF ACT I

\*

ACT II

FADE IN:

16 INT. LAO'S PALACE - RECEPTION ROOM - DAY

16

Ming Tzu and Ming T'ien enter. They look at:

A ROW OF SERVING GIRLS

who are lined up to wait on them. We go CLOSE ON one of them. IT'S XENA. She's dressed in full Chinese garb and is wearing a lot of makeup to give her a Chinese appearance but it's definitely Xena. Right now her head is bowed in a way to hide her face from the Mings.

ON LAO MA

She greets Ming Tzu and Ming T'ien.

LAO MA  
Welcome to my home. I wish only that  
it were worthy of your presence.

Ming Tzu gives a deferential bow. Lao Ma turns to Ming T'ien and goes to hug him.

LAO MA  
Welcome, Ming T'ien.

Ming T'ien pulls away as if Lao Ma disgusts him. We can see that this hurts Lao Ma but she recovers quickly.

LAO MA  
Dinner awaits, Ming Tzu.

CUT TO:

17 INT. LAO'S PALACE - MAIN ROOM - DAY

17

Ming Tzu, Ming T'ien, and Lao Ma sit around a table wolfing down goodies. They're waited on by an assortment of Serving Girls, Xena being one of them.

LAO MA  
So Borias is still a problem.

ON XENA

She has reached over Ming Tzu's shoulder and is pouring him some tea. Throughout this scene she does her best to stay out of his eye line and to blend into the furniture. She reacts now to the mention of Borias.

MING TZU  
Yes. The gold and the horses we gave him for double-crossing that whore has made him too powerful.

Xena is in the process of picking up a plate off the table. A KNIFE slips off and falls onto the table top. Ming Tzu picks it up and holds it up to Xena without looking at her.

MING TZU  
Be careful, you idiot.

Xena takes the knife from his hand and looks down at:

MING TZU'S NECK - XENA'S POV

It's soft, naked, and vulnerable. It seems to be crying out, "Cut me!!"

ON LAO MA

She studies Xena with great interest.

ON MING T'IEN

He glances up casually at Xena. Suddenly, his face freezes as he recognizes her. Xena throws him a wink.

ON MING TZU AND XENA

Xena stands behind him holding the knife.

MING TZU  
Borias is more dangerous than that witch, Xena. He's very clever. She was a stupid thug.

He takes a bite of rice. Xena stands with the knife poised. She throws a look at Lao Ma. Lao Ma gives her a striking look right back.

(CONTINUED)

17 CONTINUED:

17

ON MING T'IEN

He's fascinated to see what's going to happen next.

Xena turns and goes out of the room. Ming Tzu notices Ming T'ien watching Xena's exit.

MING TZU

Is something the matter, Son?

\*

Ming T'ien shakes his head "no." Lao Ma and Ming T'ien exchange looks, as we:

\*

CUT TO:

18 INT. LAO'S PALACE - RECEPTION ROOM - DAY

18

Lao Ma escorts the Mings to the exit. The Servant Girls are once again lined up in kneeling, subservient positions, with heads bowed, to bid farewell.

MING TZU

Goodbye, Lao Ma.

Lao Ma looks to Ming T'ien, but knows better by now that she ain't gonna get no hug. The Mings exit. As soon as the door is closed, Xena is on her feet and in Lao Ma's face.

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED:

18

XENA

Well, I did the whole servant bit and it accomplished nothing.

LAO MA

You're wrong. For a few hours, you silenced your will. It's a beginning.

XENA

Beginning of what? I should have just sliced that pig's throat.

LAO MA

To conquer others is to have power, to conquer yourself is to know the Way. Come with me, Xena.

CUT TO:

19 INT. LAO'S PALACE - THE MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

19

A SLEEPING MAN lies still in the master bed.

\*

LAO MA

*My husband.*

WIDER TO REVEAL

\*

Xena and Lao Ma standing by the bed.

\*

XENA

I've heard a rumor that you keep him in a coma. I didn't believe it, but it's true.

\*

\*

\*

(CONTINUED)

19 CONTINUED:

19

LAO MA

Oh, yes. If he were actually dead, word would get out and his imbecile cousin would become King. No, I keep him alive, but in this half-conscious state. You understand pressure points, don't you? I make sure he's seen every once in a while in the garden. It helps to convince doubters.

\*  
\*  
\*

XENA

So you rule in his name.

LAO MA

The only way a woman could rule in the Kingdom of Chin.

(nods affectionately toward her husband)

It's my gift to him. He was a vicious tyrant. I'm going to make him the most loved of rulers.

XENA

Don't you get sick of him getting the credit for what you do?

LAO MA

Not at all, as long as good is done.

She walks to a large book that sits on a stand at the foot of the bed. She begins writing in it.

XENA

You write down all of that wisdom stuff?

LAO MA

Yes. In his book.

XENA

You give him credit for that, too?

LAO MA

This wisdom comes from Heaven. What difference does it make who gets credit for it, Lao Ma or Lao Tzu?

\*

(CONTINUED)

19 CONTINUED: 2

19

XENA

Nothing seems to phase you. Except  
that kid I kidnapped. Every time he  
ignores you, it cuts deep.

LAO MA

I know. It's foolish of me. Because  
we give birth to them, doesn't mean we  
own them.

XENA

He's your son?

Off Lao Ma's peaceful smile:

GABRIELLE'S VOICE

What are you doing?!

CUT TO:

20 INT. MING'S PALACE - THRONE ROOM - DAY - CLOSE ON XENA

20

A hand slaps her across the face.

WIDER TO SHOW

Gabrielle is the one who slapped her.

GABRIELLE

Xena, say it!

DIFFERENT ANGLE

We see that Xena stands chained in the middle of the room.  
A JURY surrounds Ming T'ien's throne, where he sits waiting  
for her answer.

GABRIELLE

Promise them that you will never  
attempt to kill Ming T'ien again.  
Promise them!!

ON XENA'S FACE

She ain't in the promising mood.

GABRIELLE'S VOICE

Xena. Promise them and they'll banish  
you. We can ride away from this.

(CONTINUED)



20 CONTINUED:

20

WE CLOSE ON XENA'S FACE AND HER MEMORIES:

CUT TO:

21 INT. LAO'S PALACE - MAIN ROOM - DAY

21

Xena limps in to where Lao Ma sits by a couch. Lao Ma smiles at Xena and gestures to the couch. Xena takes off her robe and stretches out on the couch. Lao Ma begins to rub Xena's leg where the worst remnants of Caesar's wound is. She applies some oil to the wound and begins to SING A WORDLESS SONG that seems to be summoning some healing power.

ON XENA

She's transfixed by Lao Ma, totally into this odd ceremony.

ON LAO MA

Suddenly, she leaps to her feet and, as if she were possessed by some higher power, flies backward toward a distant wall.

LAO MA

Come to me, Xena. Now.

Xena stands and notices for the first time that her leg feels better. She takes a step, then stops and puts all her weight on the bad leg. She tests the other leg. It feels good, too. She runs up a wall and does a flip to land firmly on her healed legs.

ON LAO MA

She picks up a roll of fabric and hurls it at Xena. It encircles Xena. Lao Ma pulls Xena toward her.

ON LAO MA AND XENA

They collide playfully, LAUGHING and hugging each other in joy.

CUT TO:

22 INT. MING'S PALACE - THRONE ROOM - DAY

22

Xena stands in front of Ming T'ien and his Jury. Gabrielle stands next to Xena.

MING T'IEN

Then you have nothing to say in your defense, Xena?

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED:

22

GABRIELLE

Xena!

Xena remains silent, her mind years away.

MING T'IEN

So be it. Tomorrow at dawn you'll  
experience this life for the last time.  
The sentence is death.

ON GABRIELLE

She's horrified at the consequences of her actions.

ON XENA

She seems oblivious to her surroundings.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

23 INT. MING'S PALACE - THRONE ROOM - DAY (CONTINUOUS) 23

Xena, still lost in her own world, is led away. Gabrielle looks stunned, her world is collapsing around her. Ming T'ien approaches her.

MING T'IEN

Don't feel like you failed. I would have executed her no matter what she said. It's amazing really. She did all this out of some fool gratitude to Lao Ma for saving her life. I suppose even wild beasts have a sense of loyalty sometimes.

GABRIELLE

Can I see her?

MING T'IEN

Oh, yes. Now that's she's condemned, you can visit her. I'm not a monster, you know.

CUT TO:

24 INT. WATERY PRISON - ETERNAL NIGHT 24

Xena sits on her ledge. The door leading out opens up and Gabrielle splashes into the water.

GUARD'S VOICE

Scream when you want out.

LAUGHTER COMES FROM ABOVE. Gabrielle looks around and spots:

XENA

sitting on her ledge. Gabrielle approaches.

GABRIELLE

Xena. Can we talk?

Xena remains distant and cold.

GABRIELLE

You won't let me back in, will you?

Xena doesn't budge.

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED:

24

GABRIELLE

Of course not. I betrayed you. The pathetic thing is, I actually thought I was saving you.

Xena stirs for the first time when she hears that.

GABRIELLE

My reverence for life kept a brutal tyrant in power and led to my best friend's execution. I know you hate me now, but no more than I hate myself.

\*

Gabrielle looks up at Xena's cold eyes. Xena lowers herself off the ledge and approaches Gabrielle. They stand toe-to-toe for a TENSE MOMENT.

\*

XENA

Scratch my nose, will ya?

\*

\*

Gabrielle looks at Xena curiously for a moment. A loving smile creeps onto Xena's face. Gabrielle goes to hug Xena, realizes how awkward that would be considering the pillar, then just scratches Xena's nose.

\*

\*

\*

\*

ON THE OTHER PRISONERS

as they watch this reunion.

ON XENA AND GABRIELLE

Xena kisses Gabrielle's forehead.

XENA

I know you did what you thought was right, Gabrielle. I was angry with you for it, but I never hated you... I never could.

GABRIELLE

And I think I understand why you thought you had to kill Ming T'ien. It was Lao Ma's last request and she saved your life.

XENA

Not just my life. My soul, my spirit, my entire being.

CUT TO:

25 INT. LAO'S PALACE - MAIN ROOM - DAY

25

Xena and Lao Ma are still entwined in the cloth we last saw them in. Suddenly, Lao Ma pushes Xena away. Xena spins out of the fabric and LAUGHS. Keep in mind we're still in the post-healing state of euphoria.

(CONTINUED)

25 CONTINUED:

25

Xena and Lao Ma enter into a lyrical, loving dance. A riotous orgy of MUSIC and LAUGHTER leads to Xena reaching a spiritually free state.

ON XENA

She runs up a wall and levitates in mid-air for a moment. Lao Ma and she brush against each other as they travel around the room. They embrace lovingly for a moment. Xena takes the crow hair brooch from her hair and slips it into Lao Ma's hair. They smile peacefully at each other. We HEAR THE DOOR OPEN. Xena is levitating with her back to the ground. She throws her head back to see who entered.

BORIAS - XENA'S UPSIDE-DOWN POV

He's just entered the room.

ON XENA

She crashes to the floor, as her desireless state is crushed by her present desire to kill Borias. She leaps to her feet and attacks Borias with a vengeance. Borias blocks Xena's first blow but Xena continues to attack him. Lao Ma leaps between Xena and Borias.

LAO MA

Xena, stop. Control yourself. He's here because I sent for him.

\*

Xena answers with a SCREAM and does a flipping leap over Lao Ma. She delivers a two-footed kick to Borias' face. Borias goes down in a lump. Xena is poised for the kill. Lao Ma throws herself onto Borias to protect him.

LAO MA

Stop, Xena. Just stop! Stop willing, stop desiring, stop hating.

XENA'S VOICE

That was the moment.

CUT TO:

26 INT. WATERY PRISON - ETERNAL NIGHT

26

Xena and Gabrielle both sit now on Xena's ledge.

XENA

I could have done it, right there.  
I could have just let go and buried  
my hatred forever. That was my chance.

(CONTINUED)

26 CONTINUED: 26

We see pain flood into Xena's eyes as she remembers:

CUT TO:

27 INT. LAO'S PALACE - MAIN ROOM - DAY 27

Xena is staring into Lao Ma's healing face. Lao Ma is still between Xena and Borias. Xena and Lao Ma's gazes have locked - Xena's harsh and cruel, Lao Ma's soft and healing.

ON LAO MA

Her eyes become sad as she realizes there's no hope for Xena, at least now.

ON XENA

She attacks. Borias has stumbled away from Lao Ma. Xena lays into him with vicious wrath, knocking him to the ground again with brutal kicks. She's about to lower her foot onto his neck when:

LAO MA

sends an energy bolt at Xena, knocking her to the ground. \*

LAO MA

All right, we'll do this a different way.

CUT TO:

28 INT. LAO'S PALACE - MAIN ROOM - DAY 28

Xena sits in a chair. Lao Ma stands between her and Borias. \*

XENA

What's he doing here?

LAO MA

We're going to have peace in this land. And you two are going to help bring it about.

XENA

You got to be kidding.

LAO MA

Tomorrow Ming Tzu comes here to talk with Borias and me. We're going to include him in a three-way alliance.

(CONTINUED)

28 CONTINUED:

28

XENA

If you think I'm gonna play servant girl to those two, I don't --

LAO MA

Quiet, Xena. I plan to inform Ming Tzu of your presence. He has to accept that. You're going to help me run the Kingdom of Lao. You'll be my Warrior Princess. Tomorrow you'll ask for Ming's forgiveness. Today, you're going to learn how to deal with Borias.  
(to Borias)

Xena's capable of profound loyalty, Borias, she just doesn't know it yet.

She walks over to Xena.

LAO MA

I'm leaving you two alone. It serves both your interests to get along. If you kill each other, so be it.

She exits. Xena and Borias exchange long stares. Will they go at it again? There's a long, tense pause.

ON BORIAS

A wry, sexy smirk drifts onto his face.

ON XENA

There is still hate in her eyes but now her lips curl into a cruel, lust-filled smile.

GABRIELLE'S VOICE

So you and Borias made up?

XENA'S VOICE

(sadly)

Oh, yeah. We made up. I also asked Ming Tzu for his forgiveness.

CUT TO:

29 INT. LAO'S PALACE - RECEPTION ROOM - DAY

29

Ming Tzu stands inside the front door. Xena kneels in front of him in a subservient pose.

Ming T'ien stands next to him, once again filled with wonder at this strange woman, Xena. Ming Tzu's BODYGUARD stands behind his boss. Borias stands to one side, eying all of this.

(CONTINUED)



29 CONTINUED:

29

MING TZU

(to Lao Ma)

You expect me to forgive the woman who kidnapped my son? Permit me to point out a detail that perhaps you missed. Xena belongs to me. She's my property. I have every right to cut her up into little pieces if I so wish.

LAO MA

Ming Tzu, I know a man of your wisdom wouldn't endanger an important treaty by holding a grudge.

MING TZU

To have the treaty I must forgive her?

Lao Ma nods modestly, but clearly she means business.

MING TZU

Then I apologize for wasting your time. Ming T'ien, let's go.

XENA

May I make a suggestion, Lao Ma? Ming Tzu is a man of great courage. I say you put me up as the stakes in a game of chance and see who wins.

MING TZU

Excuse me, but I don't have to play such a game. I own you right now.

BORIAS

I have a claim on Xena. I discovered her, so to speak.

LAO MA

And I was fortunate enough to save her.

XENA

And I say I belong to myself. It should be an interesting game.

CUT TO:

30 INT. LAO'S PALACE - MAIN ROOM - DAY

30

Lao Ma, Xena, Ming Tzu, and Borias bend over a blanket that has been thrown onto the ground. All of them are rattling dice shakers. Ming Tzu has been drinking and is sloshed. Suddenly, he stops shaking his dice.

(CONTINUED)

30 CONTINUED:

30

MING TZU

This is ridiculous. Gambling for this worthless whore! Why don't we put something valuable into the pot?

Xena darts a look at Ming Tzu and smiles.

XENA

All right. Let's say the winner gets me and a body part from each of the losers.

Ming Tzu stares at Xena.

MING TZU

What do you mean?

XENA

A body part. Minimum bet is a hand.

BORIAS

I'm in.

Ming Tzu throws a look at Lao Ma.

LAO MA

I don't want anyone's body part.

XENA

(oozing with sarcasm)

So, if you win, we all live happily ever after.

(to Ming Tzu)

How about it, Ming? You got the jewels for this?

MING TZU

Fine. All on one throw.

XENA

You got it.

The four of them start the die shake. We move from face to face a la the final showdown in "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly." They all throw their dice and anxiously look at the results.

XENA

I win!

(to Ming Tzu)

Pay up.

LAO MA

This is ridiculous.

(CONTINUED)

30 CONTINUED: 2

30

XENA  
I want a piece of him!!!

MING TZU  
You're crazy.

BORIAS  
Then you're not gonna pay up?

MING TZU  
Are you?

BORIAS  
Yes.  
(turns to Xena and throws  
her a wink)  
I give you my heart.

Xena CHUCKLES.

XENA  
Accepted. I'll settle for that from  
you too, Ming Tzu. Your heart.

MING TZU  
This is nonsense. I'm getting out of  
here.

He stands.

MING TZU  
Ming T'ien!!

ON MING T'IEN

He enters from the other room where he was playing.

MING TZU  
We're leaving this madhouse.

Xena grabs Ming Tzu's sword from his side.

XENA  
Not until I've collected my winnings.

She plunges the sword deep into Ming Tzu's heart.

ON MING T'IEN

He watches in horror at his father's death.

ON LAO MA

She SCREAMS her anger at Xena.

(CONTINUED)

30 CONTINUED: 3

30

ON BORIAS

He drives his sword into the back of Ming Tzu's Bodyguard.

ON XENA

XENA  
(to Borias)  
Now for the kid.

Lao Ma moves between Xena and Ming T'ien.

LAO MA  
What are you doing?

XENA  
We have a chance to wipe out their whole line. Then it'll be just the House of Lao. We'll rule the whole Kingdom of Chin. You can do your noble stuff, Borias and I will keep the peace... and have some laughs along the way.

ON LAO MA

Her face goes emotionless as she knows what she has to do. She concentrates her energy and sends Borias flying back across the room with a bolt of energy. She then turns on Xena and, using bolt after bolt of energy, sends her slamming around the room like a rag doll. Xena slams against a far wall. Her face is bloodied and bruised. Her head tilts forward. We see the top of her head, CLOSE IN ON HER HAIR:

\*

31 INT. WATERY PRISON - ETERNAL NIGHT

31

CONTINUE CLOSE ON XENA'S HAIR

\*

She lifts her head up so we're CLOSE ON HER FACE. This isn't the bruised and battered face of the Xena in the past. This is the tear-streaked face of the Xena in the present...

\*

\*

\*

\*

WIDER TO SHOW Xena sitting on the ledge, with Gabrielle at her feet listening carefully. There's a LONG PAUSE.

XENA  
She had such dreams of peace for her land... and my soul. I ruined them all. It was years before I finally understood what she wanted for me.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

31 CONTINUED:

31

XENA (cont'd)  
Not long before I met you, I was at the  
end of my rope, ready to give up...  
then I thought of her and what she  
taught me... and I was reborn...  
That's the debt.

WE HEAR THE SOUND OF THE DOOR being opened.

JIU'S VOICE  
It's time, Xena.

\*  
\*

Off Xena's sad face, we:

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

32 INT. MING'S PALACE - THRONE ROOM - DAY 32

Xena is led in by GUARDS. Gabrielle is pushed aside into a CROWD OF SPECTATORS. Xena is brought to a table, very much like the one we saw Lao Ma on earlier. Xena lays down on the table, the pillar still strapped to her back. The Guards chain her to the table and remove the pillar.

ON MING T'IEN

He enters and sits on his throne. He's going to enjoy this.

ON XENA

She lies with her eyes closed, seemingly oblivious to what's going on.

CUT TO:

33 INT. LAO'S PALACE - MAIN ROOM - DAY 33

CLOSE ON LAO MA

LAO MA

The entire world is driven by a Will -  
blind and ruthless.

CUT TO:

34 INT. MING'S PALACE - THRONE ROOM - DAY - ON GABRIELLE 34

She looks sad and powerless.

ON THE EXECUTIONER

He enters and approaches the table.

ON MING T'IEN

He's like a spectator at a football game getting excited just before kickoff.

ON XENA

She is still unphased as the Executioner comes and stands by the table.

CUT TO:

35 INT. LAO'S PALACE - MAIN ROOM - DAY 35  
CLOSE ON LAO MA

LAO MA  
In order to transcend the limitations  
of that world, you need to stop  
willing...

CUT TO:

36 INT. MING'S PALACE - THRONE ROOM - DAY 36  
THE EXECUTIONER

reaches toward a second, smaller table covered with a black  
cloth. He tears the cloth off to reveal:

THE TOOLS OF TORTURE

we saw earlier at Lao Ma's execution.

ON XENA

as she remains totally still. The hacksaw hovers over her  
skull.

CUT TO:

37 INT. LAO'S PALACE - MAIN ROOM - DAY 37  
CLOSE ON LAO MA

LAO MA  
...stop desiring...

CUT TO:

38 INT. MING'S PALACE - THRONE ROOM - DAY - ON XENA 38  
The hacksaw is being lowered toward her head.

ON GABRIELLE

She can't watch.

ON MING T'IEN

He can't tear his eyes away.

ON XENA

She remains ever so still.

CUT TO:

39 INT. LAO'S PALACE - MAIN ROOM - DAY 39  
CLOSE ON LAO MA

LAO MA  
...stop hating.

CUT TO:

40 INT. MING'S PALACE - THRONE ROOM - DAY - ON XENA 40  
The saw touches her scalp.  
ON THE EXECUTIONER  
He looks up at Ming T'ien.  
ON MING T'IEN  
He gives the go-ahead nod.

\*

CUT TO:

41 INT. LAO'S PALACE - RECEPTION ROOM - DAY 41  
CLOSE ON LAO MA

LAO MA  
To conquer others is to have power, to  
conquer yourself is to know the Way.

CUT TO:

42 INT. MING'S PALACE - THRONE ROOM - DAY - ON XENA 42  
Suddenly, a peaceful smile comes onto her lips, a smile  
not unlike Lao Ma's. She opens her eyes. \*

DIFFERENT ANGLE

The Executioner looks ready to apply some serious pressure  
to this hacksaw. Then, suddenly, the instruments of torture  
that lie on the table rise in the air. The Executioner  
looks at them in dumb wonder just before they imbed  
themselves in his heart.

ON XENA'S CHAINS

(CONTINUED)



42 CONTINUED:

42

Suddenly, they break apart and Xena pulls herself free.

ON GABRIELLE

She has hope, as well being very curious as to what the hell is going on.

ON MING T'IEN

His face goes from enthusiastic glee to angry horror.

ON XENA

She starts throwing energy around like a Russian nuclear plant.

The Guards charge her. She sends them back with a bolt of energy. She then deliberately throws a bolt at the supports of the building. She's not settling now for just killing Ming T'ien. She wants to bring down his entire regime.

A SEQUENCE OF DESTRUCTION SHOTS:

- 1. Xena blasts a hole in the wall which allows innocent bystanders to escape.
- 2. Xena blasts another support. The building is beginning to collapse.
- 3. Xena sends a blast towards Ming T'ien who dives for cover. The blast knocks out another support. The building's coming down.

ON GABRIELLE

She's helping people through the hole in the wall.

\*

ON XENA

She walks toward the hole in the wall, then stops suddenly, as:

\*  
\*

MING T'IEN

\*

crawls out of the rubble. He's got a few cuts and bruises but he's still fighting mad.

\*  
\*

Xena turns toward him.

\*

GABRIELLE

\*

Xena, let's go.

\*

(CONTINUED)

42 CONTINUED: 2

42

\*

MING T'IEN

Xena, I have something to tell you.

Xena looks back to Ming T'ien, as we hear CRIES OF  
CONFUSION coming from outside the building.

\*

\*

XENA

Gabrielle, make sure all the people  
get clear of gthe building. It could  
collapse at any moment.

\*

\*

\*

GABRIELLE

Xena, are you --

\*

XENA

I'm fine. Don't worry about it.  
It's all over, as far as I'm concerned.

MORE CONFUSED CRIES come from outside. Gabrielle exits.  
Xena turns back to Ming T'ien.

\*

XENA

Say it.

MING T'IEN

You made me, Xena. You taught me how  
to be the monster I am.

(CONTINUED)

43 CONTINUED: 2

43

XENA

I know that. That's one of the reasons I'm here. I've learned to clean up after myself.

(beat)

Is that all?

MING T'IEN

One other thing. You've probably heard I had Lao Ma executed.

XENA

Yeah?

MING T'IEN

Well, I just wanted you to know, it's not true.

XENA

Really?

MING T'IEN

(suddenly a fiendish laugh)

I did it myself.

He CACKLES in delight as he remembers the execution.

MING T'IEN

I cut her up good, Xena.

Xena watches him LAUGH for another moment. Then:

XENA

I've got something to tell you, Ming T'ien.

MING T'IEN

What's that?

XENA

Lao Ma was your mother.

Ming T'ien STOPS LAUGHING and stares at Xena dead serious for a moment. Then a cruel smile leaks onto his lips.

MING T'IEN

I knew that the whole time. That's why I did the execution. I knew she wouldn't use her powers to hurt her little boy.

He LAUGHS again gleefully. He pulls something out of his pocket.

(CONTINUED)

42 CONTINUED: 4

42

MING T' IEN

I think this belongs to you.

He tosses the thing to Xena. It's the crow hair brooch.  
Xena eyes it.

MING T' IEN

Her last request was that you have it.  
It turns out she was just a sentimental  
fool.

He spots something in the rubble and reaches for it. It's  
Lao Ma's book of wisdom. He holds it up.

MING T' IEN

Remember this? Mother's book of  
wisdom. It failed her in the end.  
That philosophical sense of peace fell  
apart. She cried like a baby. She  
even cried after I'd torn her heart  
from her body.

He tosses the book at Xena's feet and LAUGHS some more.  
As Xena eyes this cackling ghoul, we:

CUT TO:

43 OMITTED

43\*

44 EXT. FOREST - DAY

44\*

Gabrielle is making sure the people are getting to safety.  
She looks back towards the palace, then walks toward it.

\*  
\*

CUT TO:

45 INT. RUINS OF MING'S PALACE - DAY

45\*

Gabrielle enters and sees:

\*

XENA

\*

standing in front of the throne where Ming T'ien sits  
glaring at her.

\*  
\*

XENA

\*

(to Ming T'ien)

\*

You're powerless now. You've lost  
face in front of your people. They  
won't follow you any more.

\*  
\*  
\*

(CONTINUED)

45 CONTINUED:

45

She bends down and picks up Lao Ma's Book of Wisdom, then  
walks toward Gabrielle. Xena smiles.

\*  
\*

XENA

You were right the entire time.  
I didn't have to resolve this with  
murder. In the end, I understood Lao  
Ma's message and made him small again.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

GABRIELLE

That's right. Not killing him made  
you exactly what Lao Ma wanted you to  
be.

\*

She notices that Xena is carrying Lao Ma's book.

XENA

Just a memento of Lao Ma.

GABRIELLE

Well, we'll take good care of that.  
I love you.

XENA

I love you too, Gabrielle.

They exit.

\*

ON MING T'IEN

\*

He sits in stoney silence.

\*

WE MOVE AROUND HIM

\*

to the side that was away from Gabrielle's POV. We see  
that the crow hair brooch is stuck deep into his temple.  
He's very dead. The Debt has been repaid.

\*  
\*

FADE OUT.

THE END