

XENA™

WARRIOR PRINCESS

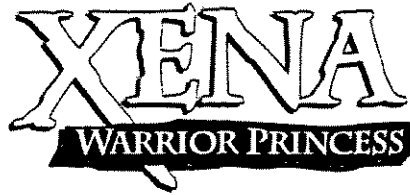
"LIVIA"

by
Chris Manheim

SEASON 5
EPISODE #20

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Renaissance Files



"Livia"
production #V0921
episode 20

written by
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XENA

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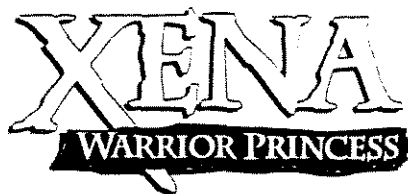
Cast List

Xena
Gabrielle

Joxer
Ares
Livia (Eve)
Augustus (Octavius)
Virgil Jerie
Meg
Village Leader
Roman Captain
Burly Soldier
Roman Guard

Sentries (O.S.)

Roman Soldiers (non-speaking)
Rebel Fighters (non-speaking) *
Rebel Leader (non-speaking) *
~~Camp Followers (non-speaking) *~~
~~Two Sentries (non-speaking) *~~
Shepherds (non-speaking)
Shepherds' Families (non-speaking)
Tavern Crowd (non-speaking)
Roman People (non-speaking)
Three Temple Priests (non-speaking) *
Jugglers (non-speaking)
Musicians (non-speaking)
Dancing Girls (non-speaking)
Eli's Enslaved Followers (non-speaking)
~~Prisoners (non-speaking) *~~
~~Senators (non-speaking) *~~
~~Dominatrix (non-speaking) *~~
~~Two Dog Collared Men (non-speaking) *~~
~~General (non-speaking) *~~
~~Identical Twins (non-speaking) *~~
~~Slave Girls (non-speaking) *~~
~~Servant (non-speaking) *~~



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Set List

Interiors:

Scenes:

Commander's Tent	3, 8
Mountain Ice Cavern	5
Tavern	9
Vigil's Jerie's Quarters	15, 17
Augustus' Palace - Livia's Room	16
Gladiatorial Arena	19, 20, 24C, 26 *
Augustus' Palace - Prison Cell	21, 24, 24B, 25 *
Augustus' Palace - Steam Room	22
Augustus' Palace - Banquet Room	23

Exteriors:

Scenes:

Military Camp	1
Commander's Tent	2
Battlefield	3A
Snow-Covered Mountain	4
Mountain Village	6, 7
Barn	10
Crowded Roman Street	11
Parade Route	12
Royal Balcony	13, 14
Another Roman Street	18
Deserted Roman Street	24A *

TEASER

FADE IN:

1
THRU
3

OMITTED

1
THRU
3

3A EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

3A

MID-BATTLE with the CLASH and CLANG of swords, punctuated by SCREAMS and CURSES as ROMAN SOLDIERS battle REBEL FIGHTERS.

Leading the battle, on a spirited stallion, is the Roman commander, LIVIA, a fearless, ambitious beauty who hacks and slashes through the Rebels' forces with zest.

SCREAMING his rage, the REBEL LEADER aims a pike at Livia's heart and rides straight at her. Grinning, she raises her sword and returns the charge, clearly at a disadvantage. But:

--in a memorable move, Livia releases her reins, lying flat against her horse's flanks as the pike passes over her while she grips her sword with both hands. Then, sitting up as the Rebel Leader rides past, Livia swings her sword with such two-handed force that it LOPS OFF HIS HEAD!

Seeing their Leader's headless corpse riding away, the Rebel Forces flee. Elated, the Roman Soldiers CHEER, SHOUTING: "Hail, Livia -- Defender of Rome! Hail Rome's Champion!" and CHANTING: "Livia, Livia, Livia..."

LIVIA

(grins; exhorting)

After the traitors! Let them feel the
might of Rome! Kill them all!

Raising her sword to spur them on, Livia watches as her men charge after the Rebels. Then, dismounting, she lifts the arm of a dead Rebel Fighter, cleaning her blade on his sleeve as:

ARES (O.S.)

Congratulations.

Smiling as ARES MATERIALIZES nearby, Livia shrugs.

LIVIA

I've had tougher games of tag.

(CONTINUED)

3A CONTINUED:

3A

ARES

I wasn't talking about the battle. I
was talking about being named the
Emperor's official successor.

*

*

LIVIA

(eagerly)

Has Augustus announced it?

*

(CONTINUED)

3A CONTINUED: (2)

3A

ARES

Not yet. But it's said he's planning to make it public the day of your march into Rome.

LIVIA

(smiles)

Then our plan's right on target.

ARES

Soon you'll be the most powerful woman the Empire's ever known.

LIVIA

Then no one can stop us exterminating the followers of Eli. As traitors to Rome...

(moving into his arms)

...and the gods she honors.

Holding her absently, Ares nods, almost sad.

ARES

True. Nobody champions those peaceniks anymore. If Xena had lived...her daughter... They'd have given us some sport.

Eyes flashing, Livia turns his face to hers.

LIVIA

I'll give you Rome...

(drawing his mouth to hers)

...and enough sport to make you forget there ever was a Xena.

Her kiss consumes him as we...

DISSOLVE TO:

4 EXT. SNOW-COVERED MOUNTAIN - DAY

4

To RE-ESTABLISH this location from last week's episode.

DISSOLVE THOUGH TO:

5 INT. MOUNTAIN ICE CAVERN - DAY

5

A wide SHAFT OF SUNLIGHT illuminates...XENA, lying motionless.

PULL BACK to reveal she's encased in A CASKET OF ICE. Nearby, GABRIELLE lies, similarly entombed.

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED:

5

A faint, but steady, SCRAPING sound is heard as CAMERA moves around Xena, tracing the sound to...XENA'S HAND which grips her CHAKRAM, using its sharp edge to shave away the ice until her hand and chakram are free. Then, flexing her wrist--

--Xena throws her chakram, banking it off a wall to a large STALACTITE where it SAWS through it, dropping it directly onto:

--Xena's COFFIN which SHATTERS into glittering shards of ice!

Gulping air, Xena sits up, disoriented.

XENA

Where--? What's going on?

Spotting GABRIELLE entombed in ice beside her, Xena rises and, anxious to free her, studies the ice. Then, grabbing a rock, she pulls her sword, puts its point on the ice with a diamond cutter's precision, and SLAMS the rock on her sword hilt--

--BREAKING the ICE into two equal halves which fall from Gabrielle like a mold. Reviving, she sits up, dazed.

GABRIELLE

Xena--? What happened? Where are we?

XENA

Good question. But more important, where's Eve?

GABRIELLE

Eve...! Octavius was supposed to bring her to us...

Frowning, Xena looks around searchingly as she concedes:

XENA

Something's gone wrong. But we won't know what it is till we get out.

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED: (2)

5

GABRIELLE

How...before we freeze to death.

Finding what she wants, Xena picks up a large shard of ice.

XENA

I've got an idea.

Positioning the ice to catch the shaft of SUNLIGHT, Xena focuses it on the cavern's frozen entrance like a laser beam. As it begins melting a hole through the ice...

TIME DISSOLVE TO:

6 EXT. MOUNTAIN VILLAGE - DAY

6

A handful of huts house SHEPHERDS and their FAMILIES, some of whom react as...Xena and Gabrielle enter the Village. Unused to seeing strangers, the VILLAGE LEADER approaches them.

VILLAGE LEADER

You ladies lost?

XENA

That depends. Where are we?

The locals trade looks.

VILLAGE LEADER

You're at the foot of Mt. Etna.

GABRIELLE

Mt. Etna?! How'd we get here?

(CONTINUED)

6 CONTINUED:

Xena knows, and calls out angrily, summoning:

XENA

Ares!

Reacting, the locals look bewildered.

VILLAGE LEADER

'Beg pardon, but Ares hasn't been seen
in these parts since the legendary
Xena died, 'bout twenty-five years ago.

Our heroes stare.

XENA

Twenty-five years...!

Off Gabrielle and Xena's stunned faces...

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

7 EXT. MOUNTAIN VILLAGE - CONTINUING

7

Xena and Gabrielle stare at the locals, in shock.

GABRIELLE

You're saying we've been out -- I mean, Xena's been dead -- for twenty-five years?

As he nods, Xena turns to Gabrielle, urgently.

XENA

We've gotta get to Rome.

GABRIELLE

Rome?! That city's poison to you.

XENA

It's where Octavius was headed.
(then; to Leader)
What do you know about a Roman big shot named Octavius? A general, maybe. Or a commander...?

VILLAGE LEADER

Only commander I know of is Livia, the Emperor's bitch.

(catching himself)

'Scuse my language. But when Augustus lets her slaughter harmless folks like the followers of Eli...

GABRIELLE

Eli? People still know his teachings?

More looks from the locals.

VILLAGE LEADER

You're not from around here, are you?

Before she can answer, Xena quickly interjects:

XENA

No, but thanks for your help..

(CONTINUED)

7 CONTINUED:

7

And Xena hustles Gabrielle off.

CUT TO:

8 INT. COMMANDER'S TENT - DAY

8

Fresh from battle, Livia strips off her armor till she's nude to the waist. Wetting a sponge, she squeezes it over her arms, watching as the water runs red off her body. Suddenly:

SENTRIES (O.S.)

Hail, Augustus.

THE TENT DOOR opens to admit AUGUSTUS, Emperor of Rome, a powerful man in his mid-forties.

AUGUSTUS

Livie, I know I promised not to come--

He halts, staring as Livia turns toward him and chides:

LIVIA

Augustus, you know it's against tradition to see a conquering hero before their victory march.

Flustered and embarrassed by her nudity, Augustus turns away. *

AUGUSTUS

'Gods, Livie. Put something on. *

Smiling at his discomfort, she slips into a robe. *

LIVIA

So, why are you here? *

AUGUSTUS

(hesitates; then) *

The truth is, I'm worried about you. Reports in Rome say your men are committing wholesale slaughter. *

LIVIA

(shrugs) *

What else can you do with traitors? Our slave camps are full. *

(CONTINUED)

8 CONTINUED:

8

AUGUSTUS

(unhappily)

Of Eli's followers. Yes...I've noticed.

LIVIA

So?

AUGUSTUS

So, perhaps the legions of Rome should be directed against something more formidable than a bunch of pacifists and their defenders.

LIVIA

These pacifists deny our gods! As divine Emperor, surely you can't condone that.

AUGUSTUS

I didn't say I condoned--

LIVIA

(snapping impatiently)

Then let me handle it my way.

Though he dotes on her, he's still the Emperor and, eyeing Livia, Augustus frowns. Seeing she's overplayed it, she offers a contrite smile.

LIVIA

I just want to safeguard the Empire... for both of us.

Mollified, Augustus eyes her with paternal warmth.

AUGUSTUS

You're a good girl, Livia.

Smiling, she takes his arm and escorts him to the door.

LIVIA

Now, go back to Rome and make sure I have the biggest victory march the city's ever seen. Okay?

AUGUSTUS

(smiles and nods)

But once I've named you my successor, there are going to have to be some changes.

(CONTINUED)

8 CONTINUED: (2)

9

LIVIA

I couldn't agree more.

*

He pecks her cheek and exits. Moving back to the basin, Livia picks up her sponge, steeping it in the bloodstained water.

*

DISSOLVE TO:

9 INT. TAVERN - DAY

9

CLOSE ON A PAINTING OF XENA

Crude, but reverential, it shows her in classic fighting stance, as we WIDEN to include Gabrielle, painted beside her.

PULL BACK as Xena and Gabrielle enter the Tavern. But as they move toward the bar, the NOISY crowd falls SILENT.

Reacting, our heroes look around, surprised to see...the Tavern looks like a "Xena and Gabrielle" shrine. Decorated with everything from replicate sais, chakrams, breastplates, etc., the Tavern's showpiece hangs over the bar in a frame inscribed "The Bard of Poteidaia's Last Scroll."

As Xena and Gabrielle trade looks, the blowsy, middle-aged bartender (MEG) approaches, eyeing them critically.

MEG

Not bad. But the real Xena had a few inches on you. And Gabrielle...let's just say she wasn't quite so buff.

As she winks knowingly, Gabrielle sputters:

GABRIELLE

What do you-- How would you-- Who are you, anyway?

XENA

(staring incredulously)
Meg. Gabrielle, it's Meg.

GABRIELLE

No way. You two were identical.
(eyes Meg; then, to Xena)
If I were you, I'd lay off starches.
Now.

As both Xena and Meg react, a familiar voice calls:

(CONTINUED)

9 CONTINUED:

9

JOXER (C.S.)

(calls)

Meg? Honey, those orders are getting cold and--

Turning, the women are amazed to see...JOXER, twenty-five years older, and nearly bald. Freezing, Joxer stares in disbelief as he gasps:

JOXER

Xena? Gabrielle...! You're back!!

Gaping, Meg knocks back a healthy slug of mead as Joxer sweeps our heroes into a hug that CLUNKS their HEADS together.

XENA

(reacting)

Joxer.

GABRIELLE

(reacting)

Joxer.

JOXER

What happened?! I looked everywhere for you. Didn't I, Meg? For years! I only stopped when poor old Argo died.

XENA

(with a sad pang)

Argo...Never be another like her.

JOXER

(grins)

Wanna bet?

SMASH CUT TO:

10 EXT. BARN - DAY

10

ON A GOLDEN PALOMINO

JOXER (C.S.)

(proudly)

Xena...meet Argo, the Second.

PULL BACK to see Xena, flanked by Gabrielle and Joxer, staring emotionally at Argo II as they approach her corral.

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED:

10

GABRIELLE

That's Argo's daughter?

JOXER

In the horseflesh. There's just one problem...

As they approach, the horse rears, halting Joxer and Gabrielle.

JOXER

...No one can ride her.

But Xena continues on, her gaze never leaving the horse as she enters the corral and moves toward her. Riveted, Argo II stares as Xena reaches her and halts.

For a beat, they measure each other. Then Argo II lowers her head, playfully butting Xena who laughs and jumps aboard her, riding the horse with the same fluid grace she rode her dam.

As Joxer and Gabrielle reach the corral, Xena halts the horse and hugs her neck before sliding off and joining them.

XENA

Joxer, she's wonderful...

(hugging him gratefully)

...and so are you.

The balding, middle-aged Joxer blushes as we hear:

VIRGIL (O.S.)

Dad...?

Turning, all three react to see...VIRGIL, a muscular, attractive, young man, holding a blacksmith's hammer as he emerges from the barn. Pulling himself together, Joxer beams.

JOXER

Virgil, hold onto your hammer. This is Xena and Gabrielle.

(turning to our heroes)

This is my son: Virgil.

VIRGIL

(floored; to Joxer)

I knew it! No matter what anyone said. I always knew your stories were true.

(back to our heroes)

It's a privilege to finally meet you.

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED: (2)

10

GABRIELLE

(to Joxer)

Stories?

JOXER

(hastily evasive)

Speaking of stories, what's yours?
That Roman friend of yours swore you
were still alive, even after I saw you
die. But--

XENA

--Roman friend? You mean Octavius?
Did he have Eve with him?

JOXER

Yeah. But once he heard Ares took
your bodies, he left.

GABRIELLE

Where's he now? Do you know?

JOXER

Rome, I guess. I went looking for
you, and never saw him again.

Disappointed, but undaunted, Xena turns to Gabrielle.

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED: (3)

10

XENA

Then Rome's still our best shot at finding Eve.

JOXER

Rome? Perfect! Virgil lives there. We can stay with him. Right, son?

VIRGIL

You kidding?! I'd be honored.

The women trade looks.

GABRIELLE

Thanks. But we'll find a place.

VIRGIL

I doubt it. The Emperor's throwing a victory march for his favorite champion, Livia. The city's packed.

JOXER

You see? I'll hose down my armor.

And he's gone, leaving Virgil beaming at Xena and Gabrielle.

TIME DISSOLVE TO:

11 EXT. CROWDED ROMAN STREET - DAY

11

With Xena aboard Argo II, Gabrielle on a horse, and Joxer and Virgil sharing a mount, they reach a street whose hurly-burly scares the horses. Calming Argo II, Xena turns to Gabrielle.

XENA

The crowd's got 'em spooked. Think you could get 'em to a stable?

GABRIELLE

Sure. What're you gonna do?

XENA

Take in the victory march.

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED:

11

GABRIELLE

What?! Why? All I've ever heard is
how crass and degrading they are.

XENA

Uh-huh. And everyone who's anyone
will be there.

GABRIELLE

(realizing)

You think you'll find Octavius? But
where'll you start?

XENA

At the top.

(handing over her reins)

Meet you back here at sunset.

And sliding off her horse, Xena's gone.

CUT TO:

12 EXT. PARADE ROUTE - DAY

12

Throngs of CHEERING PEOPLE watch the lavish procession
as...HORSES tote trunks of brightly colored silks...JUGGLERS
toss flaming batons...MUSICIANS PLAY marching MUSIC...DANCING
GIRLS carry cages they open, releasing...

...dozens of white doves that soar skyward, CAMERA FOLLOWING
them until it FINDS and HOLDS ON:

13 EXT. ROYAL BALCONY - DAY

13

Augustus sits under a canopy, watching Livia's march into
Rome.

XENA (O.S.)

So, you're the Emperor Augustus.

Chilled, he whirls, staring as...Xena steps from the shadows.

AUGUSTUS

Xena...?!

Equally shocked, Xena stares at an older, but familiar, face.

(CONTINUED)

13 CONTINUED:

13

XENA

...Octavius?!

Recovering, she yanks him close.

XENA

Where's Eve?

Afraid, his eyes dart past her to the street. And in that moment, Xena knows. Shocked, she follows his gaze to see...

...Livia entering the city on a towering float pulled by ELI'S ENSLAVED FOLLOWERS.

Appalled, Xena eyes Augustus, barely able to speak.

XENA

That's her...

AUGUSTUS

(nods)

Livia -- champion of Rome.

XENA

She's Eve.

OFF Xena's face as she stares down at her Roman daughter...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

14 EXT. ROYAL BALCONY - CONTINUING

14

Flushed with her victory march, Livia halts before Augustus, eyeing him expectantly as she proclaims:

LIVIA

Hail, Augustus, Emperor of Rome. I render to you the spoils of battle: gold for our coffers, land for our conquest, and slaves who deny our many gods for their One.

(locking eyes with him)

Accept this tribute from one who lives only to serve you and Rome...

(pointedly)

...however I can.

Looking strained, Augustus rises as...

ANGLE WIDENS to include Xena, standing out of the crowd's view. If looks could kill, Augustus would be circling the drain. Knowing this, he forces a smile.

AUGUSTUS

Your triumph and tribute please us, Livia. Accept our imperial thanks and the thanks of a grateful nation.

Livia stares. That's it?! Augustus averts his eyes.

XENA

(curt whisper)

Now, wave and draw the drapes.

(as he hesitates)

Do it.

Obeying, he waves to the crowd, then draws the canopy drapes in Livia's face. Safe from sight, Xena glares.

XENA

What have you done to her?

AUGUSTUS

Done? You saw. She's...incredible.

XENA

She's a warrior. For Rome!

(CONTINUED)

14 CONTINUED:

14

AUGUSTUS

She's alive. Considering all of Mt. Olympus wanted to kill her -- wanted to crush the bringer of 'Twilight' -- what more did you expect?

XENA

I'll tell you what I expected. I expected to raise her myself. To be there to show her a way beyond the blood and violence.

AUGUSTUS

But you weren't there. I was. And I gave her every advantage: the best tutors, the best people--

XENA

For what? I saw the slaves. I've heard the stories. She's a monster.

AUGUSTUS

(temper flaring)

She's the greatest fighter Rome's ever known. And I'm naming her my successor.

Xena's stare could weld steel.

XENA

No daughter of mine will spread Rome's tyranny.

AUGUSTUS

She doesn't know she's your daughter. I've never told her.

XENA

Then I will.

AUGUSTUS

Why? So the gods can hunt her again? Only this time, you won't fool them into thinking she's dead.

Knowing he's right, Xena hesitates, and Augustus softens.

AUGUSTUS

As my heir, the gods will only know her as Livia, Rome's champion. As your daughter Eve, they'll kill her.

(CONTINUED)

14 CONTINUED: (2)

14

Off Xena's reaction...

CUT TO:

15 INT. VIRGIL'S QUARTERS - DAY

15

Virgil scrambles to clear some space as Gabrielle takes in the scrolls, quills and inkpots cluttering the small apartment.

VIRGIL

Sorry about the mess. I don't get much company.

He scoops up a pile of scrolls and drops them in an open trunk.

GABRIELLE

What are all those scrolls, anyway?

Embarrassed, Virgil quickly shuts the trunk.

VIRGIL

Nothing. So, what's it like, being back after twenty-five years? Has the world changed much?

Gabrielle notes the quick change of subject, but lets it go.

GABRIELLE

People look a little different. Your Mom and Dad, for instance. But the Emperor Augustus sounds a lot like our Caesar.

VIRGIL

It's his ward, Livia, who's the problem. She hates Eli's teachings, and those of us who honor them.

Gabrielle looks surprised.

GABRIELLE

You're a follower of Eli?

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED:

15

VIRGIL

I wanna be. I try. But when push comes to shove...I shove back.

GABRIELLE

(grins; rueful)

Me, too.

Surprised, Virgil returns her grin as they hear:

JOXER (O.S.)

Mission accomplished!

Joxer enters with Xena in tow as Gabrielle joins them eagerly.

GABRIELLE

Did you find out anything about Octavius?

Still absorbing it herself, Xena nods.

XENA

He's the emperor. Octavius is Augustus.

GABRIELLE

Augustus?

(then)

But that means his ward...

(incredulous realization)

Livia...is...

XENA

Eve.

Stunned, Gabrielle eyes Xena compassionately.

GABRIELLE

Oh, Xena...

XENA

You gotta love the irony. My daughter, champion of all I despise.

But Gabrielle sees through her bravado to the pain beneath it.

GABRIELLE

It breaks my heart.

Holding her gaze, eyes bright with unshed tears, Xena nods.

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED: (2)

15

XENA

Mine, too.

Tears in her own eyes, Gabrielle comforts Xena.

*
*
*

DISSOLVE TO:

16 OMITTED

16

17 INT. VIRGIL'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

17

While the others sleep, CANDLELIGHT illuminates Xena's troubled face as polishes her chakram. Pausing, she studies its yin/yang design, lost in thought. *

GABRIELLE (O.S.)

'Little late to be cleaning, don't you think? *

Brought to, Xena turns to find Gabrielle has joined her. *

XENA

I gotta do something, Gabrielle. *

Otherwise, I'll go crazy wondering what could have made Eve like this.

(eyeing chakram) *

How could she get so dark? So out of balance? *

GABRIELLE

I know what you mean. Octavius was so idealistic. It's hard to think he could've done it. But who else?

XENA

(hesitates; then)

Me.

GABRIELLE

What do you mean? You weren't even there.

XENA

Sure I was. Inside her. Eve's half me, Gabrielle. And she's got Callisto's spirit. Those are tough odds to beat.

(CONTINUED)

17 CONTINUED:

17

GABRIELLE
You did.

XENA
I had you.

GABRIELLE
And now Eve has us.

Holding Gabrielle's confident gaze centers Xena, and she nods.

XENA
You're right. Whatever turned Eve, we
can turn her back.

GABRIELLE
You'll see. Once she knows the truth,
she'll change. I know it. Like
mother, like daughter. You've just
gotta find her and talk to her.

XENA
(musing)
Like mother, like daughter...
(then; idea dawning)
I think I know just where to look.

OFF Xena, mental wheels whirling...

DISSOLVE TO:

18 EXT. ANOTHER ROMAN STREET - DAY

18

Xena, Gabrielle, Joxer and Virgil reach an intersection.

VIRGIL
This is where we part ways.
(indicating it)
My shop's just up the street.

XENA
I'll meet you all back there later.

GABRIELLE
Sure you don't want me to come with
you? I could wait outside.

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED:

18

JOXER

(heroic; to impress Virgil)
 We both could. 'Case you need any
 help...
 (off her look)
 ...or something.

XENA

Thanks. But if Virgil's right about
 her usual routine, there shouldn't be
 a problem.
 (to Gabrielle)
 Wish me luck.

They hold a look. Then Gabrielle hugs her and Xena exits.
 Seeing Gabrielle's concern for Xena, Virgil reassures her.

VIRGIL

Fortune favors the brave.

Gabrielle smiles, appreciating both his kindness and his turn
 of phrase.

GABRIELLE

That's a good way to put it. You've
 got a knack with words.

As Virgil grins modestly, Joxer frowns, interjecting:

JOXER

Words, schmurds. You should see him
 shoe a horse.

Gabrielle reacts. But before she can comment:

ROMAN CAPTAIN (O.S.)

(announcing)
 Citizens, your attention...

Reacting, our three look to see...a ROMAN CAPTAIN striding
 down the street with a troop of SOLDIERS who are escorting
 THREE TEMPLE PRIESTS carrying money baskets. The people
 around them halt to listen.

ROMAN CAPTAIN

To commemorate her victories, Livia
 has commissioned a new temple to Ares.
 Your offerings are appreciated.

Flanked by Soldiers, the Priests move through the crowd,
 collecting donations. A BURLY SOLDIER approaches our trio.

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED: (2)

18

BURLY SOLDIER
(extending his hand)
Money for the gods' temple.

JOXER
We gave at the office.

But as he starts past, the Soldier seizes him by the throat. *

BURLY SOLDIER *
It's not a request. *

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED: (3)

18

VIRGIL

Hey! Let go of him!

GABRIELLE

You can't force us to give to the gods.

BURLY SOLDIER

You one of those Eli believers? *

GABRIELLE *

I believe in the right to have faith
in whatever I choose. Now, let him go. *

BURLY SOLDIER *

Or you'll do what? *

He begins choking Joxer. Reacting, Gabrielle draws her sais and gut-punches the Soldier, forcing him to drop Joxer.

GABRIELLE

Let's go. *

But as the three turn to leave, they react to see...the rest of the Soldiers surrounding them.

VIRGIL

We're not looking for trouble. *

ROMAN CAPTAIN

Too bad. 'Cuz you found it.

And signaling his men, the SOLDIERS ATTACK!

Disarming a Soldier with her sais, Gabrielle spins him around, and shoves him onto the blade of his Comrade as--

--Virgil blocks a sword swipe, punches out a Soldier, and catches his blade, mid-air, before--

--Virgil joins Gabrielle, fighting side-by-side like they were born for it. Suddenly, a SHARP WHISTLE stops everything and, they turn to see...the Captain, holding Joxer at knife-point.

ROMAN CAPTAIN

Drop 'em...

(pressing knife closer)

...or the old man gets it.

Reacting, Virgil and Gabrielle drop their weapons.

CUT TO:

19 INT. GLADIATORIAL ARENA - DAY

19

ON A CLASH OF SWORDS

WIDEN to see the adversaries are Livia and Ares, sparring among the training equipment, weapons, protective helmets and other armor laid out for a practice session. Trading blow for blow, Livia counters Ares' greater strength and size with her faster, more adroit moves that keep him slightly guessing.

*
*
*

(CONTINUED)

19 CONTINUED:

19

ARES

You're worse than a wasp.

LIVIA

(laughs)

Death has no sting for gods, remember?

But as she lunges to stab him, Ares blocks her thrust, sending her sword flying from her hand. Without missing a beat--

--Livia FLIPS up onto a balance beam, and Ares follows, each trying to get a punch or kick past the other's lightning fast defenses as they SPIN, KICK and FLIP along the narrow beam.

Reaching the end, Livia suddenly reverses herself, running directly at Ares -- and up him - propelling herself into a MID-AIR SOMERSAULT that takes her to the ground where she turns, plowing headlong into--

--Ares who FLIPS her to the ground, pinning her there, face up, hands stretched above her head.

ARES

Give up?

LIVIA

I'll give you something.

Grinning at her spunk, Ares bends to kiss her, dropping OUT OF FRAME as we RACK FOCUS to...

AN ARENA DOOR beyond them which opens as Xena enters, staring to see...Ares kissing her daughter.

ON Xena's incredulous fury...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

20 INT. GLADIATORIAL ARENA - CONTINUING

20

Ares and Livia kiss in mounting passion when, suddenly, a DOOR SLAMS and they look up to see...a helmeted warrior woman standing by the closed arena door. Masked by the training helmet she snatched from a nearby pile of practice armor, Xena stands there, unmoving.

*
*

ARES

(lips grazing Livia's ear)

Dismiss her. I'll finish your workout.

*

But something about the mystery warrior breaks Livia's mood.

LIVIA

We'll have a re-match tonight...

(inviting smile)

...at the bacchanalia.

*
*
*

Then, sliding from beneath him, she rises, calling to Xena:

LIVIA

Wait while I slip into...

(shrugs at her near-nudity)

...something.

Unabashed, she exits through a CREAKING DOOR opposite Xena who stares after her daughter. Meanwhile, Ares eyes Xena.

ARES

Haven't seen you before. First time?

Fearing her voice will give her away, Xena throws him a nod.

ARES

Well, from the looks of you, I'd say you'll survive.

Shrugging, she turns away. Intrigued, Ares continues to stare.

ARES

Where're you from? You look...

(crossing toward her)

...familiar.

Xena tenses, but holds her ground as Ares reaches her. Inhaling deeply, he reacts, his eyes beginning to register a memory he can't believe.

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED:

20

ARES
Take off your helmet.
(she doesn't move)
...Or I will.

He draws his sword as she draws hers, and they CLASH blades, maternal fury lending Xena extra strength as the two trade blow-for-blow when, suddenly, Xena hears the CREAKING DOOR start to open, and glances at it as--

--Ares cuts the chin strap on her helmet. Pulling it off, he stares, transfixed to see:

ARES
Xena...?!

Eyes blazing, she brings her sword to Ares' chest.

XENA
If you were mortal, I'd cut out your heart.

Without a moment's thought, he walks onto Xena's blade, knowing only that the woman he loved and lost is back as he pulls her into a passionate kiss.

Wrenching free, Xena spits his kiss from her lips.

LIVIA (O.S.)
Charming.

Whirling, Xena sees...Livia holding a sword at her heart.

LIVIA
Move, and I'll kill you.

As Xena locks eyes with her daughter, Ares quickly intercedes.

ARES
Livia, wait! It's not how it looks.

LIVIA
Then how is it?

ARES
I'll tell you. For the past twenty-five years, I've thought Xena was dead. Now, she shows up, hasn't aged a day. I had to kiss her to see if she was real or an imposter.

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED: (2)

20

LIVIA

You're telling me you kissed her to ID her?!

ARES

Think about it. If Xena's still alive, then it's a pretty good bet Eve is, too. And if Eve's alive...

(turns to Xena)

...I'm the dead man.

Reading his gaze, Xena sees Ares doesn't know that Livia is Eve. Meanwhile, Livia frowns, concerned.

LIVIA

Because Eve's the bringer of 'Twilight'?

XENA

Eve is dead.

LIVIA

(flaring)

Who asked you?

She starts to skewer Xena, but Ares stops her.

ARES

No! Livia, don't--

Seizing her chance, Xena knocks Livia's sword aside, somersaults from between them and, landing by the door, races out.

Reacting, Livia starts after her. But Ares restrains her.

ARES

Let her go. She'll be back.

(musing after Xena)

And if Eve's alive...

(pulling Livia close)

...she'll lead us straight to her.

Smoldering, Livia subsides as Ares gazes after Xena.

CUT TO:

21 INT. AUGUSTUS' PALACE - PRISON CELL - DAY

21

Dozens of MEN and WOMEN occupy this large cell where we find Joxer, seated on a bench, talking to Virgil.

(CONTINUED)

21 CONTINUED:

21

JOXER

It's all my fault. If I hadn't opened
my big mouth, we wouldn't be here.
Gabrielle probably hates me.

VIRGIL

Are you kidding? After all the times
you saved her and Xena.
(enumerating)
From Bacchae. And dryads. Not to
mention Callisto.

JOXER

(hastily)

Maybe it's better if you don't mention
any of it. Wouldn't want 'em to feel
like they owe me.

Proud of his modest dad, Virgil nods as Gabrielle comes up.

GABRIELLE

I asked around. But nobody seems to
know what's going on. In fact, from
what they've said, none of them
deserve to be here. I don't get it.

VIRGIL

I do. They're followers of Eli.

Gabrielle reacts. But before she can comment, the cell DOOR
BANGS open and Livia enters, flanked by GUARDS. As the
PRISONERS MURMUR, Gabrielle stares, knowing at once:

GABRIELLE

That's her, isn't it? That's Eve.

(CONTINUED)

21 CONTINUED: (2)

21

VIRGIL

Better known as Livia.

Gabrielle stares as the ambitious commander addresses them.

LIVIA

All right, listen up. As traitors to the gods, every one of you deserves to die. But, in the spirit of fair play, I offer you a chance at salvation, tomorrow.

Thrown, Virgil speaks without thinking.

VIRGIL

But the Games are tomorrow.

Livia turns, eyeing Virgil. As Joxer and Gabrielle tense, Livia crosses to him.

LIVIA

Correct. But in the opening match, I've upped the stakes.

(turning to Prisoners)

Here's how it works. You choose a champion to fight me in the arena. To keep it fair, I provide armor and weapons. He wins, you go free. I win, you die, for the glory of Rome...and her gods.

GABRIELLE

That's not salvation. It's a slaughter.

(eyeing her levelly)

And it's beneath you.

LIVIA

How would you know?

GABRIELLE

You'd be surprised.

Arrested by something in Gabrielle's voice and eyes, Livia hesitates. Then, dismissing it, she turns back to Virgil, eyeing him appraisingly as she tells the Prisoners:

LIVIA

You sheep would do well to choose him as your champion.

(CONTINUED)

21 CONTINUED: (3)

21

Running her hands over his well-muscled arms, Livia nods.

LIVIA

Yes. You're the one.

As Joxer and Gabrielle react, Virgil holds Livia's look 'til something in his eyes makes her drop her gaze and exit, while we HOLD on our trio.

CUT TO:

22 INT. AUGUSTUS' PALACE - STEAM ROOM - DAY

22

Steam fogs the air as Augustus sits, draped in a towel, deep in troubled thought. A NOISE sounds nearby and he turns, peering into the mist to see...nothing.

Turning back, Augustus jumps to find...Xena beside him, cloaked in steam, and little else.

AUGUSTUS

(recovering)

The years haven't robbed you of your...stealth.

XENA

No...just my child.

(then; conceding)

But I was wrong to blame you. I know that now. That's why I'm here. I want you to help me save her.

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED:

22

AUGUSTUS

(exasperated)

From what? Is the chance to rule an
empire really so terrible?

XENA

It is when you're ruling it with Ares.

AUGUSTUS

Ares?! What's he got to do with this?

XENA

Everything! Who do you think tapped
into Eve's dark side? Seduced her
with promises of power.

AUGUSTUS

That's a lie! Livia's hard. But
she's honorable.

XENA

I can prove it! Ares'll be at the
bacchanalia tonight. So will I.

AUGUSTUS

(dubious)

Livia's posted guards with orders to
stop you on sight.

XENA

That's my lookout. When I find Ares,
I'll signal you. Be watching. Then
find some way to get Eve close enough
to overhear us.

AUGUSTUS

But why?

XENA

To prove to you how things are. And
to prove to Eve who Ares really is.
Until I do, she'll never believe the
truth.

On Xena's resolve...

DISSOLVE TO:

23 INT. AUGUSTUS' PALACE - BANQUET ROOM - NIGHT

23

The bacchanalia is in full swing as DANCING GIRLS sway to sinuous MUSIC while, everywhere, REVELERS with painted, Fellini-esque faces drink, wench, and eat to excess, while...

CAMERA FINDS and TRACKS a statuesque brunette (Xena), wearing a mask that hides half her face and an outfit that hides even less, as she moves man-to-man through the crowd.

Passing Augustus, who's watching Livia toast her Men across the room, Xena trails her hand along his face as she whispers:

XENA

Heads up.

Knowing her voice, Augustus barely has time to acknowledge her before Xena's on the move again, glibly dispensing easy kisses and caresses until...

...she "accidentally" collides with a muscular man who turns, revealing it's a thinly disguised Ares. Steadying her, his touch tells him at once it's:

ARES

Xena...!

Feigning alarm, she starts away.

ARES

Wait! Or I blow the whistle right now.

As she hesitates, Xena covertly signals Augustus before glaring up at Ares.

XENA

What do you want, Ares?

ARES

Answers. Come on, Xena. What happened? I thought you were dead.

XENA

Let's leave it that way.

She starts away again. But Ares stops her, gripping her hard, his eyes locked on hers.

ARES

No. I mourned you, Xena. For years.

XENA

Yeah. I saw how grief-stricken you were in the arena today.

(CONTINUED)

23 CONTINUED:

23

ARES

What, you mean that bit of rough-and-tumble with Livia?

She looks away. Ares reacts, surprised.

ARES

Don't tell me you're jealous?

XENA

Of what? A Roman wannabe?

She holds his gaze.

ARES

It's true, she's not you. No one is.
(eyes still on hers;
closing in)
And if I thought you being back meant
we'd have a second chance...

XENA

(lost in his gaze)

Yes...?

ARES

(removing his mask)

I'd drop her like a nasty habit.

Lips meeting, they kiss hungrily as...

ANGLE WIDENS to reveal Livia and Augustus having witnessed all this from a nearby nook. Stunned, Augustus turns to Livia who can't tear her eyes off Xena and Ares.

AUGUSTUS

You...and Ares?

Seeming oblivious, Livia continues to stare at Xena and Ares' mounting passion while Augustus' eyes fill with contemptuous rage.

AUGUSTUS

I'd sooner see the empire destroyed
than leave it to you.

And turning, he exits. Absorbing his words even as she continues to watch Ares kissing Xena, Livia's face reflects her growing rage when a SUDDEN COMMOTION sounds as--

(CONTINUED)

23 CONTINUED: (2)

23

--a large CAGE of chained PRISONERS -- Gabrielle and Virgil among them -- is wheeled into the party where Revelers JEER at them and PELT them with everything from food and drink to plates and cutlery.

Distracted, Xena and Ares break their clench. Looking over at the cage, Ares stares in surprise.

ARES

Hey, isn't that Gabrielle?

No answer. Looking back, Ares reacts to find Xena is gone. Frowning suspiciously, Ares DISAPPEARS while--

--AT THE CAGE, Xena approaches, mask in place, and breaks into a derisively seductive dance as if to taunt the Prisoners as she moves close enough to say:

XENA

Gabrielle, Virgil...it's me.

GABRIELLE

(sotto; incredulous)

Xena?

Unpinning her hair as if to further torment them, Xena surreptitiously passes the hairpin to Gabrielle, instructing:

XENA

Use it on your chains. I'll get the door.

As Xena continues distracting everyone with her dance, Gabrielle covertly frees the Prisoners, then signals Xena who brings her dance to an end with a big flourish, during which--

--she grabs a Guard's sword and swings it down on the cage's lock, breaking it and throwing open the door.

Scrambling out, Gabrielle and Virgil whirl the chains that formerly bound them as Xena wields the sword, keeping Guards at bay as she tells the other Prisoners:

XENA

Head for the door.

Using the chains and sword to repel every Guard who tries to stop them, they reach the door. But as they start out:

(CONTINUED)

23 CONTINUED: (3)

23

LIVIA (O.S.) *
(calls a warning) *
Leave -- and your pals in the cell die. *

Halting, our trio trade stricken looks. *

XENA	VIRGIL	GABRIELLE	*
Joxer...!	Dad...!	Joxer...!	*

Having no choice, they drop their weapons and turn to face *
Livia who crosses to them. *

LIVIA *
(to Virgil) *
Looks like you're off the hook, stud. *
(removing Xena's mask) *
You're the one I want to fight to the *
death. Only this time, I'll make sure *
you stay dead. *
(then; to Guards) *
Take them away. *

For a beat, she and Xena lock eyes. Then the Guards drag our *
heroes away. *

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

24 INT. AUGUSTUS' PALACE - PRISON CELL - NIGHT

24

TORCHLIGHT illuminates Gabrielle and Xena as they talk. *

GABRIELLE *

It's crazy. You can't fight your own
daughter. You've gotta find a way to
tell her the truth and stop the match. *

XENA *

You saw her. She's already dealing
with the truth about Ares. Anymore
"truth," I don't know what she'd do. *

GABRIELLE *

Whatever it is, it's gotta beat
fighting her mother. *

XENA *

But if word gets back to the gods,
they'll try and kill her. *

GABRIELLE *

Isn't it safer if she's on the alert
for them? *

XENA *

And spend her whole life looking over
her shoulder? *

(shakes her head) *

Maybe it's better she never know than
live her life in fear. *

GABRIELLE *

Better for who? Eve...or you? *

They hold a look. Then Gabrielle softens. *

GABRIELLE *

I know it's hard. But don't you owe
her the truth? *

XENA *

You think it's easy, keeping it from
her? Seeing the darkness in Eve and
not being able to hold her and say,
"Hang on. There's light. You'll see." *

(heart aching) *

You think that doesn't hurt? *

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED:

24

GABRIELLE

Of course, it hurts...both of you.

Xena reacts. But before she can comment, the CELL DOOR OPENS and a ROMAN GUARD enters. Halting in the doorway, he reads from a scroll.

ROMAN GUARD

"By order of the Emperor Augustus, the following prisoners are free: Xena, Gabrielle, Joxer and Virgil."

Exchanging looks, the four move to the door.

JOXER

Well, it's about time...

VIRGIL

(to the Guard)

What about everyone else?

ROMAN GUARD

What about 'em?

GABRIELLE

We're not leaving unless they can, too.

(turning to her)

Right, Xena?

But Gabrielle and the men react to find...Xena is gone.

CUT TO:

24A EXT. DESERTED ROMAN STREET - NIGHT

24A

Fog makes things eerie as Xena moves quickly down the street, then slows to a halt, suddenly sensing:

XENA

Ares.

He MATERIALIZES nearby.

ARES

Still picking up on me after all these years. I'm flattered.

(moving to her)

But you're not the only one with insight. I've picked up on something, too. Wanna hear?

(CONTINUED)

24A CONTINUED:

24A

XENA
(starting past him)

No.

Ignoring her, he stops her cold.

ARES
I've picked up on why you're here in
Rome. It's Livia, isn't it? Or,
should I say...
(whispering it close)
...Eve?

Tensing, Xena jerks away from him.

XENA
I don't know what you're talking about.

ARES
Sure, you do. Both times I've seen
you, it's been because Livia was
there -- the arena, the bacchanalia.
(eyeing her shrewdly)
Bet you're going to try and see her
now, right?

Xena doesn't answer. Ares smiles.

ARES
Right. See, I figured, whatever you
did to cheat death, I slowed it down
by putting you and Gabrielle on ice.
But not Eve. For twenty-five years,
she kept on growing...into Livia...
(Loving the irony)
...Champion of Rome.

XENA
You're insane.

She stalks past him. He MATERIALIZES in front of her.

ARES
The moment it hit me, I knew. Those
cobalt eyes...those tempting lips...
(eyes drifting down Xena)
...those ample, sweet-smelling--

SMACK! Xena slaps his face. Ares glares, but stays composed.

(CONTINUED)

