

XENA

WARRIOR PRINCESS

The Black Wolf

BY
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Episode #12

Prod. #76912

XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"The Black Wolf"

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SHOOTING DRAFT
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XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"The Black Wolf"

CAST LIST

XENA
GABRIELLE

SALMONEUS
XERXES
KOULOS
DIOMEDES
FLORA
HERMIA
PARNASSUS
CHIEF GUARD
FATHER
ARRESTING GUARD
BRIGAND
BLACKSMITH
BLACK WOLF SYMPATHIZER
THE GRUMP

XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"The Black Wolf"

SET LIST

INTERIORS:

XERXES' PALACE
STAIRCASE TO DUNGEON
DUNGEON
DUNGEON - ENTRANCE
DUNGEON - ENTRANCE TO REBELS' CORNER
DUNGEON - REBELS' CORNER
DUNGEON - COMMON AREA
DUNGEON - ANOTHER PART
KOULOS' OFFICE

EXTERIORS:

VILLAGE OF ARGOS - POOR FAMILY'S HOUSE
VILLAGE OF ARGOS - VILLAGE SQUARE
VILLAGE OF ARGOS - BLACKSMITH'S SHOP
VILLAGE OF ARGOS - PORCH OF A HOUSE
ROAD TO ARGOS
ENTRANCE TO DUNGEON OUTSIDE ARGOS
XERXES' PALACE
XERXES' PALACE GATE
WOODS

Prod. #76912

XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"The Black Wolf"

CHRONOLOGY

DAY 1	SCENES # 1 - 4
NIGHT 1	SCENES # 5 - 6
DAY 2	SCENES # 7 - 18
NIGHT 2	SCENES #19 - 26
DAY 3	SCENES #27 - 38

XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"The Black Wolf"

TEASER

FADE IN:

1 EXT. VILLAGE OF ARGOS - POOR FAMILY'S HOUSE - DAY

1

XERXES' GUARDS swagger out the door, carrying a meager cache of loot. The CHIEF GUARD dumps the plunder into a leather bag, sneering:

CHIEF GUARD

Silver! And not even good silver!

The FATHER follows the Guards out the door, holding back his HOTHEADED 14-year-old SON from tangling with them, as he entreats the Chief Guard:

FATHER

How can I feed my family when your taxes drain me dry?!

CHIEF GUARD

Moonlight, take a second job. Or send your wife and daughter into the streets to make your money!

The Guards laugh cruelly, despicable bullies. They head down the unpaved street toward the Village Square when suddenly...

A GROUP OF YOUNG FREEDOM FIGHTERS, cloaked all in black, spring out of spider holes camouflaged in the dirt and bolo the Guards' ankles together. The Guards fall to the ground, legs bound, helpless. In the flash of the Freedom Fighters' crude weapons, the Guards are history.

A BLACK-CLAD HAND drops a medallion on top of the Chief Guard's body.

TIGHT ON THE MEDALLION

Carved into the metal disk is a howling BLACK WOLF.

ON THE FREEDOM FIGHTERS

The faces of the Freedom Fighters and their cloaked-and-cowled leader are so backlit, we can't make out their features as they return the confiscated taxes to the Father.

Led by THE BLACK WOLF, the rebels thrust their arms skyward in a victory salute and HOWL like wolves.

CUT TO:

2 EXT. VILLAGE OF ARGOS - SQUARE - DAY

2

XERXES sits astride his stallion in the center of the Square, backed by his second-in-command, KOULOS, and more of his well-armed GUARDS, all on horseback. The cold-eyed, coldhearted ruthless despot who rules this region of Greece, Xerxes addresses the frightened, cowed VILLAGERS of Argos gathered before him in the Square:

XERXES

To be honest, at first I found it humorous --

(a frigid smile)

the audacity of the Black Wolf and his Wolf Pack, daring to challenge my authority.

(eyeing Villagers glacially)

It isn't funny anymore. Give up the Black Wolf, or my guards will level your village and you'll all be sent to work in the mines.

The terrified Villagers eye one another, not knowing what to do. Finally, a young man as magnetically charismatic as he is courageous, steps forward. This is DIOMEDES:

DIOMEDES

I'm the Black Wolf.

Xerxes gloats. Then a finely-featured young woman, highborn and well-bred, steps forward, radiating defiance and a fierce intelligence. This is FLORA:

FLORA

I'm the Black Wolf.

The Father from the Poor Family:

FATHER

I'm the Black Wolf.

Then all the YOUNG PEOPLE of the village, each fearlessly proclaiming:

YOUNG PEOPLE

I'm the Black Wolf.

Furious, Xerxes orders Koulos:

XERXES

Arrest them all!

(a stern warning to the rebels)

You've got seven days to give up the Black Wolf, or I'll skin you all -- pelt by pelt!

CUT TO:

3 EXT. ROAD TO ARGOS - DAY

3

XENA gallops down the road. Suddenly her horse rears, throwing a shoe. Xena dismounts, checks the horse's hoof for damage.

XENA
You've been needing new shoes since we
left Corinth, Argo.
(eyeing her own boots)
That makes two of us.

CUT TO:

4 EXT. ENTRANCE TO DUNGEON OUTSIDE ARGOS - DAY

4

Inside an iron-gated Guard House sits the top of a stone staircase that leads underground. Flora's kindly aristocratic mother, HERMIA, begs Xerxes' CHIEF GUARD, standing outside the gate with THREE GATE GUARDS brandishing long spears.

HERMIA
Please, let a mother see her only
daughter. She... she's not like the
rest of them. She was brought up well.

CHIEF GUARD
So well she wound up in Xerxes'
dungeon!

The Gate Guards guffaw derisively. Hermia takes his hand, a supplicant imploring:

HERMIA
Please... I beg you... she needs her
mother...

CHIEF GUARD
She should have thought of that before
she joined the Black Wolf!

Violently, he shoves Hermia aside and she stumbles, falling to the ground.

ON XENA

Leading her horse toward Argos, Xena comes upon this scene too late to stop it. She advances on the Chief Guard:

XENA
You like shoving women around so much,
try me!

ENTRANCE TO DUNGEON

(CONTINUED)

4 CONTINUED:

4

The Three Guards instantly aim their spears at Xena, who suddenly yanks two of the spears toward her, throwing the Two Guards off balance as she kicks the third spear out of the Third Guard's grasp. With the butt end of their spears, Xena shoves the Two Guards backwards toward the entrance to the Guard House and their heads slam between the iron bars of the Gate, immobilizing them, at the same time pulling their spears out of their grips and using them to pin the Third Guard to the dirt, one spear through each side of his leather armor, before taking on the Chief Guard mano-a-mano; he gets off one good hand chop at Xena before she corkscrew-kicks him in the chest and as he spins around, so does she, and as she comes around, this time she kicks him in the back and he sprawls face first in the muck. Not about to get up anytime soon.

ON HERMIA

As Xena helps the old woman up...

HERMIA

Thank y --

...their eyes meet and they stop, startled.

HERMIA

Xe -- Xena...?

XENA

Hermia...?

HERMIA

The gods, it must be ten years since I saw you last!

XENA

What are you doing here? Where's your family?

HERMIA

Persix and Eteocles inhabit the Other Side, thanks to that murdering tyrant, Xerxes. And now he's thrown Flora in his Dungeon!

XENA

Flora? Little Flora...? She's in prison?

HERMIA

She's not little anymore. She's all grown up and madly in love with one of the Black Wolves. Diomedes brought her under the spell of these rebels.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

4 CONTINUED: 2

4

HERMIA (cont'd)
He had her believing they could bring
down Xerxes. And now...
(despairing)
Flora's all I've got left in the
world -- why must she die for a lost
cause?

Xena eyes Hermia, whose eyes glisten with tears she refuses
to shed, and is touched by an old friend's gallant pain.

XENA
Causes are only lost when people give
up. Maybe Flora knows that.
(then)
I'll get Flora back for you.

HERMIA
No one has ever escaped from Xerxes'
dungeon. Except through the grave.

XENA
(deliberate)
I'll get Flora back for you.

Off Hermia's hopeful look, we:

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

5 INT. XERXES' PALACE - EVENING

5

It's instantly clear from the decor why Xerxes imposes such ruinous taxes: he has expensive tastes. An angry Xerxes paces as he upbraids Koulos, usually expert at sucking up to his ruler. Xerxes is sitting on the edge of his desk, his calm demeanor masking his anger as he plays with a letter opener.

XERXES

I'm being mocked by children! You should have brought me the Black Wolf. Remind me why I haven't had you flogged by now?

KOULOS

These rebels are incredibly disciplined. The usual techniques don't work with them.

XERXES

Then change the "usual techniques." The Feast of Zeus is five days from now. I want the execution of the Black Wolf to be the main entertainment. Or, I could execute my Minister of Security. And that would be... You!

Xerxes lets fly with the letter opener. It sticks in the wall next to Koulos' head.

KOULOS

I'll find him. There's no way a true leader can hide his identity forever.

(then)

Of course, we could just pick one and say it's the Black Wolf. Who would know?

XENA (O.S.)

The Black Wolf would know. And you'd have another martyr on your hands.

A startled Xerxes and a suddenly very-worried-for-his-job Koulos spin to catch sight of their visitor standing in the doorway:

ON XENA

Her sword sheathed, Xena is holding something under each arm as she advances on them.

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED:

5

KOULOS

Guards!

Xena dumps two helmets on the desk.

XENA

Don't bother the dears, they're sleeping.

(to Xerxes)

You kill the wrong man, and the word will get out somehow. Then the Black Wolf would have another martyr to hold up in front of the people.

KOULOS

(angry)

Then we'll kill them all.

XENA

Good idea. Make martyrs out of all of them. No, Xerxes, you're right. It's the Black Wolf you want. Cut off the head of the serpent -- and the body withers... useless.

Koulos unsheathes his sword, but Xerxes stops him with a gesture.

XERXES

Who are you? And what is your interest in all this?

XENA

My name is Xena. I'm a problem solver. And I can solve your problem for ten thousand dinars.

KOULOS

That's outrageous! I refuse to listen to this.

XENA

Stage my arrest in the center of town in front of a Black Wolf sympathizer. Once I'm in your prison, I'll expose the Black Wolf and hand him over to you.

KOULOS

And why would we believe you could succeed?

XENA

Ask Mezentius in Trachis about me.

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED: 2

5

XERXES
Mezentius is dead.

XENA
(proving her point)
Yes, he is.
(then)
Ten thousand. And a new pair of boots.

Xerxes eyes the determination in her face -- and nods.

XERXES
But fail -- and you join them on the
block. That's my offer. Take it or
leave it.

XENA
(smiling)
I'll take it.

CUT TO:

6 EXT. XERXES' PALACE - EVENING

6

The Chief Guard cringes as Koulos throws his helmet back
into his arms. As he puts it back on...

CHIEF GUARD
Sorry, Lord Koulos. She was too quick.

KOULOS
If I rely on you and your Guards,
they'll be tossing my head around the
Square on the Feast of Zeus! Thank the
Gods I've got my own man inside.
(determined)
And tomorrow, I'll show you how a real
soldier handles this woman.

CUT TO:

7 EXT. VILLAGE SQUARE - NEXT DAY

7

XENA'S FIST

rockets toward Koulos, and we ride it right to his jaw.

KOULOS

slides on his back and, finally, comes to rest among the
feet of his guards, including the Chief Guard who asks:

(CONTINUED)

7 CONTINUED:

7

CHIEF GUARD

Would you need my helmet, Lord Koulos?

Koulos gets up and gives him glare, then he turns his attention back to Xena. The Villagers stand nearby, watching in amazement.

KOULOS

(to Xena, but hammily
playing to the crowd)

You'll go to the Dungeon for this! You
and this Black Wolf sympathizer.

Koulos glowers at a BLACK WOLF SYMPATHIZER, held in front of his Food Shop by two of Koulos' Guards. The Chief Guard stands beside them, sword ready, watching as Koulos and Xena continue staging her "capture" for the Villagers. She taunts Koulos:

XENA

I'm waiting. Come and get me.

KOULOS

With pleasure, traitor!

Koulos rushes Xena, fists flashing. She grabs onto both fists, squeezing tight. His eyes bulge as he fights to keep from crying out in pain, and then he's stunned to find himself flipping heels over head as she swings him over her head and he goes flying into the display of food outside the store, SPLAT!

He spits a few stray morsels out of his mouth. The Black Wolf Sympathizer watches their fight with great concern; after all, his fate is in Xena's hands. Koulos is pissed off as he scrambles to his feet. This time he's wary as he circles around her, complaining through clenched teeth:

KOULOS

You're making this harder than it needs
to be!

XENA

(low voice)

You want it to look believable, don't
you?

With one sudden move, she rolls him to the side and rolls on top of him, rising to her knees, which she locks under each of his armpits, and swings her fists simultaneously at each side of his skull. If this were an animated show, birds and bells would be flying over his head. Xena compliments Koulos:

(CONTINUED)

7 CONTINUED: 2

7

XENA

Great move! They're buying it.

Some of the braver Villagers laugh derisively until Koulos glowers at them as he shoves Xena off of him and springs to his feet. Xena backs up. He throws punches at Xena, but she ducks and swerves out of their way, backing up all the while. Until she finds her back against a wall.

Koulos grins; he's got her where he wants her. He hauls back and throws a mighty punch right at Xena's jaw. She darts sideways -- and his fist connects with the stone base.

Enraged, he swings with his other fist and Xena somersaults out of his path. His fist connects with stone so hard his eyes almost cross from the pain. Xena lands on her feet behind him.

He's soaking wet from the exertion and she's barely breaking a sweat as they come face-to-face again.

XENA

Don't worry, you're gonna make a comeback at the end.

Before he can move, she flips OVER HIM, grabbing his shoulders while directly over him and, as she lands on her feet, she pulls him UP IN THE AIR and over her into the GUARDS, and they all fall into the water trough in front of the Blacksmith's Shop with an ENORMOUS SPLASH!

KOULOS

(to Chief Guard)

Don't just stand there! Get her!

With the look of a condemned man, the Chief Guard pulls his sword and approaches Xena. She pulls her sword and waits. The Chief Guard takes a cautious swipe at Xena... and her sword drops to the ground! The Chief Guard stares in amazement as Xena raises her hands in surrender. Koulos is livid.

KOULOS

Take her away!

(eyeing the Sympathizer in
the crowd)

And that traitor, too!

As she passes him:

XENA

(sotto; to Koulos)

Didn't I tell you you'd win in the end?

CUT TO:

8 EXT. BLACKSMITH'S SHOP - LATER THAT DAY

8

The BLACKSMITH is shoeing Argo when a puzzled GABRIELLE strides up with her staff.

GABRIELLE

Where's the owner of this horse?

The Blacksmith punctuates his words with blows from his hammer.

BLACKSMITH

You the one she said would pay me for the horseshoes? Gimme the money and I'll tell you.

GABRIELLE

(anxious)

What's happened?

BLACKSMITH

Fifteen dinars for the shoes, five for the feed. Horse has a healthy appetite.

Worried, Gabrielle quickly fishes coins out of her bag and pays the Blacksmith.

BLACKSMITH

She said for you to take her gear and wait for her at the tavern.

GABRIELLE

That doesn't tell me where she is now.

BLACKSMITH

(grinning)

Xerxes' Dungeon...

GABRIELLE

Oh no! Why? I have to go see her!

BLACKSMITH

The only way anyone sees someone in the dungeon is to be sent there. It's not a nice place to go.

Off Gabrielle's look, we:

CUT TO:

9 EXT. VILLAGE SQUARE - DAY

9

Determined, Gabrielle strides into town where she finds a group of XERXES' GUARDS, lounging in the Village Square, ogling whatever young girls haven't been carted off to prison. She grabs some overripe tomatoes from a produce stand and backs up, judging the distance between her and the guards. She bumps into someone. She turns and finds SALMONEUS staring down at her. He has a stand of his own set up and, assuming she's a customer, he pounces.

SALMONEUS

Hello there, my little friend. Looking for some Black Wolf merchandise? Oops! Have to keep my voice down. Not just because of Xerxes' guards, but because these are such bargains.

He takes her tomatoes from her, places them on the cart out of her reach, and shoves a backpack into her hands.

GABRIELLE

I really don't have the time for this...

SALMONEUS

Time? Who doesn't have time for a great deal? Trust Salmoneus, he only has the customer's interests at heart. Ask around... later. How's this? It's a pouch that fits on your back, good for carrying scrolls, vegetables, statues, whatever. Look; it has the Black Wolf seal on the inside. I call it my Black Wolf... Pack! You see, don't you?

GABRIELLE

No thank you. Can I have the tomatoes back --

SALMONEUS

I have a Black Wolf Purse you might be interested in.

Gabrielle leaps, grabs one of the tomatoes, and throws it at the guards. SPLAT, it hits the guard squarely on the back of the head. The Guard looks at them, and starts to head over. Gabrielle proudly stands in front of him, waiting for the inevitable arrest as Salmoneus quickly starts to close up shop.

ARRESTING GUARD

You think that's funny, do you? How about some time in the dungeon to sharpen your humor?

(CONTINUED)

9 CONTINUED:

9

Gabrielle smiles; her plan worked! Almost. The Arresting Guard walks right past her and grabs Salmoneus!

SALMONEUS

But it wasn't me! It wasn't me! She's the one!

The Arresting Guard takes a look at that innocent face...

GABRIELLE

I threw the tomatoes!

ARRESTING GUARD

(then)

As if.

He hauls Salmoneus away, protesting his innocence every step of the way. Gabrielle watches in frustration.

CUT TO:

10 INT. DUNGEON - DAY

10

Xena is tossed to the ground. If she wasn't playacting, they would have been dead before they'd finished shoving her. Even so, as she picks herself up and dusts herself off, she looks up to see PARNASSUS, a wiry man all bent and hunched over. In his hand he holds a fist-sized stone, which he pets.

PARNASSUS

My rock... my rock... you like him...?

He holds the rock out to her, then pulls it back and scurries away. Xena eyes the Dungeon.

It's a large subterranean cave, with various coves and sleeping areas; brackish water occasionally trickles out of cracks in the rocks. There's a central arena-like court surrounded by levels of boulders where the prisoners hang out, sort of like your basic prison exercise yard. Columns of light, shooting out of the air-shafts in the ceiling high overhead, pierce the darkness. The rest of the lighting comes from torches hanging on the stone walls. There's only one entrance; the one she came through. She starts walking farther into the dungeon. Various prisoners eye her with varying interest. Her expert eyes probe for weaknesses and escape routes.

A big, hulking BRIGAND steps in Xena's path and leers disgustingly at her:

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED:

10

BRIGAND

Looking for the man of your dreams,
darling?

Xena punches him in the stomach and he folds.

XENA

Nope. You're not him.

The other Prisoners explode in ribald laughter at the
Brigand's expense, as Xena goes to:

11 INT. ENTRANCE TO REBELS' CORNER - DAY

11

The Two Rebels standing guard block Xena's way.

XENA

Is this where I can find the Wolf Pack?

(no answer)

You've got a choice. You can let me
pass, or you can nurse a broken leg.

Diomedes steps forward, confronting Xena:

DIOMEDES

And who would you be?

Behind Diomedes and the Rebel Guards, we catch glimpses of
Rebels hard at work. The Black Wolf Sympathizer who was
arrested with Xena rushes over:

BLACK WOLF SYMPATHIZER

It's okay, Diomedes -- she's on our
side. She was trying to protect me
when Koulos arrested her.

Diomedes stares long and hard at Xena.

DIOMEDES

That means nothing. Anyone who's not
one of us is a threat.

Flora -- who's been watching from inside -- strides up to
the entrance. She and Xena exchange looks that convey past
history -- and present uncertainty.

FLORA

Xena, it's been a long time.

DIOMEDES

Xena...? This is Xena?

Touching Diomedes gently but firmly on the shoulder, Flora
urges him to back off.

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED:

11

XENA
(to Flora)
You've grown up.

FLORA
You've grown legendary.

Currents of old resentments mixed with hero-worship flicker across Flora's face.

XENA
I'm different now.

FLORA
(skeptical)
So I've heard. You've returned to the
Xena I admired as a child.
(to Diomedes)
Would you believe, Xena taught me how
to swing a sword and embroider linens
for my wedding chest.

DIOMEDES
(eyeing Xena, astonished)
You -- embroider?

XENA
(dryly)
I have many skills.
(to Flora)
I need to speak to you. Alone.

Diomedes starts to object, but Flora waves him off. Then, she gives him a quick kiss on the cheek. He moves off, keeping a watchful eye on Xena, as do all the Wolf Pack.

XENA
Your mother's worried sick about you.
I promised I'd get you out of here.

FLORA
(difficult)
I'm sure I've caused her a lot of pain.
I regret that.
(then)
It doesn't matter, there's no way out
of here.

XENA
I'm sure Xerxes believes that, but I
don't. Look up. That air shaft. The
two of us could make it through there.
You'd have to hang onto my back, but --

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED: 2

11

FLORA

Can you carry twelve people on your back? I'm not leaving without the rest of the Wolf Pack.

Xena takes in her defiant look. Xena looks to the rest of the Wolf Pack, who stare back at her. Then:

12 INT. COMMON AREA - DAY

12

The Chief Guard unlocks the entrance door. With great fanfare, six Guards pour into the Dungeon and array themselves. Some urge slow-moving Prisoners into the common area with their weapons. Koulos strides into the Dungeon, imperious and overbearing. He eyes Xena, his prisoners, and the rebels, as he walks over to a wood grating which is set into the floor.

KOULOS

I'm not going to waste words with you people. I want the Black Wolf and you're going to give him to me.

(to Xena)

You. Come here.

Xena walks over to Koulos, as the Chief Guard opens the wood grating to a pit.

KOULOS

Look down. What do you see?

She looks down and sees:

XENA'S POV

Eight feet deep, four feet square, no place to move, littered with bones, skulls and a couple of skeletons.

BACK TO SCENE

XENA

What's your point?

KOULOS

My point is this.

The Chief Guard gives Xena a shove and she falls into the pit! The grating is quickly lowered and locked. Another Guard pulls down on a wood lever and water pours into the pit. Flora immediately wants to intervene, but Diomedes holds her back. Koulos turns to the rest of the Wolf Pack.

(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED:

12

KOULOS

This is just one example of what we do
to members of the Wolf Pack. Or anyone
who speaks up for them. Consider my
demand as you listen to your friend
scream for her life.

He turns and kneels by the pit, speaking to Xena in a low
voice.

KOULOS

Don't worry -- you'll make a comeback
in the end.

He smiles at her as water rises to Xena's chin and she
struggles with the locked grate.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE --

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

13 INT. COMMON AREA - DAY

13

Water churns around Xena's jaw as she clutches at the grating covering the pit.

Flora watches with concern. She looks to Diomedes, but his face betrays nothing as he stares at the spectacle.

The Guards peer down at Xena, enjoying this. Suddenly she disappears into the roiling water, breaking the surface a moment later with a leg bone in her hand. Before the Guards can react, she flings the bone through the grating at one of their heads, dropping the Guard, who falls on top of the grate. She grabs his sword, pulling it through the slats. With a ferocious swing, she chops through the wood grating and hauls herself out of the pit. Furious, she raises the sword toward Koulos. But, immediately, the sharp ends of five Guards' swords are at her throat. Xena allows the Guards to disarm her. Koulos turns to the prisoners.

KOULOS

(pointedly)

I want the Black Wolf.

(to Guards)

Repair the pit. Use metal grating this time.

And he turns and exits, the door closing. A beat, then the door opens again and Salmoneus is thrown into the Dungeon. He hits the ground at Xena's feet and looks up...

SALMONEUS

Those boots... that leather... it can't be...!

He is lifted to his feet. His eyes open wide, then:

SALMONEUS

It's you! Xena!

XENA

Salmoneus! What are you doing here?

SALMONEUS

I was in the wrong place at the wrong time.

(off her look)

No, really! This time it's true! I'm completely innocent! Hey! What are you doing here?

(CONTINUED)

13 CONTINUED:

13

XENA

I'm here because I want to be.

SALMONEUS

Okay. I'm not sure I understand the allure of this little vacation spot, but, somehow, I'm sure you have reasons. But you are leaving here, aren't you? I mean, you aren't taking up a permanent residence. And, when you go, you'll take me with you. Please take me with you. I don't eat well when I'm in prison and you know my stomach condition.

Xena looks around. Then:

XENA

I might just have a use for your abilities. Think you can scrounge a few things for me?

SALMONEUS

Certainly. You tell me where the hardware store is, and I'm there.

XENA

The hardware store is all around you.

SALMONEUS

You mean... these people?

XENA

I'm afraid so. It's either that, or get used to the food. I have to go talk to the Black Wolves.

SALMONEUS

Wait, wait! The Black Wolf is here? In this dungeon? I have got to talk to him. You see, I've been selling a designer line of Black Wolf wear and his endorsement...

Parnassus wanders by, looks Salmoneus up and down, holds up his stone:

PARNASSUS

This is my rock! He's mine!

And he wanders off.

SALMONEUS

What was that?

(CONTINUED)

13 CONTINUED: 2

13

Off that, we:

CUT TO:

14 INT. THE REBELS' CORNER - DAY

14

Xena walks over to where the Wolf Pack has their perimeter. Once again, several of the Pack stand to intercept her, Diomedes glaring at her. Flora watches from a rock where she is sitting talking to some other Pack members.

XENA

Flora!

Flora stands and faces her.

XENA

You're not leaving without your friends. Very well. I can get you all out.

DIOMEDES

Oh, really?

XENA

Yes. And, believe me, my plan will work. Your tunnel won't.

The rest of the Rebels turn and stare at Xena. As well disciplined as they are, a few can't keep their faces from betraying shock.

FLORA

What tunnel?

Xena strides past Diomedes over to the Hotheaded Son from the Poor Family who's squatting on a boulder. She lifts him straight up and kick-shoves the boulder aside...

XENA

This one.

...to reveal the entrance to a tunnel.

XENA

This boulder's been moved too many times not to show the wear. And, next time, learn to hide the excess dirt better. It won't be long before the guards notice it, too. So, what's it going to be? Are you in the mood to listen?

(CONTINUED)

14 CONTINUED:

14

DIOMEDES

I vote against it. The idea that Xena, the Warrior Princess, could be captured and thrown in prison sure smells like a setup to me. If I were Xerxes, I couldn't think of any better way to get the Black Wolf than by sending you in here!

XENA

You're a smart man, Diomedes. And you're half right. I allowed myself to get captured... to get Flora out. She won't leave without all of you, so I have a plan. But we'll need everybody's help. All the prisoners.

The Rebels consider it. Diomedes looks around the area, scanning the faces of the Pack. Then, to Flora. Finally:

DIOMEDES

It's not just my decision to make. Talk. We'll listen.

CUT TO:

15 INT. ANOTHER PART OF THE DUNGEON - DAY

15

Salmoneus, sporting several belts looped over his arm, is talking to the Brigand.

BRIGAND

Whatt'dya want my belt for?

SALMONEUS

To be honest, I don't know. I just need it. And as many as we can get.

BRIGAND

What if my drawers drop?

SALMONEUS

I don't see that happening. The fit is exquisite. It's like you were poured into that outfit. The belt is such a detriment to fashion.

BRIGAND

Whatever.

He pulls the belt off and hands it to Salmoneus, who loops it with the others. The Brigand picks up a rope and starts to use it as a belt, as Salmoneus notices:

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED:

15

SALMONEUS

Are you going to use that rope?

Off the Brigand's look, we:

CUT TO:

16 INT. REBEL'S CORNER - DAY

16

Flora is using a rock to sand a homemade bow. Diomedes comes up to her and drops some wood next to her. He kneels, looks into her eyes, and gives her a kiss.

DIOMEDES

I'm only going along with this because of you.

FLORA

We have to try something.

DIOMEDES

I thought we were.

(then)

Do you think I'll ever actually meet your mother.

FLORA

I would like that. One day. When this is all over.

A long beat. He takes her hand.

DIOMEDES

It's hard to think there'll ever be a future sometimes.

FLORA

There will be. And not just for us, but for everyone.

This time, she kisses him. They are interrupted by the approach of Xena.

XENA

We need some help with the netting.

FLORA

What's the problem?

XENA

Your fellow Wolves don't want to listen to me.

(CONTINUED)

16 CONTINUED:

16

DIOMEDES

(beat)

I'll take care of it.

XENA

You might want to have some people keep an eye on the other prisoners. We don't need anyone talking to the guards about this.

He gets up and leaves. Xena looks at Flora's work.

XENA

Don't make it too thick on the inside. It needs as much strength as --

FLORA

I know what I'm doing, Xena. I'm not a little girl anymore.

XENA

No, you're not.

She sits next to her.

XENA

And what are you doing? In here. Fighting a tyrant.

FLORA

The times change people...

XENA

...and people change the times. You remembered.

FLORA

I can hardly forget. You used to say that a lot when our village was attacked.

XENA

I didn't want our people just sitting back and thinking they had no choice.

FLORA

Even back then, you could read people. I never could figure that out. You had a knack for understanding what someone needed without asking. Only one of a few things I liked about you.

Xena picks up one of the pieces of wood and looks at it.

(CONTINUED)

16 CONTINUED: 2

16

XENA

Oak. Strong. Remember the oak tree by the river?

FLORA

I've tried to forget it. You and all the other kids would climb up into it, and I was left on the ground.

Xena says nothing.

FLORA

Then, you'd reach down your hand and say "You've got to have faith! You've got to!" And I would reach up... and you would pull your hand away. I fell for that every time.

(anger)

I couldn't understand why someone I admired so much would treat me like that. Can you tell me why?

A long beat.

XENA

I can tell you you were the closest thing I had to a sister. And that was important to me.

Xena stands and walks away.

17 EXT. PORCH OF A VILLAGE HOUSE - DAY

17

Gabrielle leans over the railing, throwing rocks at the same group of XERXES' GUARDS down the street, but they land short. Suddenly the GRUMPY HOMEOWNER storms out of his house and yells at Gabrielle:

THE GRUMP

Get off my porch!

She tosses the last rock and it hits the Arresting Guard. The Guards rush the porch and after giving Gabrielle a quick glance, grab The Grump.

ARRESTING GUARD

You're under arrest!

GABRIELLE

What? Not again!

But they drag The Grump away, to Gabrielle's dismay.

CUT TO:

18 INT. DUNGEON - DAY

18

The Grump is tossed inside the Dungeon. He looks around, then up to the heavens.

THE GRUMP

But it was the girl!

XENA

as Flora comes up to her.

FLORA

Everything's ready. We just have to put it together.

Xena steps up onto a boulder and looks at the waiting faces.

XENA

You all want out of here -- let's get to work!

CUT TO:

19 INT. DUNGEON - VARIOUS SHOTS - PREPARING THE ESCAPE - NIGHT

19

The Prisoners weave vines into ropes, bend wood into bows, tie vine-ropes to grappling hooks, string the bows. Salmoneus goes to and fro, his arms laden with materials. Wandering in their midst is Parnassus, talking to his Rock. Finally:

WITH XENA

As Flora walks over to her, Xena is knotting the rope onto large, crude arrows. In the background, others are doing the same.

FLORA

We're just about done, assuming the guards don't do another contraband sweep. They usually toss us some food around midnight.

At that moment, Salmoneus trundles over, his arms loaded with belts and ropes.

SALMONEUS

Okay! I got fifteen belts, four ropes and three proposals. This is disgusting work.

(sees Flora)

Still... all for the cause. The greater glory of the Black Wolf.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

19 CONTINUED:

19

SALMONEUS (cont'd)
A Black Wolf who would be much more
widely known if he had better
merchandising, I might add.

XENA
You've added. Now, go.

With a sigh, Salmoneus takes off.

FLORA
(to Xena)
I know you aren't doing it for this
reason, but you're keeping the Black
Wolf cause alive.

XENA
And what does the Black Wolf think
about all this?

FLORA
The Black Wolf appreciates it. Though,
he's still a bit suspicious.

XENA
I don't disagree with what you and the
rest of the Wolf Pack want, but it
bothers me to believe that you're more
concerned with the Black Wolf's
struggle than you are with your own
mother's tears.

FLORA
(tense)
I can't give up who I am or what I've
become.

XENA
You aren't expected to. But, in the
process, don't forget where you came
from or who gave you life. She
deserves more than that.

Xena starts to turn away.

FLORA
(angry)
You don't understand anything about my
mother and me!

XENA
(simply)
Neither do you.

And Xena walks away, leaving Flora to think.

CUT TO:

20 INT. ANOTHER PART OF THE DUNGEON - NIGHT

20

Salmoneus stands to the side. Several men, including Diomedes, are sitting with the large bows between their legs, their feet on the actual bows, their hands on the arrows and strings. The arrows, as implied before, have ropes tied to them. Xena examines the scene.

XENA

How does it look?

SALMONEUS

You're asking me? For a fly-by-night operation, I think it's incredible. These Wolf people, they really organize, you know? When you do find who the Black Wolf is, I have got to know. Not just because I'm running a Guess-The-Black-Wolf Pool... Diomedes is running even odds....but because I have got to talk to him about my Authorized Signature Black Wolf Revolutionary Gear. It's ready to go, I even have a slogan; "Just say Wolf." Good?

Xena sits at the only unoccupied bow.

SALMONEUS

The problem is, I need to talk to this Black Wolf person. He's got the power of attorney here.

XENA

(to Diomedes)

Diomedes! Are you ready?

DIOMEDES

Let's get on with it.

And, with that, the men (and Xena) lean back, putting their muscles into bending the bows. Using their feet, they aim the arrows high and:

XENA

One, two, three, NOW!

They release the arrows and, as they fly away from the bows, we:

CUT TO:

21 INT. STAIRCASE TO DUNGEON - NIGHT

21

Several Dungeon Guards stand around, waiting; playing "rock, sword, parchment." Several bundles are on the floor.

(CONTINUED)

21 CONTINUED:

21

The Chief Guard arrives.

CHIEF GUARD

All right. Time to feed the animals.
Open it up.

A couple of the Guards pick up the bundles as the others unlock the door.

22 INT. DUNGEON - NIGHT

22

The Guards stop dead in their tracks and look around in shock. There are no prisoners inside! They rush in, looking about. The Chief Guard spots:

THE TUNNEL IN THE REBELS' CORNER

CHIEF GUARD

Here! They've dug a tunnel!

The Guards crowd the entrance to the tunnel, effectively turning their back to:

ON THE CEILING

the Prisoners -- ALL hanging from the netting that, in turn, hang from the arrows they launched earlier. They drop down to:

RESUME SCENE

the Dungeon floor and take the Guards by surprise. The Prisoners fight for their lives. We can see that Diomedes and Flora are not new to this. Even Xena takes a beat to appreciate "little Flora" as a Guard grabs her in a bear hug. Flora nails him with her elbow, then bends over, grabs his leg and pulls, dropping him on his back. Without looking, she plants a foot in his midsection and moves onto the next victim.

Finally, the Prisoners disarm the surprised Guards and push them into the tunnel, sealing it with the boulder.

The Wolf Pack raises their fists and HOWL with joy. Even the Brigand, who raises his fist and howls, effectively losing control of his beltless pants.

XENA

No time to celebrate! Come on!

23 INT. STAIRCASE TO DUNGEON - NIGHT

23

Xena pauses as the Prisoners rush past her out of the Dungeon. Salmoneus stops next to her, his face flush with exertion and excitement. Xena looks concerned. Flora stops.

FLORA

What's wrong?

XENA

This was too easy.

SALMONEUS

Easy? This was easy?

Xena says no more, but pushes Salmoneus upstairs.

24 EXT. DUNGEON ENTRANCE - NIGHT

24

The Prisoners rush out into the woods, mostly splitting up. Xena stays with the Wolf Pack, as does Salmoneus.

VARIOUS SHOTS

as they run with abandon. Until:

25 EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

25

They all come to a screeching halt. Standing in front of them are a PLATOON OF XERXES' ELITE ARCHERS and HEAVILY ARMED GUARDS led by Koulos, waiting for them.

KOULOS

It took you long enough. We've been here for the last hour.

As they are disarmed, the Wolf Pack glares at Xena. Salmoneus notices and moves away from her.

KOULOS

(to Guards)

Round up the rest and take them back.

(to Xena)

Xerxes wants to talk to you.

Off this setback, we:

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

26 INT. XERXES' PALACE - NIGHT

26

Koulos addresses a bare-chested, impressively-muscular Xerxes who's refining his chain-fighting technique with his INSTRUCTOR, also bare-chested and well-muscled; the two men swing long chains at each other, trying to catch their opponent's limbs with the chain. Xena stands nearby, a nervous guard keeping an eye on her. During this display of his abilities:

KOULOS

At the very least, she failed. At the most, she betrayed you! Look at what she did! Once she was in my dungeon, she began working against you, Lord Xerxes. She continually harassed my men, she bonded with the Wolf Pack and lead them into an escape! Now, if she had just betrayed me, I could deal with that. But, you, Lord Xerxes... I cannot tolerate someone thinking they can humiliate you!

Xerxes catches his Instructor's leg and drops him to the floor with a savage yank. As he wraps up the chain and accepts some water from an assistant:

XERXES

Well, Xena? You've said little.

XENA

I haven't had to say anything. Koulos has said it all... and he's right. I bonded with the Wolf Pack, and I led them in an escape.

She turns to Koulos with controlled anger.

XENA

And, because of all that, I was about to become one of them. Then, I would have found out who the Black Wolf is.

A beat, then Xerxes motions Xena's guard to leave.

XERXES

Well, Koulos? You seem to have set my plans back a bit.

(CONTINUED)

26 CONTINUED:

26

KOULOS

Respectfully, Sir, it wasn't me who set you back. If this woman had told me of her plan, I could have guided her efforts and we would have the vermin by now. Her silence is what hurt us.

XENA

Really? Apparently you weren't completely surprised. Who's your man on the inside? How did you know to be waiting for us in the woods?

KOULOS

I knew because I'm good at what I do.

XENA

Yes. I can see that. Even the Black Wolf can see that. Whoever he is.

(back to Xerxes)
Send me back in.

KOULOS

(smirking)
They'll kill you.

XENA

I still have a few ideas. Who knows? I might be able to turn this to my advantage.

Xerxes considers this. Then:

XERXES

If they do kill you, I won't have to worry about doing it. And, if you succeed...

(pointedly; for Koulos)
...you may have a job when you get out.

Koulos stiffens with the implication.

CUT TO:

27 EXT. SUNRISE (STOCK) - ESTABLISHING

27

28 INT. DUNGEON - DAY

28

The Chief Guard shoves a staff with Xerxes' seal on it into the dirt under a lightshaft, and announces to the Prisoners:

(CONTINUED)

28 CONTINUED:

28

CHIEF GUARD

Xerxes commands that you give up the Black Wolf by the time the sun hits this staff -- or you all die! You've got a little over three hours to decide.

And he exits. A BEAT on the staff, then we hear a scuffle.

29 INT. COMMON AREA - DAY

29

The Brigand drags Salmoneus into the middle of the area.

BRIGAND

I found him! The little rat was hiding in the latrine!

He throws a frightened Salmoneus onto the ground.

SALMONEUS--

Please! There really has been a mistake! I hardly know the woman! I mean, yes, we've met before. But that wasn't of my choosing! I never really liked her!

BRIGAND

Any friend of that traitor, Xena, is an enemy of mine.

SALMONEUS

There's that word again! "Friend!" Hardly describes what was, at best, a purely business relationship!

Suddenly, a hand appears on his shoulder and the Brigand goes flying. Xena stands above him as the other prisoners back up.

XENA

You got a problem with me, take it up with me.

The Brigand looks to the others, then:

BRIGAND

I've got no problem.

He turns his back to walk away, then suddenly spins right back with a scream... right into Xena's fist. He drops. Xena turns her attention to the gathering crowd.

(CONTINUED)

29 CONTINUED:

29

XENA

I know I'm not very popular right now...

SALMONEUS

To be precise, they want to slit your throat.

XENA

But I'm not the one who betrayed you. Why would I arrange an escape just to tell the Guards about it?

Diomedes walks deliberately over to Xena.

DIOMEDES

It makes perfect sense to me. Especially if you're intent on breaking our spirit. The escape fails and we become demoralized. Or, the escape succeeds... and we begin to trust you. No, no. Not anymore.

The Rebels howl in agreement as Diomedes removes his shirt in preparation for battle. Xena shoots a look to Flora, who is grim-faced.

XENA

Diomedes, you don't want to do this.

Diomedes leaps at Xena, legs extended for a kick to her head. Xena drops, tucks and rolls under him and springs to her feet, leaping up in a spinning kick that catches Diomedes full in the back, sending him sprawling.

XENA

I'm telling you, you don't want to do this.

Diomedes springs to his feet. This time, when he comes at Xena, he comes at her with respect for her abilities. It's a Hong Kong-Style, No-Holds-Barred Street Fight -- up, down, all over the boulders: spectacular jumps, powerful backflips, airborne kicks, body slams and bone-cracking blows. Diomedes turns out to be a strong warrior, a worthy opponent for Xena's fighting abilities. Even Parnassus, clutching his Rock, moves closer to watch. But ultimately, Xena is the stronger, and Diomedes is losing. He grabs a heavy stone, lifts it high, about to bash her head in.

Xena hesitates, shooting another glance to Flora. Then, as Diomedes charges with the rock over his head, Xena launches into a forward snap-kick, catching him in the chest, knocking him backward as she grabs the rock from his hands. Now, she holds the rock high and Diomedes is on his back.

(CONTINUED)

29 CONTINUED: 2

29

All Xena has to do is drop the rock on his head to end this.
The rock falls...

And slams into the ground next to Diomedes' head.

XENA

Look, there are two people in this
Dungeon who know I'm telling the truth:
one is me, and the other is the
traitor.

Xena steps away. Dead silence. Salmoneus takes a beat,
then heads after her. Flora rushes over to Diomedes to help
him up. He's shaken.

FLORA

She could have killed you. And she
didn't.

Diomedes catches her look, then nods...

The Rebels eye each other, wondering what to believe.

CUT TO:

30 EXT. XERXES' PALACE GATE - DAY

30

Gabrielle, carrying a tureen full of chocolate pudding,
approaches the guards at the Gate as they talk to the Chief
Guard. She has a very determined look on her face. She
pauses, tastes the pudding, and smiles...

CUT TO:

31 INT. DUNGEON - DAY

31

The shaft of sunlight moves inexorably closer to Xerxes'
staff stuck in the ground as the Chief Guard, appropriately
covered in chocolate pudding, tosses Gabrielle into the
Dungeon. He slams the door shut with a resounding CLANG!

GABRIELLE

(calling after him)

It was really nice of you to walk me
down here personally!

Gabrielle takes in her new surroundings and zeroes in on the
Rebels sitting together.

GABRIELLE

Excuse me... I'm looking for Xena.
Tall, beautiful, swings a mean right
hook?

(CONTINUED)

31 CONTINUED:

31

They all stand and face her.

GABRIELLE

Looks like she might have swung it already.

Xena pulls her away.

XENA

What in the gods' names are you doing here?

GABRIELLE

You go and get yourself thrown into a dungeon and I'm supposed to do nothing? You should know me better by now.

XENA

I should.

GABRIELLE--

I figure two things; One, if you're here it's because you want to be. Which means you have a plan to get out. And two, you're going to need my help. You couldn't ask for it, of course, that's not you. But you knew I'd find a way down here and bring you this...

She points to her sunbonnet.

XENA

A hat?

Gabrielle tilts her head so Xena can see the chakram.

GABRIELLE

And this.

She uncoils the whip from around her waist and hands it over.

XENA

These will come in handy, I admit. You know that plan you mentioned... for getting out?

GABRIELLE

Yes? What is it?

XENA

Abandoned. It didn't work.

GABRIELLE

Not good.

(CONTINUED)

31 CONTINUED: 2

31

XENA

And the prisoners here consider me
their enemy. They want to kill me.

GABRIELLE

Even worse.

SALMONEUS

You!!!

Gabrielle turns to find Salmoneus advancing on her.

SALMONEUS

That's the Little Miss Innocent who got
me thrown in here in the first place!

XENA

She's my friend.

SALMONEUS

She's your friend...

(pulls back)

She's your friend? Since when did you
get a friend? Is she a warrior?

He tentatively reaches out and feels her arm, looking for
muscle.

GABRIELLE

Hey! Back off! You wouldn't be here
in the first place if you had kept your
hands off my tomatoes.

Salmoneus quickly turns to Xena.

SALMONEUS

I can explain that!

GABRIELLE

(to Xena)

So, why are we here? And why does
everyone hate you?

XENA

It's a long story. Salmoneus will be
glad to tell you, but I have someone to
talk to.

She moves off, heading toward Flora. Gabrielle turns to
Salmoneus.

GABRIELLE

So? Tell me.

(CONTINUED)

31 CONTINUED: 3

31

SALMONEUS

Well, it all began when I met this
blonde-haired girl who had me thrown
into this dungeon!

ON FLORA

She sits near Xerxes' staff and stares at the beam of light
which is three feet away from it and their death. Xena
walks over to her. A beat, then she sits next to her.

FLORA

I've been thinking. About you. And
me. And how we've changed. And I
realized something.

XENA

Really? And what was that?

FLORA

Why you never gave me your hand when I
wanted to climb that tree. You told me
to have faith. I always thought you
meant to have faith in you. But it was
me you were talking about, wasn't it?

XENA

You have to have faith in yourself,
Flora. Otherwise you spend your life
waiting for other people to offer their
hand to you. I knew that eventually
you'd climb that tree without me.

FLORA

And I finally did. When it happened, I
was sad that you weren't there to see
it. Thank you.

(then)

I told Diomedes the story about the
tree. He doesn't understand it.

XENA

Maybe he just can't believe you ever
didn't have confidence in yourself.

(then)

Diomedes is in love with you.

FLORA

Yes. And I love him. I would do
anything for him.

XENA

And he would do anything for the Black
Wolf.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

31 CONTINUED: 4

31

XENA (cont'd)
(off her look)
Yes. I know who the Black Wolf is.

FLORA
The others thought you could be fooled.
I knew it was just a matter of time.
(then)
So, now what?

XENA
My plan hasn't changed. I'm still
getting you out of here.

With that, Xena stands and leaves her.

DISSOLVE TO:

32 INT. DUNGEON - DAY

32

ON XERXES' STAFF

The sun has moved MUCH closer now. Less than a foot away.

PARNASSUS

wobbles through the area, petting his Rock and mumbling to
himself. He is taken by some arguing:

GABRIELLE AND SALMONEUS

are having an argument.

SALMONEUS
I'm not going to do it! It sounds too
dangerous!

GABRIELLE
What is there to do? Xena wants us to
collect as many shirts as we can. We
wet them, use them as air-bladders, and
escape through the underwater river.
It's a great plan!

SALMONEUS
Great if you're a fish. Which I'm not.

GABRIELLE
You can always stay if you want.

SALMONEUS
The tough decisions always become
Salmoneus'. Okay, how many shorts?

(CONTINUED)

32 CONTINUED:

32

GABRIELLE
Ugh! Shirts, not shorts.

SALMONEUS
Whatever.

Parnassus pauses, then moves away to:

DUNGEON DOOR

Parnassus moves to the door, still playing with his Rock, though we can't see exactly what he is doing with it. He tosses his Rock at the door. It "KNOCKS" as it hits and rebounds into his hand. He does it again. Then, on purpose, he misses catching it, and it rolls toward the door. A hand grabs up the rock. Parnassus looks up to see Xena.

XENA
Sometimes the smartest place to hide is
out in the open.

She twists the rock and it separates, revealing a hollow core. Inside in a scrap of papyrus. As the Prisoners gather around them, Xena reads to Parnassus what's written on it:

XENA
Rebels escaping through underground
river.

Gabrielle and Salmoneus are in the crowd.

SALMONEUS
You shouldn't listen in on other
people's conversations.

GABRIELLE
It's not polite.

XENA
So, you're the traitor.

A BEAT as everyone looks to Parnassus. He stands upright, taking on an arrogant air.

PARNASSUS
I'm a spy. There's a difference.

The Prisoners close in on Parnassus, about to beat him to a pulp, when the door opens and a startled guard looks in at Parnassus.

PARNASSUS
They know. I'm coming out.

(CONTINUED)

32 CONTINUED: 2

32

With that, he exits. The door slams behind him.

CUT TO:

33 INT. KOULOS' OFFICE - DAY

33

Parnassus is slammed against the wall, his face a bloody mess. Koulos, wearing a metal glove, stands over him. The Chief Guard watches with mild amusement.

KOULOS

Why did you bother coming out? You should have let them beat you to death!

PARNASSUS

It wasn't... my fault...

KOULOS

And I'm supposed to take the blame?
Is that what you're saying?
(to Chief Guard)
How much time do we have left?

CHIEF GUARD

About an hour. Then Xerxes wants them all killed.

KOULOS

And us along with them, you can bet.
(thinking)
Of course, my threatened death does free my hands a bit. What do I have to lose now?

Off that, we:

CUT TO:

34 INT. DUNGEON - DAY - ON STAFF

34

The shaft of light is just shy of Xerxes' staff.

WIDER

The Dungeon door swings open and, backed by a platoon of Guards, Koulos storms inside. Everyone stands and faces him.

KOULOS

You're a defiant bunch, I'll give you that.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

34 CONTINUED:

34

KOULOS (cont'd)

I've threatened all of you Black Wolves individually and in groups and it makes no difference. Each one of you is ready to die for him.

(smiling)

Then it occurred to me that I had this wrong. You Wolves like to think of yourselves as the saviours of the little people. If that's the case, my threats have been misdirected.

(indicating Salmoneus)

Guards!

Four Guards grab Salmoneus while another Guard raises the (now metal) grate.

SALMONEUS

Wait! What are you doing? I can't swim!

KOULOS

Let's see how you react to the death of someone who isn't a Black Wolf.

SALMONEUS

But I am! I am a Black Wolf!

And Salmoneus starts HOWLING like a wolf.

Xena looks to Flora, who can only stare at the proceedings.

And they toss the frightened Salmoneus into the pit. The Guards slam the grate shut and lock it. A Guard presses the wood lever and the water starts flowing into the pit.

Flora turns to meet Xena's gaze. Almost silently:

XENA

Flora... do you have faith? Do you?

A beat, then Flora nods. Xena steps forward.

XENA

Koulos! Let him out. I'll give you what you want.

Koulos looks at her, then motions to the Guards. They open the grate and drag a sputtering Salmoneus out.

KOULOS

(to Xena)

Very well. Now, what is it I want?

(CONTINUED)

34 CONTINUED: 2

34

XENA

The Black Wolf. That's her.

She points to Flora. A shocked moment, then all the Wolves step forward and repeat variations of the phrase:

DIOMEDES

No! I'm the Black Wolf!

The sound is almost deafening. But, with a look to Xena, Flora steps forward.

FLORA

Stop it! STOP IT!!

Silence. Only the real Black Wolf could command such respect from these people. Flora steps up to Koulos.

FLORA

She's right. I am the Black Wolf.

DIOMEDES

No...!

FLORA

Quiet!!

A beat, then Koulos smiles.

KOULOS

Excellent!

The Guards grab her and drag her away. The rest of the Pack stares at Xena. But Xena's eyes are on Koulos, as we:

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

35 INT. XERXES' PALACE - DAY

35

Xerxes is quite pleased.

XERXES

This is wonderful. And just in time
for the feast.

XENA

So, you are going to execute The Black
Wolf in the open square?

XERXES

Of course! I didn't root her out just
to have her buried in a private
ceremony. This will be quite a
spectacle.

XENA

Glad I could help. Even happier when I
can get my payment....?

XERXES

Ah, yes. The ten thousand. It's
yours. And the boots. But, keep in
mind, I wasn't fooling when I mentioned
a possible position here.

XENA

And what about Koulos?

XERXES

Yes, Koulos... it should be interesting
to see how you deal with him. So, are
you staying or leaving?

XENA

And miss the execution of The Black
Wolf? I think not.

XERXES

I'd be honored if you would accompany
me.

She nods with a seductive smile, as we:

CUT TO:

36 INT. DUNGEON - DAY

36

The Rebels' wrists are chained, shackled to each other. Including Gabrielle, once again wearing her sunbonnet as she attempts to talk to Diomedes.

GABRIELLE

You have got to listen to me before it's too late.

DIOMEDES

There's nothing you could ever say that would make me think anything good about Xena!

GABRIELLE

How about the thought that this might be part of her plan to get you out of here?

He looks to her.

GABRIELLE

She said if you didn't believe me, I was to mention some oak tree that she and Flora used to play in.

DIOMEDES

(a beat)

Talk to me.

LONG SHOT

From across the Dungeon, we can SEE but CAN'T HEAR Gabrielle as she replies. We can see the Rebels' attitude change as they listen, watching Gabrielle as she raises her chained wrists high.

CUT TO:

37 EXT. VILLAGE SQUARE - DAY

37

A wood platform with a beheading block has been erected in the center of the square. The chained Wolf Pack, including Gabrielle and Salmoneus, are marched in under Guard. Salmoneus turns to Gabrielle:

SALMONEUS

But what happens if this works? I'm a salesman, not a warrior -- what do I know about fighting?

GABRIELLE

It's simple. See the pointy ends of those swordy things the guards are carrying? Stay away from them.

(CONTINUED)

37 CONTINUED:

37

SALMONEUS

Not amusing in the least.

In the square are Villagers come to see the spectacle. With much fanfare, Xerxes, accompanied by Xena, his four PERSONAL GUARDS and Koulos, takes his place on his throne. He is smiling, indulging in his victory. Then:

ON THE EXECUTION PLATFORM

Flora -- her wrists and legs heavily chained, dressed in the all-black cloak of The Black Wolf -- is dragged by two Guards onto the platform, where her chains are attached to the beheading block.

ON THE VIEWING PLATFORM

Xerxes stands and faces the Villagers.

XERXES

Citizens of Argos, we have come to a glorious day, a day when we can restore the order of law to our realm, where no longer will law-abiding citizens have to fear for their lives from rebellious acts of terror.

The Villagers stare at Xerxes stony-faced, until they're prodded by the Guards' spears, and they cheer listlessly.

XERXES

Carry out the execution!

ON THE EXECUTION PLATFORM

the EXECUTIONER raises his ax.

GABRIELLE

takes off her hat and throws it to Xena.

ON THE VIEWING PLATFORM

Xena grabs the hat and rips the chakram out of the brim and throws it at:

THE EXECUTIONERS AX

and slices it in half, throwing the Executioner off-balance as the blade of the heavy ax falls behind him, embedding in the platform, jagged handle up.

XENA

catches the chakram and fires it off again at:

(CONTINUED)

37 CONTINUED: 2

37

THE WOLF PACK

who, on cue, lift their chains high as the chakram rips through them, cutting them all free. With a howl, they leap into the attack.

ON XERXES

XERXES

Stop them! Kill them all!

Xerxes' Guards swarm the Village Square as he pulls his sword and swipes at Xena, who is already leaping to the executioner's block.

WIDER ON SCENE

Xena kicks the Executioner in the chest, knocking him off the platform into the crowd which starts beating him. Xena uses her chakram to chop into the chains holding Flora, freeing her. She looks to Gabrielle, who already has the whip out and tosses it to Xena. Meanwhile, Xerxes leaps onto the platform with Xena. He grabs up one of the chains and begins swinging it around him, a smile on his face.

XERXES

I owe Koulos an apology. One I will give him after I kill you!

And he swings the chain. Xena leaps out of the way as it swipes under her. A guard comes up behind her with a sword. She kicks at him, sending the sword sailing.

XENA

Diomedes!

And he grabs it with a look of appreciation, then rejoins the battle.

GABRIELLE

has grabbed up a staff and uses it as she knows how, knocking several of the guards here and there.

SALMONEUS

is doing his best to follow Gabrielle's suggestion: keep the pointy side of the swords away. He uses the Square as his defense, allowing the guards to chase him into obstacles.

FLORA

looks across the Square and sees Diomedes being threatened by one of the guards. With a yell, she runs and plants both feet into the guard's back, sending him reeling.

(CONTINUED)

37 CONTINUED: 3

37

XERXES AND XENA

Xerxes swings his chain again, barely missing Xena as she leaps off the platform into the crowd, turns around and finds a grinning Koulos.

KOULOS

This time, no one's acting!

With his massive sword, he tries to cleave Xena in half, but she snaps the whip, wrapping it around the wrist of his sword hand. Yanking on the whip, she forces him off-balance; the momentum of his swing drags him off the platform and he falls on his own sword, shish-kebab.

XERXES

And you won't make a comeback this time.

Then, the chain wraps around Xena's neck and pulls her upward. She grabs it, trying not to choke, as Xerxes uses all his might to suspend her in the air, hanging her. Xerxes hisses down at her.

XERXES

Look at me! I want to see into your eyes as you die!

Xena takes her chakram and throws it at the wall of the Square. It hits, it sparks, it ricochets, and comes right back to cut the chain! Xena drops to the ground. Xerxes, completely off balance, flies backward and lands on the jagged end of the ax handle. Dead on impact.

As Xena stands, the furious motion in the Square suddenly calms down. The guards, without their leader, run for it. The Wolves start howling! Flora looks to Xena with a grin. Diomedes takes a beat, then clasps arms with Xena.

DISSOLVE TO:

38 EXT. VILLAGE SQUARE - DAY

38

There is much merrymaking as relative calm seems to have returned to Argos. Flora and Diomedes are walking with Xena.

FLORA

We already have some people working in the government, so it won't be too difficult to turn things around.

(CONTINUED)

38 CONTINUED:

38

DIOMEDES

But we never would have gotten this far without your help. I was wrong about you.

XENA

No you weren't, Diomedes. You're a smart man. You knew why I was there. To get The Black Wolf. But, at the time, I didn't know it was Flora.

FLORA

How did you figure that out?

XENA

When Diomedes didn't want to hear my plan, he kept looking at you. A lot of the Wolves were doing that. It didn't take too long to notice that was the procedure. No decisions were made without a glance to The Black Wolf; you.

FLORA

You want to know something funny? All of this... you know what it means? It means you finally pulled me up into the tree.

Salmoneus and Gabrielle walk up, talking.

SALMONEUS

It's a perfect match! You write it and I'll publish it!

GABRIELLE

Stories like this aren't to be written, they're to be recited!

SALMONEUS

That's the old school of thought. Take my word for it, writing is going to be big one day.

(to Flora)

How about it? A whole series of scrolls entitled "The Black Wolf Conflicts"? I can draw up the papers immediately. Of course, I'll need all the Wolves to sign releases. And their cubs, if they have any.

XENA

Flora... someone wants to talk to you.

She indicates. Flora looks over to see:

(CONTINUED)

38 CONTINUED: 2

38

HERMIA

standing a little way off, -looking apprehensive.

WIDER

A BEAT, then Flora runs to her mother. They embrace and hold onto each other tightly.

BACK TO SCENE

Everyone is smiling. Salmoneus wipes his eyes.

GABRIELLE

Pretty touching, isn't it?

SALMONEUS

(nodding)

This ending alone will make us a fortune!

The rest of them give him a look. Except:

XENA

She is still focused on Flora and Hermia and the warm feeling she has inside of herself. Off this, we:

FADE OUT:

THE END