



"THE DEBT I & II"

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

**Teleplay by
R.J. Stewart**

**SEASON 3
EPISODE #6 & 7**

Prod. #V0406

XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"The Debt"

a.k.a.

"Betrayal"

Story by

Robert Tapert & R.J. Stewart

Teleplay by

R.J. Stewart

Directed by

Oley Sassone

Revised Pages: Cover, 1

Executive Producers
Sam Raimi & Robert Tapert

SHOOTING DRAFT
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Prod. #V0406 - 7/14/97 - Blue

XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"The Debt"

CAST LIST

XENA
GABRIELLE

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

*

* non-speaking

XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

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SET LIST

INTERIORS:

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

LAO'S PALACE - BATHING ROOM
 - DRESSING ROOM

CAVE

*

EXTERIORS:

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

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XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"The Debt"

CHRONOLOGY

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

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XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"The Debt"

*

TEASER

FADE IN:

1 EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

1

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

XENA

Gabrielle?

Xena stands and walks to:

2 EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT

2

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

XENA

Everything all right?

GABRIELLE

Oh, yeah. Just thinking.

(beat)

Thank you.

XENA

Me? For what.

GABRIELLE

You've stuck by me through everything.

XENA

Same thing coming right back at you.

GABRIELLE

I hope I never let you down, Xena.

XENA

Impossible.

GABRIELLE

Oh, I've learned anything's possible.

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

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED:

2

GABRIELLE

(softly)

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

XENA

I know. He's moving to our left.

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

AN ASIAN MESSENGER

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

MESSENGER

Xena?

XENA

Yes.

MESSENGER

I was sent by the Weak One...

Xena has a strong reaction to this.

MESSENGER

Who is soft as water and...

XENA

(says it simultaneously
with the Messenger)

...hard as the raging flood.

MESSENGER

...hard as the raging flood.

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

SIX CHINESE WARRIORS

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

ON XENA

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

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED: 2

2

A WARRIOR

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

ON GABRIELLE

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

ANOTHER WARRIOR

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

ONE LAST WARRIOR

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

ON XENA

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

XENA

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

MESSENGER

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

XENA

I'm listening.

MESSENGER

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

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED: 3

2

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

GABRIELLE
The Green Dragon? What --

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

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

*

XENA
This time's different.

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

GABRIELLE
What's so different about it?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED: 4

2

XENA

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

GABRIELLE

What's that?

Xena doesn't answer.

GABRIELLE

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

XENA

Nope.

GABRIELLE

Then is the Green Dragon a person?

XENA

Yeah. It's a person.

GABRIELLE

Well, which person?

XENA

The one I'm gonna kill.

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

3 INT. GENERAL STORE - DAY

3

Xena is shopping for a long trip.

GABRIELLE

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

XENA

That sums it up pretty well.

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

GABRIELLE

You can't do that.

XENA

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

*

GABRIELLE

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

XENA

You'll never understand.

Gabrielle is hurt.

GABRIELLE

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

XENA

(to the Shopkeeper)
How much for the lot?

SHOPKEEPER

Twenty dinars.

Xena reaches for her dinar pouch.

GABRIELLE

Hey, wait a minute.

(to the Shopkeeper)
Do we look stupid? Twenty dinars for this?

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED:

3

SHOPKEEPER

Fifteen?

GABRIELLE

(to Xena)

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

Xena throws twelve dinars on the counter.

XENA

Thanks, Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE

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

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

XENA

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

GABRIELLE

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

CLOSE ON XENA, as she shuffles through some memories.

XENA

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

CUT TO:

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

XENA'S VOICE

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

4 EXT. EVERYWHERE - ESTABLISHING SHOTS - DAY

4

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

(CONTINUED)

4 CONTINUED:

4

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

CUT TO:

5 EXT. PLAIN - DAY

5

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

ON BORIAS

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

THE BATTLE

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

ON BORIAS

as he eyes their surrender with satisfaction. But suddenly:

A FIERCE WARRIOR

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

THE SECOND SOLDIER

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

THE FIERCE WARRIOR

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

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED:

5

ON BORIAS

He rides between the Fierce Warrior and Second Soldier.

BORIAS

No. We don't slaughter them.

ON THE FIERCE WARRIOR

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

XENA

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

BORIAS

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

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

BORIAS

(to the Second Soldier)

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

XENA

Borias.

BORIAS

Yeah?

XENA

I want the dead.

BORIAS

The dead?

She nods toward the corpses.

XENA

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

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

BORIAS

Fine. Do what you will with them.

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED: 2

5

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

CUT TO:

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

6

It looks really cool.

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

7

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

XENA

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

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

XENA

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

She points toward:

MING'S PALACE

which is in view from the wall.

RESUME CHUANG AND XENA

CHUANG

Both families of Chin are very powerful.

XENA

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

CHUANG

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

(CONTINUED)

7 CONTINUED:

7

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

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

XENA
...kill them all.

CUT TO:

8 INT. BORIAS' YURT - DAY

8

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

BORIAS
(forcefully)
Sit down.

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

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

BORIAS
Quiet.

ON MING TZU

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

BORIAS

leaps to his feet and bows to Ming Tzu.

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

(CONTINUED)

8 CONTINUED:

8

MING TZU

Not at all, Borias.

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

MING TZU

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

BORIAS

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

MING TZU

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

(to Ming T'ien)

Remember that, Ming T'ien.

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

BORIAS

Have a seat.

MING TZU

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

BORIAS

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

MING TZU

One-half.

XENA

No deal.

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

MING TZU

This woman is in charge?

BORIAS

(half to Xena)

No, she's not.

(to Ming Tzu)

But your offer --

(CONTINUED)

8 CONTINUED: 2

8

MING TZU

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

Borias ponders this for a moment.

BORIAS

Half, huh?

XENA

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

MING TZU

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

BORIAS

Wait a minute. Don't listen to her.

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

BORIAS

Ming Tzu.

ON XENA

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

ON BORIAS AND XENA

as they face off against each other.

BORIAS

He's gone.

XENA

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

BORIAS

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

XENA

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

(CONTINUED)

8 CONTINUED: 3

8

BORIAS

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

XENA

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

BORIAS

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

XENA

Then I'd say --

GABRIELLE'S VOICE

Kill them all.

CUT TO:

9 EXT. TRAIL - DAY

9

Xena and Gabrielle both ride Argo along the trail.

XENA

Yeah. That's what I said.

GABRIELLE

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

XENA

We were quite a pair in those days.

GABRIELLE

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

*

XENA

You haven't heard the worst of it yet.

GABRIELLE

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

XENA

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

(CONTINUED)

9 CONTINUED:

9

GABRIELLE
Love? Sure it is.

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

GABRIELLE
Well?

XENA
Well what?

GABRIELLE
Whose love?

CUT TO:

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

10

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

WIDER TO REVEAL

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

CHUANG
Lao approaches.

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

XENA
Let him wait.

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

XENA
Don't be so sure.

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

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

He gallops off.

XENA
Run to your master, puppy.

CUT TO:

11 EXT. BORIAS' YURT - DAY

11

Borias gallops up just as:

A LITTER

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

BORIAS

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

The curtain covering the canopy is pushed aside revealing:

LAO MA

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

ON XENA

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

ON LAO MA

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

LAO MA

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

BORIAS

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

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

LAO MA

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

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

LAO MA

You must be Xena.

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED:

11

XENA
You heard of me?

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

XENA
Well, they're right.

Lao Ma smiles a serene smile as she eyes Xena.

BORIAS
You have nothing to fear, Lao Ma.
(flashes a warning look at Xena)
We will negotiate in honor and with fairness.
(back to Lao Ma)
I hope we'll find common ground on which to stand.

CUT TO:

12 INT. BORIAS' YURT - NIGHT

12

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

ON XENA

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

ON LAO MA AND BORIAS

as they stare in shock at Xena.

ON LAO MA'S HAND

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

ON XENA AND LAO MA

(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED:

12

XENA

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

She picks up the chop and bites into it.

LAO MA

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

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

ON XENA

She becomes uncomfortable and exits.

CUT TO:

13 INT. LAO MA'S YURT - NIGHT

13

Lao Ma is shown in by Borias.

BORIAS

I apologize for this simple dwelling.

*

LAO MA

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

BORIAS

What we talked about tonight will benefit us both.

LAO MA

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

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

XENA

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

*

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

14 EXT. COUNTRY ROAD #1 - DAY

14

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

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

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

GABRIELLE
Then why...?

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

They walk on a few strides.

GABRIELLE
And did you kill her?

ON XENA'S FACE

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

CUT TO:

15 INT. LAO MA'S YURT - NIGHT

15

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

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

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

ON LAO MA

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED:

15

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

*
*
*
*
*
*
*

15A EXT. LAO MA'S YURT - NIGHT

15A*

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

*
*
*
*
*

ON BORIAS

He rushes up to Lao Ma.

*

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

*
*
*

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

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

He exits. We stay on a thoughtful Xena.

GABRIELLE'S VOICE
So what did she say?

CUT TO:

16 EXT. COUNTRY ROAD #1 - DAY

16

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

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

(CONTINUED)

16 CONTINUED:

16

XENA

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

(CONTINUED)

16 CONTINUED: 2

16

GABRIELLE

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

XENA

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

GABRIELLE

How were you going to do that?

XENA

By appealing to his sense of family values.

CUT TO:

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

17

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

MING TZU

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

(to the Soldiers)

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

He exits.

ON MING T' IEN

as he reacts to the sounds outside.

ON A LARGE WINDOW

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

*
*
*
*

(CONTINUED)

17 CONTINUED:

17

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

SOLDIER
What do you want to know?

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

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

*
*

CUT TO:

18 INT. CAVE - DAY

18

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

BORIAS
You're insane.

XENA
And you're scared. Why is that?

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

XENA
Ming and Lao together?

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

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

BORIAS
Where's the child?!

Xena CHUCKLES and throws a look toward Chuang.

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED:

18

XENA

Hey, Chuang. He expects me to tell him.

Chuang joins in the LAUGHTER. Xena eyes Borias.

XENA

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

She smiles triumphantly at Borias.

CUT TO:

19 INT. BORIAS' YURT - DAY

19

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

XENA

(to Chuang)

Check the gold.

(to Ming Tzu)

You got a smart kid. Of course, he got a lot smarter when he was with me.

CHUANG

It's all here.

BORIAS

You saw the horses?

XENA

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

MING TZU

The boy!

XENA

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

*

(CONTINUED)

19 CONTINUED:

19

Ming Tzu rushes out.

XENA
(gives Borias a wink)
Nice, huh?

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

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

ON CHUANG

as he gives her a vicious kick to the head.

ON XENA AND THE OTHERS

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

BORIAS
As promised.

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

Borias looks down at the groggy Xena.

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

CUT TO:

20 EXT. PORT - DAY

20

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

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

XENA
Yes.

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED:

20

GABRIELLE

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

XENA

I know what you mean.

GABRIELLE

You're going through with this killing?

XENA

Yes.

Gabrielle nods, sadly.

GABRIELLE

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

XENA

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

GABRIELLE

Ming?

Xena doesn't answer.

GABRIELLE

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

Xena gives Gabrielle a sweet and forgiving smile.

XENA

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

*

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

GABRIELLE

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

Silence for a moment, then:

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED: 2

20

XENA

Yes.

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

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

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

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

CUT TO:

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

A CHAINED XENA

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

MING T' IEN

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

ON LAO MA'S LITTER

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

MING TZU

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

LAO MA

Perfect for what?

MING TZU

Her.

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

(CONTINUED)

23 CONTINUED:

23

LAO MA

You plan to hunt her?

MING TZU

Yes. My men have the hounds already in place.

(to Ming T'ien)

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

Ming T'ien isn't so sure.

LAO MA

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

She walks up to Ming T'ien.

LAO MA

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

She holds out the cloth.

LAO MA

I made it myself.

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

LAO MA

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

MING TZU

No. But it will be entertaining.

CUT TO:

24 EXT. WOODS - DAY INTO NIGHT

24

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

THE HOUNDS (STOCK)

give pursuit.

ON XENA

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED:

24

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

ON MING T' IEN AND MING TZU

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

*
*

MING TZU

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

*
*
*

ON MING T' IEN

*

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

*
*

XENA'S POV

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

DIFFERENT ANGLE

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

LAO MA

Come with me if you wish your freedom.

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

THE LEAD HOUNDS

explode into the thicket.

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

LAO MA

(to Xena)

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

Xena follows Lao Ma for a few steps.

XENA

Why are you doing this?

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED: 2

24

LAO MA

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

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

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED: 2

24

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

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

CUT TO:

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

25

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

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

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

MING TZU
(to the Guards)
Search the room.

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

DIFFERENT ANGLE

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

LAO MA
Now, if you could respect my privacy.

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

ON LAO MA

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

ON XENA

Clearly she hasn't much breath left.

ON MING TZU

He turns back suddenly.

(CONTINUED)

25 CONTINUED:

25

LAO MA

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

UNDERWATER

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

ON LAO MA AND MING TZU

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

MING TZU

You better not be hiding her.

LAO MA

(ever so sweetly)

My Lord, I would never hide what is yours.

MING TZU

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

LAO MA

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

MING TZU

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

LAO MA

Like water.

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

LAO MA

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

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

CUT TO:

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

26*

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

CLOSE ON A BOWL OF DARK OIL

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

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

DIFFERENT ANGLE

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

*

CUT TO:

27 EXT. FOREST EDGE - NIGHT

27*

Xena creeps out of the forest and stares at:

28 EXT. MING'S PALACE - NIGHT

28*

It sits in front of Xena.

ON XENA

She looks determined, ready to kill.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

29 EXT. MING'S PALACE - NIGHT

29*

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

ON THE MOAT

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

CUT TO:

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

30

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

CUT TO:

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

31*

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

CLOSE ON XENA

as she moves down the corridor.

CUT TO:

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

32

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

CUT TO:

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

33*

Xena edges down the corridor.

34 INT. LAO'S PALACE - DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT 34

Xena sits on a chair as Lao Ma combs Xena's hair.

CUT TO:

35 INT. MING'S PALACE - BIRDCAGE CORRIDOR - NIGHT 35

Xena makes her way down the corridor. *

36 EXT. COUNTRY ROAD #2 - DAY 36

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

ON LAO MA

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

LAO MA

I must go. Enjoy your entertainment.

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

MING TZU

(to Ming T'ien)

You could have at least looked at her gift.

Ming T'ien shrugs indifferently.

MING TZU

(to the Soldier)

Let me see.

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

MING TZU

Ah, she knows my nickname for you.

(to the Soldier)

Show it to him.

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

(CONTINUED)

36 CONTINUED:

36

CLOSE ON A GREEN DRAGON
looking sad.

CUT TO:

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

37*

Xena moves down the corridor.

*

THE CORRIDOR - XENA'S POV

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

ON XENA

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

CLIP - FROM EARLIER IN THIS SHOW

CLOSE ON Gabrielle as she says:

GABRIELLE

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

RESUME SCENE

Xena continues to edge toward the candle.

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

RESUME SCENE

Xena gets ever so close to that candle.

CLIP MONTAGE - QUICK CUTS FROM PREVIOUS EPISODES:

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

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

CLIP - "DEATH IN CHAINS" - XENA LIBERATING DEATH

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

MORE LIKE THIS.

(CONTINUED)

37 CONTINUED:

37

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

RESUME SCENE

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

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

38*

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

ON THE BED

A figure lies sleeping under the blankets.

ON XENA

She's ready to strike.

ON THE FIGURE

It moves.

ON XENA

She goes to strike.

ON THE FIGURE

The blankets are thrown off to reveal GABRIELLE.

ON XENA

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

GUARDS

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

ON GABRIELLE

GABRIELLE

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

CLOSE ON A GREEN DRAGON

(CONTINUED)

38 CONTINUED:

38

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

WIDER TO SHOW MING T'IEN

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

*

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

ON XENA

As she stares in shock at Gabrielle, we:

FADE OUT.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

THE END

Prod. #V0407

XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"The Debt II"

a.k.a.

"The Debt"

Story by

Robert Tapert & R.J. Stewart

Teleplay by

R.J. Stewart

Directed by

Oley Sassone

Revised Pages: Cover, 1

Executive Producers
Sam Raimi & Robert Tapert

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

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

XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"The Debt II"

CAST LIST

XENA
GABRIELLE

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

*

* non-speaking

XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"The Debt II"

SET LIST

INTERIORS:

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

*

EXTERIORS:

BORIAS' YURT
COURTYARD

FOREST

*
*
*
*

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

XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"The Debt II"

CHRONOLOGY

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

*

*

*

XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"The Debt II"

*

TEASER

FADE IN:

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

CUT TO:

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

1

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

GABRIELLE'S VOICE

I want to see Xena.

WIDER TO SHOW

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

MING T'IEN

That would be impossible.

GABRIELLE

Why?

MING T'IEN

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

(CONTINUED)

1 CONTINUED:

1

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

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

CUT TO:

2 INT. PRISON - DAY - ON XENA

2

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

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

XENA
No, not by a friend.

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

GUARD
Throw her in.

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

A DARK CAVERNOUS PIT

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

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

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

3

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

THE WATERY PRISON - XENA'S POV

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

ON XENA

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

JIU

This one's mine.

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

*
*

ON THE OTHER PRISONERS

They liked that!

ON XENA

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

CUT TO:

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

4

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

GABRIELLE

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

MING T'IEN

It would take more than that.

GABRIELLE

Xena wouldn't go back on her promise.

MING T'IEN

Of course, she would.

GABRIELLE

(trying a more forceful approach)

I want to see her!

MING T'IEN

Out of the question.

GABRIELLE

You told me I could have anything in your kingdom.

MING T'IEN

Except that.

GABRIELLE

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

MING T'IEN

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

GABRIELLE

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

MING T'IEN

(suddenly cruelly intense)

I know her!!!

(mellows)

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

(CONTINUED)

4 CONTINUED:

4

GABRIELLE

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

MING T'IEN

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

GABRIELLE

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

*

*

MING T'IEN

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

*

CUT TO:

5 INT. CAVE - DAY

5

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

XENA

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

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

XENA

Pretty scary, huh?

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

MING T'IEN'S VOICE

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

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

FOOTSTEPS draw Xena's attention to:

CHUANG

who enters, looking concerned.

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED:

5

XENA
What is it?

CHUANG
Borias. He's riding this way.

XENA
With how many men?

CHUANG
He's alone.

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

ON XENA - MING T'IEN'S POV

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

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

*
*
*
*

CUT TO:

6 OMITTED

6*

7 OMITTED

7

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

8

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

MING T'IEN

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

CUT TO:

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

XENA

Chuang. Move out the gold.

MING TZU

The boy!

XENA

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

*

Ming Tzu rushes out.

9 EXT. BORIAS' YURT - DAY

9

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

CUT TO:

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

10

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

GABRIELLE

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

Ming T'ien's look hardens.

MING T'IEN

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

GABRIELLE

Where is he now?

MING T'IEN

(indifferently)

Dead.

(smiles cheerfully)

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

*

He holds up a glass of rice wine.

ON GABRIELLE

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

CUT TO:

11 INT. WATERY PRISON - ETERNAL NIGHT

11

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

XENA

What do you want, Old Man?

JIU

He's offering you his shirt.

XENA

(to the Old Man)

I don't want your clothes.

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

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED:

11

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

XENA
(to Jiu)
What are they doing?

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

XENA
For what?

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

XENA
They like that, huh?

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

XENA
Where are you from?

JIU
The Kingdom of Lao.

XENA
Lao? You know of Lao Ma then?

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

XENA
When did you last see her?

We CLOSE ON JIU'S FACE as he recalls:

CUT TO:

12 EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

12

Lao Ma is escorted into the courtyard by ARMED GUARDS.

ON JIU

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

(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED:

12

ON LAO MA

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

ON THE SMALLER TABLE

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

ASSORTED TOOLS

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

*

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

*

*

CUT TO:

13 OMITTED

13*

14 INT. WATERY PRISON - ETERNAL NIGHT

14

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

XENA

Who ordered the execution?

JIU

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

XENA

No. Her powers were real.

CUT TO:

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

15

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

LAO MA

Would you kill a mosquito with an axe?

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

A CROW HAIR BROOCH

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

ON LAO MA AND XENA

LAO MA

This is very beautiful.

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED:

15

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

ON THE TABLE

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

XENA

Amazing.

LAO MA

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

XENA

You could kill someone with a hair
brooch?

LAO MA

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

XENA

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

Lao Ma studies Xena curiously.

LAO MA

You're so full of anger and hate.

XENA

Everybody's got to be full of
something.

LAO MA

Put up another bottle.

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

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

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

XENA

Teach me how to do that.

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

LAO MA

Well, try it.

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED: 2

15

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

LAO MA

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

XENA

What else is there?

LAO MA

Exactly.

XENA

What?

LAO MA

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

XENA

How do I do that?

LAO MA

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

XENA

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

LAO MA

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

XENA

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

LAO MA

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

XENA

Ming Tzu?

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED: 3

15

LAO MA

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

*

XENA

Serve Ming? I'd rather die.

*

LAO MA

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

FADE OUT.

*

END OF ACT I

*

ACT II

FADE IN:

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

16

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

A ROW OF SERVING GIRLS

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

ON LAO MA

She greets Ming Tzu and Ming T'ien.

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

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

LAO MA
Welcome, Ming T'ien.

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

LAO MA
Dinner awaits, Ming Tzu.

CUT TO:

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

17

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

LAO MA

So Borias is still a problem.

ON XENA

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

MING TZU

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

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

MING TZU

Be careful, you idiot.

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

MING TZU'S NECK - XENA'S POV

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

ON LAO MA

She studies Xena with great interest.

ON MING T' IEN

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

ON MING TZU AND XENA

Xena stands behind him holding the knife.

MING TZU

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

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

(CONTINUED)

17 CONTINUED:

17

ON MING T' IEN

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

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

MING TZU

Is something the matter, Son?

*

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

*

CUT TO:

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

18

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

MING TZU

Goodbye, Lao Ma.

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

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED:

18

*

XENA

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

LAO MA

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

XENA

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

LAO MA

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

CUT TO:

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

19

A SLEEPING MAN lies still in the master bed.

*

LAO MA

My husband.

WIDER TO REVEAL

*

Xena and Lao Ma standing by the bed.

*

XENA

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

*

*

*

(CONTINUED)

19 CONTINUED:

19

LAO MA

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

*
*
*

XENA

So you rule in his name.

LAO MA

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

(nods affectionately toward
her husband)

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

XENA

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

LAO MA

Not at all, as long as good is done.

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

XENA

You write down all of that wisdom
stuff?

LAO MA

Yes. In his book.

XENA

You give him credit for that, too?

LAO MA

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

*

(CONTINUED)

19 CONTINUED: 2

19

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

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

XENA
He's your son?

Off Lao Ma's peaceful smile:

GABRIELLE'S VOICE
What are you doing?!

CUT TO:

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

20

A hand slaps her across the face.

WIDER TO SHOW

Gabrielle is the one who slapped her.

GABRIELLE
Xena, say it!

DIFFERENT ANGLE

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

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

ON XENA'S FACE

She ain't in the promising mood.

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

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED:

20

WE CLOSE ON XENA'S FACE AND HER MEMORIES:

CUT TO:

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

21

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

ON XENA

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

ON LAO MA

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

LAO MA

Come to me, Xena. Now.

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

ON LAO MA

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

ON LAO MA AND XENA

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

CUT TO:

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

22

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

MING T'IEN

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

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED:

22

GABRIELLE

Xena!

Xena remains silent, her mind years away.

MING T'IEN

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

ON GABRIELLE

She's horrified at the consequences of her actions.

ON XENA

She seems oblivious to her surroundings.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

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

23

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

MING T'IEN

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

GABRIELLE

Can I see her?

MING T'IEN

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

CUT TO:

24 INT. WATERY PRISON - ETERNAL NIGHT

24

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

GUARD'S VOICE

Scream when you want out.

LAUGHTER COMES FROM ABOVE. Gabrielle looks around and spots:

XENA

sitting on her ledge. Gabrielle approaches.

GABRIELLE

Xena. Can we talk?

Xena remains distant and cold.

GABRIELLE

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

Xena doesn't budge.

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED:

24

GABRIELLE

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

Xena stirs for the first time when she hears that.

GABRIELLE

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

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

XENA

Scratch my nose, will ya?

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

ON THE OTHER PRISONERS

as they watch this reunion.

ON XENA AND GABRIELLE

Xena kisses Gabrielle's forehead.

XENA

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

GABRIELLE

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

XENA

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

CUT TO:

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

25

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

(CONTINUED)

25 CONTINUED:

25

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

ON XENA

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

BORIAS - XENA'S UPSIDE-DOWN POV

He's just entered the room.

ON XENA

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

LAO MA

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

*

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

LAO MA

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

XENA'S VOICE

That was the moment.

CUT TO:

26 INT. WATERY PRISON - ETERNAL NIGHT

26

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

XENA

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

(CONTINUED)

26 CONTINUED:

26

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

CUT TO:

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

27

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

ON LAO MA

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

ON XENA

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

LAO MA

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

*

LAO MA

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

CUT TO:

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

28

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

*

*

XENA

What's he doing here?

LAO MA

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

XENA

You got to be kidding.

LAO MA

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

(CONTINUED)

28 CONTINUED:

28

XENA

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

LAO MA

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

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

She walks over to Xena.

LAO MA

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

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

ON BORIAS

A wry, sexy smirk drifts onto his face.

ON XENA

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

GABRIELLE'S VOICE

So you and Borias made up?

XENA'S VOICE

(sadly)

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

CUT TO:

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

29

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

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

(CONTINUED)

29 CONTINUED:

29

MING TZU

(to Lao Ma)

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

LAO MA

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

MING TZU

To have the treaty I must forgive her?

Lao Ma nods modestly, but clearly she means business.

MING TZU

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

XENA

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

MING TZU

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

BORIAS

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

LAO MA

And I was fortunate enough to save her.

XENA

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

CUT TO:

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

30

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

(CONTINUED)

30 CONTINUED:

30

MING TZU

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

Xena darts a look at Ming Tzu and smiles.

XENA

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

Ming Tzu stares at Xena.

MING TZU

What do you mean?

XENA

A body part. Minimum bet is a hand.

BORIAS

I'm in.

Ming Tzu throws a look at Lao Ma.

LAO MA

I don't want anyone's body part.

XENA

(oozing with sarcasm)

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

(to Ming Tzu)

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

MING TZU

Fine. All on one throw.

XENA

You got it.

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

XENA

I win!

(to Ming Tzu)

Pay up.

LAO MA

This is ridiculous.

(CONTINUED)

30 CONTINUED: 2

30

XENA
I want a piece of him!!!

MING TZU
You're crazy.

BORIAS
Then you're not gonna pay up?

MING TZU
Are you?

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

Xena CHUCKLES.

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

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

He stands.

MING TZU
Ming T'ien!!

ON MING T'IEN

He enters from the other room where he was playing.

MING TZU
We're leaving this madhouse.

Xena grabs Ming Tzu's sword from his side.

XENA
Not until I've collected my winnings.
She plunges the sword deep into Ming Tzu's heart.

ON MING T'IEN

He watches in horror at his father's death.

ON LAO MA

She SCREAMS her anger at Xena.

(CONTINUED)

30 CONTINUED: 3

30

ON BORIAS

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

ON XENA

XENA
(to Borias)
Now for the kid.

Lao Ma moves between Xena and Ming T'ien.

LAO MA
What are you doing?

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

ON LAO MA

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

*

31 INT. WATERY PRISON - ETERNAL NIGHT

31

CONTINUE CLOSE ON XENA'S HAIR

*

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

*

*

*

*

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

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

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

31 CONTINUED:

31

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

WE HEAR THE SOUND OF THE DOOR being opened.

JIU'S VOICE
It's time, Xena.

*
*

Off Xena's sad face, we:

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

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

32

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

ON MING T'IEN

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

ON XENA

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

CUT TO:

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

33

CLOSE ON LAO MA

LAO MA

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

CUT TO:

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

34

She looks sad and powerless.

ON THE EXECUTIONER

He enters and approaches the table.

ON MING T'IEN

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

ON XENA

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

CUT TO:

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

35

CLOSE ON LAO MA

LAO MA

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

CUT TO:

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

36

THE EXECUTIONER

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

THE TOOLS OF TORTURE

we saw earlier at Lao Ma's execution.

ON XENA

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

CUT TO:

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

37

CLOSE ON LAO MA

LAO MA

...stop desiring...

CUT TO:

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

38

The hacksaw is being lowered toward her head.

ON GABRIELLE

She can't watch.

ON MING T'IEN

He can't tear his eyes away.

ON XENA

She remains ever so still.

CUT TO:

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

39

LAO MA
...stop hating.

CUT TO:

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

40

The saw touches her scalp.

ON THE EXECUTIONER

He looks up at Ming T'ien.

ON MING T' IEN

He gives the go-ahead nod.

*

CUT TO:

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

41

CLOSE ON LAO MA

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

CUT TO:

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

42

Suddenly, a peaceful smile comes onto her lips, a smile
not unlike Lao Ma's. She opens her eyes.

*

DIFFERENT ANGLE

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

ON XENA'S CHAINS

(CONTINUED)

42 CONTINUED:

42

Suddenly, they break apart and Xena pulls herself free.

ON GABRIELLE

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

ON MING T'IEN

His face goes from enthusiastic glee to angry horror.

ON XENA

She starts throwing energy around like a Russian nuclear plant.

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

A SEQUENCE OF DESTRUCTION SHOTS:

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

ON GABRIELLE

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

*

ON XENA

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

*
*

MING T'IEN

*

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

*
*

Xena turns toward him.

*

GABRIELLE

*
*

Xena, let's go.

(CONTINUED)

42 CONTINUED: 2

42

*

MING T'IEN

Xena, I have something to tell you.

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

*
*

XENA

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

*
*
*

GABRIELLE

Xena, are you --

*

XENA

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

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

*

XENA

Say it.

MING T'IEN

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

(CONTINUED)

43 CONTINUED: 2

43

XENA

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

(beat)

Is that all?

MING T'IEN

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

XENA

Yeah?

MING T'IEN

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

XENA

Really?

MING T'IEN

(suddenly a fiendish laugh)

I did it myself.

He CACKLES in delight as he remembers the execution.

MING T'IEN

I cut her up good, Xena.

Xena watches him LAUGH for another moment. Then:

XENA

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

MING T'IEN

What's that?

XENA

Lao Ma was your mother.

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

MING T'IEN

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

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

(CONTINUED)

42 CONTINUED: 4

42

MING T'IEN

I think this belongs to you.

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

MING T'IEN

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

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

MING T'IEN

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

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

CUT TO:

43 OMITTED

43*

44 EXT. FOREST - DAY

44*

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

*
*

CUT TO:

45 INT. RUINS OF MING'S PALACE - DAY

45*

Gabrielle enters and sees:

*

XENA

*

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

*
*

XENA

*

(to Ming T'ien)

*

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

*
*
*
*

(CONTINUED)

45 CONTINUED:

45

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

*
*

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

*
*
*
*

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

*

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

XENA
Just a memento of Lao Ma.

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

XENA
I love you too, Gabrielle.

They exit.

*

ON MING T'IEN

*

He sits in stoney silence.

*

WE MOVE AROUND HIM

*

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

*
*

FADE OUT.

THE END