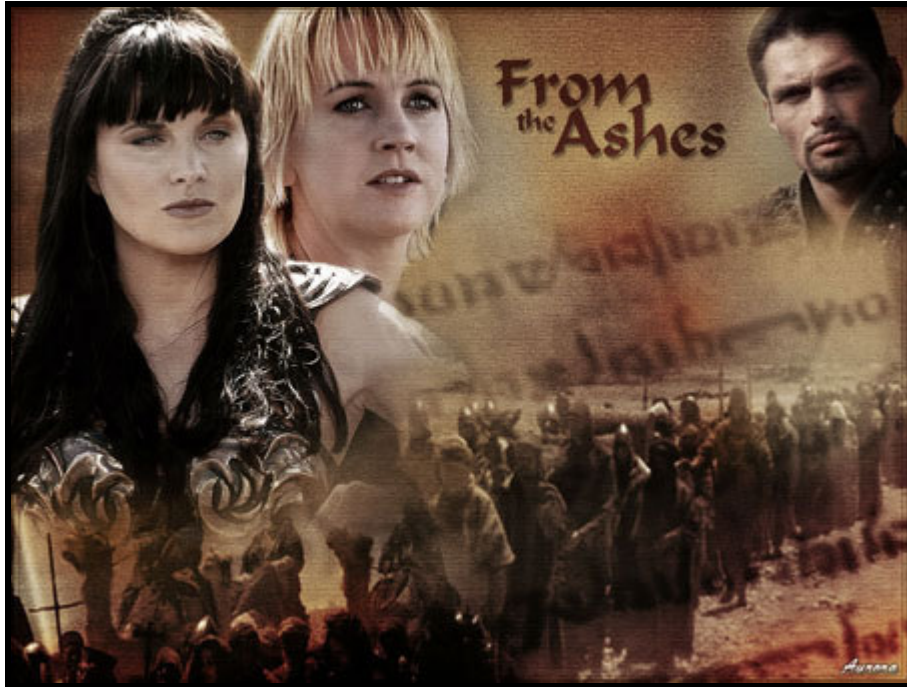


THE SHIPPER SEASONS

XENA WARRIOR PRINCESS VIRTUAL SEASON TEN



Production #XWP203/SS69
Episode #10.01

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Logline

After Jerusalem falls to the Romans, Xena and Gabrielle face the difficult task of leading Israelite refugees to safety while trying to rescue those taken captive by the Romans. With the help of some old friends, Xena is determined to save the Israelites and succeed where she has failed them once before.

Airdate

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TEASER

FADE IN

Previously on Xena...

[MONTAGE]

* Xena and Ares on the docks.

XENA:

I'll see you in the fall.

* A ship sailing toward Jerusalem.

* A busy street in Jerusalem.

XENA:

So, tell me more about this Bar-Giora. Doesn't he want freedom from the Romans, just as you do?

JOHN (with sudden vehemence):

He doesn't want freedom! He wants to rid us of the Romans, yes--but only to put us under the tyranny of fanatics like himself.

* The Sicarii warriors fighting Xena.

* Xena and Gabrielle talking with Josephus.

XENA (emphatic):

Josephus, the way things are going now--the people who seek freedom for this land will kill each other before the Romans even get here.

* Xena and Gabrielle traveling on horseback through the desert.

XENA:

It isn't about betrayal, Gabrielle. It's about survival.

* The Romans attack Josephus' garrison. Sabina and Titus are on horseback side by side.

* Josephus and his men are trapped by the Romans in tunnels under the fortress. They pray.

JOHN:

Israelites, even those like Bar-Giora and his lot, would never desecrate their temple like that. Only an outsider would think such a thing.

* Bar-Giora takes over the Temple by force.

* Xena, John and Gabrielle are shocked to see Josephus alive, and as a messenger for the Romans.

GABRIELLE:

The shortages are starting to get worse. I don't know how much longer the food is going to hold out.

* Xena helps put out the fire in the granary.

GABRIELLE (agitated):

Cleansing fire... I can't believe this is what they meant. Taking the food away from their own people to make them more desperate?

* Josephus approaches Gabrielle.

JOSEPHUS:

The offer--is for you to leave the city unharmed.

GABRIELLE:

You mean--

JOSEPHUS:

Safe passage back to Greece. For you *and* Xena.

GABRIELLE:

The answer is no.

* Xena and Gabrielle in an argument

XENA:

Gabrielle--you know how worried I am about you and Darion and-- Your staying here and risking your life won't do them any good

* Xena battles alongside John and the other Israelites against the Romans.

* Gabrielle goes into labor.

* Inside the city walls, Darion runs up to Xena.

DARION (out of breath and terrified):

It's Gabrielle. She's--

* All color drains from Xena's face.

* Xena runs off, following Darion.

* Gabrielle gives birth

GABRIELLE:

I'm going to call him Samuel.

* A piece of the wall of Jerusalem collapses as the Romans look on.

* Outside the temple.

SABINA:

Burn it.

* The Romans rampage through Jerusalem.

* Outside the city walls, Xena and Gabrielle (holding her baby) sit watching as Jerusalem burns.

[END MONTAGE]

A vast, dry landscape. A dust storm forms and swirls over the ground.



In the distance, a rider is visible on the back of a large black horse, galloping fast across the sand. The camera zooms in on the rider, who is seen from the back; he is wearing a black cloak and a hood.

CUT TO



Jerusalem, near one of the city gates. Buildings destroyed by fire lie in ruins--nothing but death and destruction where a city full of life had once thrived. A long convoy of Israelite prisoners, their hands and feet chained, is led out of the gate, guarded by armed Roman soldiers.

The camera pans to Sabina who is surveying this scene, seated regally on a horse. She wears her bronze armor, a red cape draping her back, her head held high as she watches the prisoners being led away.

DISSOLVE TO

A commotion off-camera gets Sabina's attention. She whips around, then rides toward a half-ruined building and turns its corner. She sees five Roman soldiers fighting a cloaked man who is doing an impressive job of sparring with them and repelling them with powerful kicks and swings of his sword. We still don't see his face; the soldiers are partly blocking him from view and he is spinning around rapidly as he spars.

SABINA:

What is going on?

Her voice causes the fight to halt for a moment. Two of the Romans manage to grab the man by the arms, but he struggles free and gets in a few more good kicks, causing the Romans to stagger backwards. They charge again. Pan to Sabina, a sudden look of recognition on her face. She grins a little.

SABINA (commanding):
Stop!

The soldiers turn. Sabina dismounts and walks toward them.

SABINA:
What did he do?

ROMAN SOLDIER (panting):
Caught him riding around the city like he *owns* the place!

Sabina gestures for the soldiers to step back and they obey.

The camera pans to the cloaked man, who is standing with his back to Sabina. The hood of his cloak has slipped off. He turns around. It's Ares.

SABINA:
Didn't think I'd find *you* here.

Ares looks at her and notices the insignia on her armor. He flashes her a sarcastic grin.



ARES:
I could say the same to you. Valeria Sabina--a Roman general. My, my, you've moved up in the world.

SABINA:
And you've moved down, haven't you. Rumor has it, you're mortal. (pause) And by the looks of it... (she looks him up and down, shaking a disapproving nod at his slightly scruffy appearance) ...I'd say rumor is right. What happened?

ARES (holds her stare confidently):
Lots of things.

SABINA (crosses her arms, mocking):
You mean, Xena. (off his silent stare) So...you've traveled all this way to find her. (sarcastic) Such noble devotion. Pity you're too late.

Close-up on Ares' face. He stares at Sabina in shock and alarm.

SABINA (continues, casually):
She escaped when the city was taken.

Ares breathes an obvious sigh of relief.

SABINA (continues):

If she hadn't been so distracted by Gabrielle--who knows, she might have saved the day for the Israelites. Of course, she would have only been postponing the inevitable. (confident, with a touch of arrogance) Rome would still prevail in the end.

ARES:

Spoken like a true Roman. (pause) Enjoy your spoils.

He sheathes his sword and walks over to his horse, who stands by one of the ruined buildings. He takes the reins and mounts, looking back at Sabina.

ARES (continues):

I've got a Warrior Princess to find.

He rides off through the gate as Sabina looks on.

ROMAN SOLDIER:

You just let him leave?

SABINA (after a moment's pause):

He's no threat to us here.

DISSOLVE TO

The dusty, desert landscape. A large caravan of dozens of people are traveling across the sand, the strong, harsh wind pushing against them, whipping up dust around them. Some are carrying packs and baskets, most of them are walking, some are riding horses. There is the occasional goat with them.



Amongst the group, Gabrielle (who is wearing her brown leather outfit again) and Darion are riding horses. Darion is riding his own horse, beside Gabrielle. Gabrielle is riding with Samuel who is resting securely in a sling hanging over her shoulder, attached to her front. Xena is walking beside Gabrielle's horse, her hand on the reigns, guiding the horse along. She glances up at Gabrielle and they share a brief, tender smile.

DISSOLVE TO



A tilted view of a towering Ionic-style column. Pan down where many other columns lie scattered at its base, some fallen and broken into many pieces, half-buried by sand, others half-leaning against each other. Stone slabs are scattered over the sand, and the foundations of many ancient stone buildings line a small but noticeable walkway. The remains of tall, imposing arches tower over portions of the walkway. The ground is barren, no trees in sight, but the ancient ruins provide plenty of shade from the blazing sun.

DISSOLVE TO

Gabrielle is sitting beneath a group of large fallen columns in the shade. Her pack is lying on the dirt. She holds her baby in her arms gently, breastfeeding him. Samuel coos while he feeds.



The expression on her face is one of tenderness but also a touch of worry. Naomi is sitting some distance from Gabrielle next to a pile of ruins staring into the distance, thoughtfully.



The large group of Israelites have spread themselves out throughout the ruins, resting.

Darion walks up, looking around.

DARION:

Look at this place...

NAOMI (smiles a little):

These are the ruins of the great, ancient city of Jericho.

Gabrielle nods slowly.

GABRIELLE (almost to herself):

The ruins of a great city...

Xena walks into view. She looks tired and discouraged.

GABRIELLE:

Couldn't find anything?

XENA (shakes head):

There's not much to hunt out here.

GABRIELLE:

At least we have enough grain to last us for a while--until we reach Petra.

Xena walks over to Gabrielle's pack and sifts through it, finding the waterskin. She takes a deep drink as she sits down beside Gabrielle.

XENA (nods toward Samuel):

How's he doing?

GABRIELLE:

He's a hungry little guy.

Xena smiles; she looks rather preoccupied. Darion walks toward them and holds out some dried figs to Gabrielle.

DARION:

Here, take these.

GABRIELLE (shakes her head):

No, they're supposed to be for you.

DARION (insistent):

You need them more. You need your strength... (nods toward Samuel) ...for him.

He holds out the figs and finally, Gabrielle takes them.

GABRIELLE:

Thank you... (smiles a little) for taking care of me.

DARION:

Sure. I'll go look for some firewood.

Gabrielle hesitates. She looks at Xena, who nods her approval, then turns toward Darion.

GABRIELLE:

All right--just stay close.

DARION (nods):

I will.

Darion walks off. Gabrielle and Xena watch him for a long moment until he disappears behind a row of fallen stones.

XENA:

He's really growing up.

GABRIELLE (reflective, quietly):

He is. He's been through so much with us over these past few years. (looks down at Samuel who has now fallen asleep in her arms) And now with Samuel...it's going to be a lot more responsibility.

She stares ahead thoughtfully. Xena gives her an anguished, concerned look.

[FLASHBACK]

From *Ends and Means*:

Gabrielle and Haimon. He is looking at her solemnly and rather somberly.

HAIMON:

Vespasian is going to do great things. And that's something I want--to have a chance to be part of something...great.

[END OF FLASHBACK]

XENA (quietly):

He's become the man of the house--long before any boy should be.

GABRIELLE (sighs):

I can't wait to get back to Greece. It's been so long... Once we get these people to safety--we're going home.

XENA:

It's not that simple.

GABRIELLE:

What do you mean?



XENA:

I have to find out what happened to John and his men. (close-up on her face; she looks guilty) I came here to help them, Gabrielle. And-- (she trails off, shaking her head, then looks up at Gabrielle) I have to help them now. (grimly) I owe them that much.

Gabrielle reaches out and takes Xena's hand, squeezing it gently in a reassuring gesture, as we:

FADE OUT

ACT ONE

FADE IN

Continued from the previous scene.

XENA (grimly):

I bet they're being taken to Rome.



GABRIELLE:

To be paraded in a victory march...and then probably sent to die in the arena. (shakes her head in disgust) The Romans' idea of entertainment.

XENA:

I won't let that happen. I need to get to them before they can reach Rome. If I can only find out by which route they're being taken...

She stares ahead pensively. Gabrielle touches her shoulder.

GABRIELLE (tenderly):

You'll do it. I have faith in you.

XENA (quietly):

I'm glad *someone* does. (She looks up, shaking off her melancholy reflections, and rises to her feet) I better go help Darion with the firewood.

She gets up and walks away, Gabrielle staring after her.

DISSOLVE TO

Dusk. The sun is low; the sky is bright shades of orange and yellow.



Gabrielle and Naiomi sit next to each other. In the background, Xena is chopping wood. Darion arranges the split pieces in neat layers, building a fire.



Samuel suddenly cries and Gabrielle lifts him onto her shoulder and gently pats his back. The baby cries louder and she frowns, patting his back quicker. Samuel's cries continue to increase and he grows more fussy. Gabrielle is obviously becoming more and more frustrated at her inability to burp him. Naiomi looks on sympathetically and holds out her arms, smiling gently.

NAIOMI:

Here--let me have a try.

Gabrielle hands the boy over to Naiomi with a grateful sigh. Naiomi takes Samuel and lays him face down across her lap. Gabrielle watches, clearly confused by what the older woman is doing. Naiomi rubs his back gently. After a moment Samuel burps and stops crying. Naiomi takes him up in her arms and he gurgles happily.



NAIOMI (smiles):
I still remember a few old tricks.

Gabrielle sighs in gratitude.

GABRIELLE:
Oh--thank you. There's so much I don't know about... (she shakes her head). I never expected to have another child and now that I do I feel a bit lost. (she squeezes Naomi's shoulder) I'm so glad to have you.

Naomi nods wisely.

NAIOMI:
I have noticed a certain...insecurity about you lately. That doesn't seem to be at all like you, Gabrielle.

Gabrielle shakes her head and frowns.

NAIOMI:
It's going to be fine. When it comes to taking care of a baby, a woman's nature just seems to take over.

Gabrielle looks away.



GABRIELLE:
What if I don't have that inside of me anymore? I've been a fighter so long that maybe that other side of me is gone now.

She sighs and looks over her shoulder at Xena, energetically splitting a large log with a hatchet.

GABRIELLE:

Xena and I wanted to raise this baby together. But...for a long time now I've wondered if I'll be able to fight by Xena's side and still be the mother I want to be.

Naiomi rocks Samuel in her arms.

NAIOMI:

You and Xena--you've been together a long time...haven't you?

GABRIELLE (nods):

A lifetime.

Naiomi looks over at Xena, then back to Gabrielle.

NAIOMI:

And...the boy's father?

Gabrielle is obviously flustered.

GABRIELLE:

He didn't--that is to say we didn't--well...we parted ways. We realized we both wanted different things...

Xena laughs loudly in triumph as the large log she has been chopping splits and falls to the ground with a loud thunk. Naiomi glances over at her, then back to Gabrielle.

NAIOMI:

Where is he now?

Gabrielle stares ahead.

[FLASHBACK]

Haimon grins and grips Gabrielle's shoulders enthusiastically. He is full of cheer and optimism and is oblivious to her desolate look. The camera angle distorts the scene slightly, making it look almost grotesque.

HAIMON:

Gabrielle, I'm going to join Vespasian. He's going to do great things and I'm going to be a part of it!

[END OF FLASHBACK]

Gabrielle frowns and shakes her head curtly.

GABRIELLE:

I don't know where he is.

Pan to Xena. She stands up, panting a little from the exertion of chopping firewood. Then she tenses, as if sensing something, and slowly turns around.

Ares is riding up on his horse. He brings the horse to a halt, and their eyes lock in a long moment of silence.



She breaks out into a small, almost incredulous smile.

Ares dismounts as she walks toward him and then stops. They stand facing each other a little awkwardly, as if unsure what to say. Finally, she nods toward the horse.



XENA:

So...you picked up a friend.

Ares clears his throat and looks pointedly at Samuel in Gabrielle's arms.

ARES:

I could say the same about you.

They continue to stand facing each other.

DISSOLVE TO

Ares is watering his horse by a pool of water amidst the ruins. He unbuckles the horse's harness and starts to take it off. The camera shows Xena standing nearby, leaning on a ruined pillar, her arms crossed. As Ares pats the horse's neck, Xena notices his bare wrists and frowns slightly as she comes closer.

XENA:

What happened to your gauntlets?

Ares looks at her and shrugs.



ARES:

I needed money to follow you. (after a pause) I heard about what was going on in Jerusalem. Figured maybe you could use my help.

Xena holds his stare for a long moment, then takes another step and puts her hand on his shoulder.

XENA (softly):

I'm glad you came.

He turns around and she kisses him, gently brushing her lips against his and then capturing his lips. There is a little awkwardness at first but then they move into a warmer embrace. Ares moves to kiss her neck and she wraps her arms around him, closing her eyes for a moment. The camera moves in on them.



XENA (her voice husky):

How--did you know where to find us?

ARES (his voice muffled as he nuzzles her hair):

I went to Jerusalem looking for you--heard you were on the road. Then--

XENA (pulls back a little):

Jerusalem? What's happening there?

ARES (shrugs):

Romans. When I was heading out of the city, they were taking a bunch of prisoners to Caesarea.

XENA (stares at him in shock):
Caesarea? Not Rome?

ARES:

That's what I heard the Romans say. Seems Titus is in Caesarea now, planning a big victory celebration before he returns to Rome. He's going to have the prisoners fight in the games for the celebration.

Xena stares at him grimly, then finally speaks.

XENA:

No, they're not. (pause as the camera zooms in on her) Not if I can do anything about it.

Pan to Ares, who looks worried.

CUT TO

Evening. A bright night sky full of stars. Xena, Gabrielle, Ares, and Darion are sitting amongst the ruins of a building, several fallen columns and an archway around them. They are on a small hill, a bit of a distance from where the refugees have made camp. A fire is burning in front of them. Samuel sleeping on some blankets next to Gabrielle. They are eating a modest meal of bread and fruit.

ARES (to Darion, half-serious, half-teasing):

You know, young man, you and I have some serious business to talk about. You were supposed to stay with me and make my mortal life miserable for a few months. Instead, you run off and get on that ship. (points a finger at him) What's the idea?

DARION (serious):

I thought Gabrielle might need me.

ARES:

Did you, now! (glances at Gabrielle) Well, good to know there's at least *one* guy who'll stand by you through thick and thin.

Gabrielle looks like she's been punched in the stomach. Xena elbows Ares in the side, hard enough for him to almost choke on his bread.

GABRIELLE (mutters curtly):

Thanks.

Ares looks a little sheepish; he obviously hadn't realized how hurtful his remark was.

There is a moment of tense silence as Gabrielle looks down, fiddling with her piece of bread. Finally, she looks up with a somewhat forced smile

GABRIELLE (trying to lighten the mood):

Well, at the moment, there are only two guys I want or need in my life--and they're both right here with me.

Darion grins proudly; Ares recovers from his embarrassment and smirks.

ARES:

Why, thank you, Gabrielle--I'm deeply flattered.

Gabrielle snorts. Xena, who had been staring off into the distance, distracted, suddenly turns to face them.

XENA:

Gabrielle. Do you think you can get these refugees to Petra without me?



GABRIELLE (puzzled):
By myself?

DARION:
You won't be by yourself. I'll help you.

Gabrielle chuckles and pats him on the arm.

GABRIELLE:
Standing by me through thick and thin, huh? (to Xena) Why?

XENA:
I need you to do this, Gabrielle. Ares and I have something else we have to do.

Ares gives her a surprised look.

ARES:
We do?



XENA:
I'm going to Caesarea after those prisoners--and you're coming with me.

Ares and Gabrielle look at her, somewhat taken aback, as we:

FADE OUT

ACT TWO

FADE IN

The same scene as before.



ARES:

I always knew you'd end up dragging me into this Greater Good business. (pause) Look, not to doubt your many skills, but how exactly do you plan on pulling this one off?

XENA:

We'll deal with that when the time comes.

ARES:

Why don't I like the sound of that?



GABRIELLE (sighs):

I wish I could help you.

Xena puts her hands on Gabrielle's shoulders in a tender gesture.



XENA:

You *will* be helping me--by making sure the refugees get safely to Petra, as we promised.

GABRIELLE:

Yeah, but you're still going to do the heavy lifting.

ARES:

She's got a point.

XENA (turns to him with a slight, sly grin):

You're not complaining about a chance to fight at my side, are you?

Ares thinks for a moment, then grins.

ARES:

Let's hear it for heavy lifting.

XENA:

Good. We head out at first light.

Xena and Ares share a long, lingering look. Gabrielle notices this and turns toward Darion.

GABRIELLE:

Why don't we head back to camp and get some sleep?

DARION:

Sure.

Gabrielle stands up and picks up Samuel, careful not to wake him. She and Darion walk back toward the refugee camp.

The fire crackles as Xena and Ares continue to stare at each other. Ares takes her hand, rubbing their fingers together gently as she watches him.



After a moment they lean toward each other and kiss; it is a tender kiss at first, then growing more intense and filled with urgency. They pull apart, breathless, and stare at each other again, still holding hands.

ARES (a little awkwardly):

It's been a long time.

XENA (smiles a little):

Yeah, it has...

ARES (with a small grin):

Well, I hope I still remember the basics.

XENA (teasing):

Oh, I'm sure it'll come back to you.

They embrace again.

DISSOLVE TO

Xena and Ares are on the ground, still clothed. Ares is on his back, Xena above him, kissing him. Ares moves his hand to her arm, pulling her closer.



They both moan slightly as the camera pans upward for a clear view of the starry night sky and holding there for a few moments.



Then:

CROSS-FADE TO



The ruins in the night.

DISSOLVE TO

Xena and Ares are lying together, Ares' cloak covering them. Xena is draped over Ares, resting her head on his chest, her eyes half-closed. He has an arm around her.

ARES (a quiet intensity in his voice):
I've missed you.

XENA (sleepily but a little mischievously):
I noticed.

He strokes her hair. She raises herself up a little, leans forward and kisses him gently.

XENA:
I missed you, too. (sighs, resting her head on his chest again) We leave at dawn. Get some sleep.

Pull back for a view of Xena and Ares asleep in each other's arms.

CUT TO

Daybreak. A Roman camp. The Israelite prisoners are gathered in an area of the camp under the watch of a couple of Roman guards. Most of the Israelites and the Romans are still asleep.

The camera pulls in on two young Israelites, still chained but managing to move quietly, with large sticks in their hands.

Close-up on one of the Roman guards. He is knocked out from behind and falls with a thud.

The camera pulls back to show the other guard lying unconscious next to him. The two Israelites nod to each other and sneak to the area where the horses are, untying two of them.

VOICE (off-camera):
Prisoners escaping!

The Israelite men quickly mount the horses even as several Romans come running toward them. The entire camp starts to wake up. The other Israelite prisoners shout and cheer as they realize what's going on.

The two escapees ride out of the camp. One of the Romans draws back a bow and shoots an arrow. It lodges in the back of one of the Israelite men and he falls from his horse, dead, as the horse continues to race away. The other Israelite sees this and looks pained but continues to ride on. Several Roman horsemen give chase but cannot catch up with him.



One of them shoots another arrow at the rider but the arrow is lost in the cloud of dust behind the horse as it rides away.

The Romans look at each other in obvious displeasure.

CUT TO

A long shot of the refugee camp among the ruins. Most people are still asleep; some campfires still burn from the night before.

CUT TO



Xena and Gabrielle are hugging. Xena pulls back and smiles. She is wearing a cloak similar to the one in "Motherhood".



XENA:

Stay safe. I'll see you in Petra.

GABRIELLE:

Yeah. (she looks at Ares, who is also wearing his cloak, and then back at Xena; she smiles a little to lighten the mood) Don't do anything I wouldn't do.

ARES:

And that would leave us what exactly?

Xena grins at him and shakes her head.

XENA (to Gabrielle):
See you soon.

She walks over to a brown horse that is saddled and ready for travel, Ares' horse beside it, also ready. Xena mounts and Ares follows suit; they ride off, Xena turning once to look at Gabrielle.



Pan to Gabrielle and Darion as they watch Xena and Ares ride away.

DARION:
Good luck! (waves)

Off to the side, the camera pans to Naomi who is holding Samuel in her arms, looking on thoughtfully as Gabrielle watches Xena leave.

DISSOLVE TO

Xena and Ares are riding, the ruins in the distance behind them.



CUT TO

A small group of children, mostly boys between 9 and 14 years old, are herding goats beside a few sparse trees.

In the distance, a horse is galloping toward them. One of the children looks up. The rider comes into view. It's the Israelite prisoner that had escaped the Roman camp. There is an arrow lodged in his shoulder and he wobbles in the saddle, weak from the blood loss and the heat. He attempts to slow the horse down as he approaches but instead,

leans too far to one side, loses his balance and falls out of the saddle. The horse begins to bolt away but two of the boys grab its reins and calm it down.

All of the children gather around the man lying in the dirt. He coughs, his hands still bound by the manacles. One of the girls offers him a waterskin.

The man looks up at them and takes the waterskin, drinking greedily. There is dried blood around the wound where the arrow had lodged itself into his shoulder. He gives the waterskin back to the girl and tries to sit up but falls back when pain shoots through his wounded shoulder. He lies on his back.

TEN-YEAR-OLD BOY:

What happened to you?

ISRAELITE MAN:

I escaped.

TEN-YEAR-OLD BOY:

From who?

ISRAELITE MAN (bitter):

The Romans.

FOURTEEN-YEAR-OLD GIRL (gasps):

You're from Jerusalem.

The man nods.

TWELVE-YEAR-OLD BOY:

We heard what went down there, but--we don't really know much about it.

ISRAELITE MAN (grim):

Trust me, child. It's not something you want to know.

CUT TO

Xena and Ares are riding through the desert. Ahead of them, they see the sparse trees and the group of goat herders gathered around the Israelite.

As they ride up, Xena slows down and Ares does likewise. She sees the Israelite man sitting under the tree, the arrow in his shoulder and his hands manacled.

XENA:

What happened?

She dismounts and walks toward the man.

FOURTEEN-YEAR-OLD GIRL (concerned):

You're not Romans, are you?

Xena shoots her a disgusted look.

XENA:

No.

TEN-YEAR-OLD BOY (points to the Israelite man):

He's escaped from the Romans. He's hurt. Maybe you can help him?

In the background, Ares dismounts.

Xena eagerly approaches the man and squats down next to him.

XENA:

You escaped? You were part of the convoy headed to Caesarea?

ISRAELITE MAN:

Yes. My brother and I tried to escape. He was killed; I almost was.

XENA:

So you're from Jerusalem.

ISRAELITE MAN (bitter):

There *is* no more Jerusalem.

Xena looks away, feeling guilty; then turns to the man again.

XENA:

What's your name?

ISRAELITE MAN:

My name is Aaron.

XENA (looks at the arrow in his shoulder):

All right. Let's start by pulling this out.

Xena picks up a stick on the ground and gives it to Aaron.

XENA:

Bite on this.

She puts the stick in Aaron's mouth and he bites down on it. She puts one hand firmly around the shaft of the arrow.

XENA:

You ready?

Aaron nods. She turns to Ares, who is coming up.

XENA:

Hand me the wineskin, will you?

Ares goes to get the wineskin from his saddlebag. Meanwhile, Xena yanks on the arrow; Aaron's cry is muffled by the stick in his mouth. She drops the arrow on the ground and rips a piece of cloth from her cloak. As Ares brings her the wineskin, she pours some wine on the cloth, then wraps it around the wound on Aaron's arm and ties it tight. Close-up on Aaron as he winces.

XENA:

That should stop any infection. In a few days you'll be good as new.

AARON (with difficulty):

Thank you.

Xena looks at his manacled hands.

TEN YEAR OLD BOY (indicating the manacles):

I don't know how we can break those.

TWELVE-YEAR-OLD GIRL:

I bet your father could. He's a blacksmith.

TEN-YEAR-OLD BOY:

Yeah, but our parents are all scared to death of the Romans. They're not gonna help.

ARES:

Well, you're in luck, then. Because the *Romans* are scared of *her*. (nods toward Xena, who is still inspecting Aaron's manacles)

XENA (without looking up, slightly bitter):

Not anymore.

ARES (grins):

Well--then I guess they'll never know what hit them.

Xena chuckles in spite of herself and looks up at him.

Ares extends a hand toward the manacles as if to zap them; then, remembering that he no longer has powers, lowers his hand, looking somewhat dejected. Xena gives him a sympathetic, reassuring smile as she squeezes his hand.

XENA:

Let me do it.

Xena stands up and draws her sword. Aaron places his hands across a rock, exposing the chain and Xena brings her sword down forcefully, breaking the links. Aaron stands up, a little wobbly.

AARON:

Thanks.

XENA:

So, you were with the other prisoners. (Aaron nods) My friend and I are trying to free them.

AARON (chuckles bitterly):

Good luck.

XENA:

I've beaten tougher odds than that.

AARON (suddenly realizing):

Wait. You're Xena. You're the Greek warrior that was supposed to help us defeat the Romans.

XENA (impassive):

Yes, that's me.

AARON:

They say you deserted us on the battlefield. (Off her silent look; bitterly) Well, you'll have to forgive me if I'm not in a hurry to trust your promises.

Xena's jaw tightens and she looks away, then turns back to him.



XENA:

I failed your people once. This is my chance to do something to make up for it. Anything you can tell me about the Roman's plans would help.

AARON:

You already know they're headed to Caesarea.

XENA:

And that's all?

AARON:

No--there's more. Six of the men are being taken directly to Rome. John of Giscala--and five of his top lieutenants who survived.

Xena stares at him, appalled. Ares turns to her.

ARES:

That means--

XENA:

I can't save them all. (frustrated) We can't be in two places at once.

She thinks a moment, then turns to Aaron again.

XENA:

Do you know by what route they're going?

AARON:

I heard them mention Kefar.

Thinking, Xena turns toward the boys.

XENA:

Can you take Aaron somewhere where he'll be safe? Just don't take him back to your village--and not a word to your parents.

OLDER BOY (nods):

Sure, we can do that. There are some caves along the cliffs. It's a good place to hide.

XENA:

Thank you.

Xena walks up to her horse and mounts. Ares comes up to her.

ARES:

So we're going after the other prisoners?

XENA (looking down at Ares):

Yep.

ARES:

And I take it we want to slow down the convoy to Caesarea.

He and Xena stare at each other.

XENA and ARES (speak simultaneously):

Rockslide.

Xena turns toward the children, who stare at her and Ares in awe. Then one of them, a boy of about twelve, smirks mischievously.

TWELVE-YEAR-OLD BOY:

I know just the place.

Xena grins a little.

CUT TO

Mountaintop. A large dam of rocks keeps a river at bay. Ares and Xena gallop up on their horses. They leap down. Ares eyes the rocks wearily.

ARES:

Now would be a good time to have my powers back.

XENA:

Since when do you need to be a god to start a rockslide?

ARES:

You have to admit, fireballs would help.

XENA:

We've got... (she takes her chakram from her hip) this.

She throws the chakram; it splits in two, crisscrossing along the ledge of the bedrock, before returning to its owner. Within seconds the bed of rocks collapses and the river bursts, causing a flood below. Ares and Xena look over to the edge of the mountaintop. The road below is flooded and blocked with rocks. Xena smiles.

XENA:

That should keep the Romans busy for a couple of days.

INTERCUT images of:

* Xena and Ares riding at full gallop.

* The Romans on the march.

* John and several of his men are locked in a wooden cage (similar to the one in which we saw Xena was in during "The Debt"), pulled along by two horses. John and his men stare out grimly, well aware of what awaits them.

* Xena and Ares riding

* A tight shot of the Romans marching.

CUT TO

Xena and Ares behind a cluster of trees, slightly ahead of the Roman convoy, watching the Romans march. The camera zooms in on the cage with the prisoners.

ARES:

So, those are your friends.



XENA (grimly):
That's them.

Suddenly, the look on her face changes to one of recognition and shock.

ARES (glances at her):
What?

XENA (grimly):
Look over there. The man to the left of the commander.

The camera zooms in on the Roman officers riding at the head of the column, and then closes in on one of them until we see his face in close-up. It's Haimon.



Close up on Xena's shocked face as we:

FADE OUT

ACT THREE

FADE IN

Hilltop. Ares notices Haimon as well.

ARES:
Isn't that Gabrielle's boy toy?

XENA:
Yeah.

ARES:
Sure is taking well to being a Roman.

Xena nods and glares.

XENA:
I can see that.

ARES:
Well--he's really just a soldier following orders.

XENA (through gritted teeth):
Thanks. That makes me feel so much better.

ARES:
So. Got a plan?

XENA:
I do now. Follow me.

She starts riding out from behind the trees.

ARES:

What are you doing?

XENA:

Surrendering.

Ares gapes at her.

ARES:

What?!

XENA:

Just play along.

She rides out toward the Romans.



ARES (scowls):

The things we do for love.

He follows her lead.

A wide shot of Xena and Ares riding toward the approaching column. Spotting them, the commander gives a signal to stop and the convoy comes to a halt.

Pan to the commander.

COMMANDER (to the men behind him):

Bring them over here.

Several men on horseback ride out and then return flanking Xena and Ares, who follow them without protest. They dismount. The Roman commander looks them up and down.

COMMANDER:

Who are you and what are you doing out here?

XENA:

We're merchants, sir.

Quick pan to Haimon, who flinches as he recognizes Xena's voice.

XENA (continues):

Got separated from our caravan 'cause this no-good husband of mine took a long detour to a tavern in the last village we passed.

She gives Ares a light smack on the back of the head. The Romans laugh.

ARES (scowls):

Shut your mouth, woman! You'll drive any man to drink.

More laughter from the Romans. Meanwhile, Haimon stares at Xena, trying to conceal his shock; then he looks away so as not to be conspicuous.

COMMANDER:

Merchants, huh? Which way are you headed?

XENA:

To Yaffo, sir. Why, is there any trouble?

COMMANDER:

Can't be too careful out here. We've got all sorts of fools and wannabe heroes trying to free our prisoners.

XENA (scoffs):

I look like a fool about as much as he looks like a hero. (gestures toward Ares) Why, he can barely kill a chicken.

More laughter from the Commander and his men while Ares scowls at Xena.

COMMANDER:

Well, better safe than sorry. (to his men) Check them out.

HAIMON (quickly):

I'll do it.

COMMANDER:

Go on, Centurion.

Haimon leaps down nimbly off his horse. He goes to Xena first, reaching for her cloak.

XENA:

Watch where you put your hands.

Haimon gives her an intense look then looks inside Xena's cloak. Her chakram is clearly visible. He pauses a moment, then drops her cloak, as if it's soiled.

HAIMON:

She's unarmed, sir.

He goes over to Ares to check him, handling Ares somewhat roughly. He seizes the dagger at Ares' waist and finally pushes him back. Ares glares at Haimon who moves over to the Roman commander, offering up the weapon.

HAIMON:

Just a dagger, sir.

The commander gives Ares a suspicious look.

ARES:

Well, like you said, sir--can't be too careful out here.

XENA:

Can't just ride around unprotected. I carry a dagger too, but (to Haimon) if I showed you where it is, you'd have to marry me afterwards.

She glances down at her bosom. The Romans stare at her, grinning, some of them exchanging what are obviously lewd remarks.

ARES (annoyed):

Are we done here or what?!

COMMANDER (waves his hand abruptly):

Move along.

Xena glares intensely at Haimon. When she speaks, her tone is faintly threatening.

XENA:

Next time keep your hands to yourself.

She swings up onto her horse. Ares does the same. They quickly ride off, not looking back.

CUT TO

Night. The convoy is down for the evening. Everyone is resting in their own way: some are sleeping, some are writing letters by firelight, some cleaning their boots or sharpening their swords.

The camera zooms in on Haimon, who sits by a fire cleaning his sword. He looks troubled. Finally, he rises, sheathes his sword, and turns to the men near him.

HAIMON:

I'm going out to check the perimeter.

ROMAN SOLDIER:

Want me to go with you, sir?

HAIMON:

No, it's all right. I won't be long.

Haimon walks off.

CUT TO

A small grove. Haimon walks into view, looking around.

XENA (off-camera):

Ave, Haimon.

He whips around and sees Xena and Ares standing before him, wearing their black cloaks.

HAIMON:

I'm not a Roman, Xena.

XENA (crosses arms):

Really? Could've fooled me, considering I just saw you guarding Rome's prisoners--caged and shackled for the crime of defending their country.



HAIMON (perturbed):

Those men? They're thugs. They've killed their own people--terrorized anyone that they accused of straying from their faith. They desecrated their own--

XENA (interrupts):

Not *these* men. Simon Bar-Giora and his zealots--those were the thugs. Well, Bar Giora's dead--they say at the hands of one of his own men. The man you got in the cage over there is John of Giscala. (Off his uncomprehending stare) John is the reason I'm here. He's a good man, Haimon. He wanted to keep his people free from both the Romans *and* the zealots. And he asked for my help.

There is a brief, uncomfortable silence. Then Haimon speaks up again.

HAIMON:

Is Gabrielle here?

XENA:

She's with some refugees from Jerusalem, leading them to a safe haven.

HAIMON:

How is she?

Xena gives him a somewhat hesitant look, as if unsure what to say. Ares glances at her expectantly. Haimon frowns. Finally, Xena speaks.

XENA (firmly):

She's just fine.

Haimon sighs and nods.

HAIMON:

Well--guess I should get going before they start to wonder where I am.

He turns to leave.

XENA:

Haimon. (He stops) In your heart, you know this is wrong--what the Romans are doing here. What you're helping them do. You know it. You're a good man.

HAIMON (turns toward her):

I'm glad you know what kind of man I am--because I don't think I know anymore.

Xena draws her sword and points it at Haimon. A beat and Ares does the same. Haimon raises his hands, alarmed.

HAIMON (stammers a little):
I'm--pretty sure I'm not an evil one!

Xena gestures with her head, indicating something behind him. He turns his head slightly and sees torchlight approaching.

XENA (off-camera; whispering):
Haimon! (he turns around) Play along!

Before he gets what she means, she and Ares swing their swords at him. He instinctively parries. They continue their fake fight.

ROMAN SENTRY 1 (off-camera):
Haimon!

Xena signals Haimon with her eyes.

HAIMON:
Over here! I could use some help!

XENA (still sparring with him):
Haimon, I need you to help me free those prisoners.

HAIMON:
I can't do that.



XENA:
Yes, you can.

HAIMON:
No, I can't. I took an oath of loyalty. To me, that means something.

XENA:
You have a higher loyalty.

HAIMON:
You mean--to you and Gabrielle.

XENA:
I mean to yourself.

Close-up on Haimon; she has clearly gotten through to him.

HAIMON:

The convoy stops in Kefar tomorrow. It's about fifteen leagues from here. I'll be at the main city inn.

Three Romans come running up, swords drawn. Ares grins.

ARES:

Finally. A real fight.

XENA:

We're not staying.

ARES:

Spoil my fun.

Xena and Ares disappear into the trees. The Romans try to give chase but they're already lost in the night. Haimon sheathes his sword, breathing hard.

HAIMON (to Roman Sentry 1):

Thanks.

ROMAN SENTRY 1:

You were gone so long I thought you might have run into trouble.

HAIMON:

Good thinking.

ROMAN SENTRY #2:

Rebels?

HAIMON (shakes head):

Just nomads. I think they wanted to rob me. Don't worry, I ran them off.

CUT TO

Morning. Xena and Ares sit under a tree, near a small pool where their horses are drinking. Xena is mending her boot.



XENA:

I have to talk to Haimon. We need his help. It's the only way we can free both John and the prisoners who are being taken to Caesarea.

ARES:

You think he'll help?

XENA (pauses):

I have to take a chance on that.

ARES (skeptical):

So--we'll just walk into an inn full of Romans and chat up Haimon.

XENA:

Well...not exactly 'walk'. And not exactly 'we'. I'm going in there alone.

ARES (disappointed but curious):

Why?

XENA (with a mischievous little smile):

Because there are some jobs for which you aren't equipped.



Ares looks at her with a mix of admiration and slight annoyance as her meaning dawns on him.

CUT TO

The camera travels up the body of a woman clad in a blue and black dancer's outfit, low cut and showing lots of cleavage and thigh, with a lot of jewelry (an outfit that's similar to the ones from *Cradle of Hope* and *Who's Gurkhan*). As the camera pan up, we see that it's Xena. Her face is half-covered with a black veil.



She is standing in the middle of a tavern filled with Roman soldiers. Xena starts to dance. The Romans watch her, enthralled, some of them banging their fists on the table and whooping, rowdily shouting their approval. Some of them throw coins at her feet.

The camera pans over to Haimon, who is sitting in a corner finishing his mug of ale. He glances at Xena but doesn't recognize her and turns away.

Xena starts approaching some of the Romans and flirting with them--moving in close, touching their faces and arms, running her scarf over them but always moving away, teasing, before any one of them can make a move on her. Finally she approaches Haimon and taps him on the shoulder.

HAIMON (not looking at her):
Sorry, miss. I'm not interested.

XENA (in a low, sultry voice):
Oh, I think you are.

He looks up and realizes that it's Xena. She lowers herself, straddling his knees, and starts to sway back and forth. Haimon looks extremely uncomfortable.

HAIMON (in a whisper, in close-up):
Is this really necessary?

XENA (likewise):
It was the best idea I could come up with.

ROMAN SOLDIER (calls out):
You're wasting your time on him, honey!

The Romans laugh. Paying no attention, Xena leans seductively toward Haimon's ear.

XENA (whispers):
Made your decision yet?

HAIMON (nods quietly):
I'll help.

XENA (running a finger over his lips, still in a seductive whisper):
Know how to break a lock?

HAIMON (uncomfortably):
No.

Xena grins and runs her hand down his chest.

XENA:
Then you've got some things to learn.

She stands up and pulls him with her. She leads him upstairs and he follows, among bawdy laughs and cheers from the Romans, as we:

FADE OUT

ACT FOUR

FADE IN

A cave with a small fire burning in it. Aaron, the escaped Israelite prisoner, sits by the fire finishing a meal. Two of the goatherds, a boy and a girl of about twelve, stand by; the girl is holding a basket.

AARON:
Thank you.

Hearing a noise, he lifts his head. Xena and Ares come into the cave.

AARON:

You're back! Any word of John?

XENA:

If my plan works, he'll be free tomorrow. (to the goatherds) Where's the Roman convoy?

BOY:

You're just in time. They cleared the road this morning and moved out--about an hour ago.

XENA (to Aaron):

You're looking better. Think you can hold a sword?

AARON:

Against the Romans? Any time.

ARES:

The three of us--against a couple of hundred Romans? (He pauses) Uh--good odds.

XENA:

Oh, it's not just the three of us. We're going to have an army on our side. (Off his and Aaron's puzzled looks) A *small* army.

CUT TO

Dusk.



The Roman convoy has settled by the river. Two sentries playing dice on the perimeter of the camp when a strange noise gets their attention. They jump to their feet and look up, drawing their swords.

Suddenly, the camp is invaded by dozens of bleating goats and barking dogs. They run through the convoy, wreaking havoc. Pandemonium breaks out as children run after the goats, pretending to try to catch them but actually goading them on. In a few moments the camp is in complete disarray.

Pan to Xena, Ares and Aaron running through the camp to the roped-off area where the prisoners are held. Several guards draw their swords. One of them shouts, trying to raise an alarm, but he cannot be heard over the noise of the animals and the children. Two of the guards fall, knocked out by rocks; pan to two of the boys holding slingshots, grinning.

Xena cuts the ropes and the still-chained prisoners pour out.

XENA (to Aaron):

Take them to safety. We'll hold off the Romans.

More Romans attack. Xena splits her chakram and uses the two pieces to do battle. She disarms a Roman, cutting him with his own weapon in the process, then sweeps his legs out from underneath him. Ares slices a warrior on the side, then begins parrying with another. He easily holds his own. A child's scream catches his attention. He turns to see a Roman soldier grabbing one of the boys and trying to drag him away as the child struggles.

Distracted, Ares gets knocked down to the ground. He kicks his attacker away, then throws his sword at the Roman who is dragging away the boy, hitting him in the back and killing him.

Ares nimbly leaps to his feet and makes a move to retrieve his sword, but another Roman charges at him with a battleaxe. Ares deftly sidesteps the lunge and grabs for the axe, wrenching it from the hands of the soldier. He swings wildly and the Roman crumples to the ground. He looks at the axe, impressed.

ARES:

Well, it's not a sword, but it'll do.

He fights off some more Romans, then looks over to Xena, who's fighting several men.



She does a jumping V-kick, knocking two Romans out, then spins and slices a Roman across the chest with the chakram halves. As he staggers back, she sees another Roman behind her and, with a furious yell, buries the chakram halves in his chest. He collapses as she yanks them out.

Joining the chakram together, Xena sees a group of Romans charging after the escaping prisoners.

XENA:

Chee-YAH!

She throws the chakram. It bounces off a rock, then flies toward the Romans, taking down several; as they fall, their comrades stumble and fall down as well. The chakram flies back to Xena and she catches it. Pan to the prisoners as they run for the hills.

Xena looks around for Ares and sees him bring down another Roman with his sword. The camp is still in full pandemonium, the Romans trying to get things under control as the animals stampede through the area.

XENA:

Come on--we need to get out now before the Romans regroup.

Ares nods breathlessly. Xena gives a birdcall and the children start pulling back with the animals. A quick succession of shots of children running out of the camp with the goats and dogs, and racing for the hills in the same direction the prisoners went; then, pan to Xena who is fighting off two more Romans.

ARES (off-camera):
Xena!

Xena turns around to see Ares on his horse, holding hers by the reins. Xena swings up onto her horse and looks around, making sure the prisoners and the children have escaped. Then she brings the reins down on her horse and kicks its sides.

XENA:
Hyah!

Xena and Ares ride off at a gallop.

CUT TO

Evening. Among some cliffs, Xena and Ares are facing the children and the freed prisoners, whose broken chains lie scattered on the ground.

XENA (to the children):
Thank you again for the help. Remember, the Romans are still in the area--stay safe.

FOURTEEN-YEAR-OLD BOY:
We will.

The twelve-year-old boy Ares saved steps forward.

TWELVE-YEAR-OLD BOY (to Ares):
Sir... (he pulls Ares' sword from under his cloak) I brought you your sword.

Ares' eyes light up when he sees his sword. He takes it from the boy.

ARES:
Hey--didn't think I'd get to see this again. Thanks, kiddo.

TWELVE-YEAR-OLD BOY (with feeling):
Thank *you*, Sir! You saved my life out there.

Xena gives him a warm and slightly amused look. Ares looks back at her and shrugs a little, then turns.

ARES:
All right, kids. Run along.

As the children leave, Xena turns her attention to the freed prisoners.

AARON:
Xena--I don't know how to thank you. I know I doubted you before, but--

XENA:
It was the least I could do. (she pauses) The best thing for you now is to scatter in small groups and go to Petra. If you're lucky, you may find your families there.

With a disjointed chorus of thanks to Xena and Ares, the Israelites start to walk away.

DISSOLVE TO

Dissolve to images of the sun rising and setting, to indicate that a night has passed.

CROSS-FADE TO

Xena and Ares sit by the fire. Xena looks worried.

XENA:

Wonder what's taking Haimon so long. He should have been here already.

A brief silence.

ARES:

So. Are you going to tell him?

XENA:

Tell him about what?

He gives her a reproachful look as if to say, 'Come on, you know what I'm talking about.' Xena sighs.

XENA:

I don't know. I just--want to do what's best for Gabrielle. (looks away) I wish I knew what that was.



ARES:

The guy sort of deserves to know about his kid, don't you think?

Xena gives him a look.

ARES:

What?

XENA (wryly):

You're doing sensitive chats. Obviously, Gabrielle has been a good influence.

ARES (makes a face):

Don't push it. I still haven't forgotten that whole "can barely kill a chicken" business.

Xena chuckles and squeezes his hand; then, suddenly, tenses and rises to her feet.

The camera pans to Haimon riding up. The expression on his face is grim but determined. He is followed by John and the other five prisoners, also on horseback. They dismount. Haimon stands aside as John walks up to Xena. His face is unreadable.

Close-up on Xena. She looks uneasy.

For a moment, Xena and John stand facing each other. Then, in an almost brusque motion, he extends his hand and they clasp forearms.

JOHN:

I knew you wouldn't let us down in the end.

He lets go of her arm.

XENA (moved):

But I did. Jerusalem has fallen to the Romans--nothing can change that now.

John lowers his head grimly. There is a brief silence. Then Xena speaks again.

XENA:

Remember one thing--history is fickle. Who knows; maybe some day, the nation of Israel will still stand when the Roman Empire is just a memory.

He ponders her words, then nods, looking a little less gloomy.



JOHN:

Maybe--with friends like you. Thank you for your help.

XENA:

You might want to lie low for a while.

JOHN:

I know. Rome is everywhere and we're in no position to take them on. I think we'll head to North Africa--maybe join up with your nomad friends. Nothing like a common enemy to bring people together.

XENA (with a restrained smile):

Sounds like a great idea.

He puts a hand on her shoulder, smiles, and turns to his men.

JOHN:

Let's go.

He mounts his horse, and the Israelites ride away as Xena, Ares, and Haimon look on. Then, Xena turns to Haimon.

XENA:

Thanks, Haimon. You kept your word.

HAIMON:

I did what I thought was right. (he pauses) And now I'm a hunted man--the Romans don't take kindly to deserters, let alone traitors.

XENA (her face impassive):

Having regrets?

HAIMON (shakes his head):

No. I believed I was going to be part of something great. But in the end this turned out to be... (he trails off) I guess you were right about Vespasian after all.

Xena says nothing. There is a brief, tense silence.

HAIMON (looking away):

Now, I have to figure out what to do next.

Another long pause. Xena looks conflicted; she glances at Ares, who looks at her meaningfully. Finally, she speaks.

XENA:

Haimon...you need to see Gabrielle.

HAIMON (alarmed):

What do you mean? Is she all right?



XENA:

She-- (stumbles a little) She's fine. She gave birth to your son two weeks ago.

Haimon stares at her, stunned.

HAIMON:

My--son?

XENA:

He was born in Jerusalem the day the city fell.

Haimon digests this for a moment, various emotions--bewilderment, joy, excitement, distress--struggling in his face.



HAIMON:

She--she never said anything, or--sent me word after I left--

XENA:

You two have a lot to talk about.

Haimon stares at her a moment, then turns around and walks off.

ARES:

That's a hell of a way to find out.



XENA:

There was no easy way to do it.

Xena stares grimly after Haimon. Ares watches her for a moment, then raises his arm and places it comfortably around her shoulders. Xena lets out a tiny smile of acknowledgement and appreciation as she continues to watch Haimon's figure recede into the distance.

FADE OUT

THE END

[No goats were harmed in the production of this motion picture. The same, however, cannot be said for the Romans.]