

SHIPPER SEASON SEVEN

“Princess of Thieves”

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Logline

When a simple theft goes wrong it's up to Xena and Gabrielle to help an old friend. What will happen when an old mistake of Zeus' comes back to haunt everyone involved?

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TEASER

FADE IN

A beautiful clear blue lake is surrounded by trees and berry bushes. Close up of surface of lake. There isn't a ripple in sight until a beautiful woman rises out of the water. She has sapphire colored eyes and is surrounded by a golden glow, seeming to be one with the water.

Camera pans back to the shore and we see someone in a long robe watching her. The woman notices the figure for the first time and frowns.

WOMAN:

What are you doing here?

ZEUS:

Watching you, beautiful Inyx.

INYX (whispers):

Please go away, I don't want any trouble.

ZEUS (starts walking into the water):

The world is at my fingertips, I can control the universe, so I think "no means no" is not going to work. (reaches her and grabs her arm pulling Inyx close) I am the King of the Gods, girl, why deny me?

In a golden flash Hera appears.

HERA:

Because she's a smart nymph.

INYX (sobbing):

Goddess, please save my soul.

ZEUS (sighs):

A little melodramatic, don't you think?

The Queen of the Gods raises her hands and turns the nymph into a white dove. Inyx flies away quickly.

ZEUS (turns to Hera):

Damn you woman! Do you have to be such a spoilsport?

HERA:

You never learn, do you?

Hera leaves in a flash of gold. Zeus looks around for a moment before walking back towards the shore.

ZEUS:

Well, little nymph, you wanted your soul saved. (forms a ball of energy in his hand. Inyx in bird form is circling the lake, suddenly the dove falls from the sky and Zeus is left holding a ball of bright light) A visit to Hephaestus is in order.

CUT TO

On Screen Writing: Hundreds of Years Later

Someone in a dark green cape, their face invisible, is hanging from the ceiling by a rope. The camera pans over to it and closes in on a solid golden statue of a nymph sitting on a pedestal.

It has sapphire eyes and lips made of hundreds of ruby chips; each ear is decorated with a perfect diamond for an earring. Pan back to see the entire room, gold coins sit in piles in various positions on the ground. A chest filled with precious jewels is sitting in one corner.

The figure reaches out to grab the statue and the rope breaks under the weight.

HOODED FIGURE (omph!):

This is not good.

A dozen armed guards storm into the room and surround the intruder.

CUT TO

Sitting on a large throne is a King. The intruder is kneeling before him still surrounded by guards. Hung upon nearly every wall are posters with slogans such as "Vote for King Eurystheus. Or else."

KING EURYSTHEUS:

Well, well, well. When Zeus died, I went to great lengths to get my hands on that statue. And here you are, trying to take it from me! Now what happens if Zeus finds out I have it? He'll take it away from me, and probably my head with it. Can you see my problem here? You somehow found out that I had the statue of Inyx. What I want to know is--how?

One of the guards rips the intruders cape away from them and we close in on the face of a scared girl. She has very dark brown eyes and long wavy, chestnut colored hair.

KING EURYSTHEUS (shocked):

Oh my, not exactly what I was expecting. Throw her in the dungeon; Daddy dearest will soon be here to save his precious princess. (rubs hands together) Isn't that right, Anticlea?

ANTICLEA:

You leave my father out of this!

KING EURYSTHEUS (sinister smile):

Sorry. No can do, Princess of Thieves.

CUT TO

A busy market place, Xena and Gabrielle are making their way through hundreds of stalls.

GABRIELLE (to herself):

I suddenly have a craving for Indian food. Some nice rice...curry...

XENA:

Last time you had a craving for Indian food we ended up in India.

GABRIELLE:

That was a spiritual quest.

XENA:

Yeah, for barah kebabs with a side of dhal!

GABRIELLE:

You should talk. Last time we went to Chin, we spent a whole afternoon looking for a tavern that served the perfect Chicken Lo Mein.

XENA (raises an eyebrow):

Well, at least I--

The conversation is interrupted when a large group of people runs by, seemingly chasing someone. They stop for a second, look at each other, realize the person they're after isn't there and turn around and run in the other direction.

GABRIELLE:

I wonder what that's all about.

XENA:

That.

Xena is looking towards a figure standing on a roof watching the villagers with amusement.

XENA (flips onto the roof):

Ayiyiyiyiy!

AUTOLYCUS (turning around):

Ah! Hey I know that breast...plate. Xena?

XENA:

My, my, we've aged well. What's your excuse?

Autolykus still looks the same as he did the last time Xena saw him give or take a few lines around his eyes.

AUTOLYCUS:

My excuse? (his eyes widening) What about you?

XENA:

I'm Xena.

AUTOLYCUS:

Fair enough.

FADE OUT

ACT ONE

FADE IN

Xena, Gabrielle and Autolykus are sitting in a busy tavern. Each has a bowl in front of them containing their lunch. Gabrielle is pouting because hers is obviously not Indian.

GABRIELLE (in between a mouthful):

So, Autolykus, how have you been? Come across a fountain of youth in your travels?

AUTOLYCUS (takes a breath):

I'm a demigod.

GABRIELLE (spits a mouthful of mead across the table):

What?

XENA (raises an eyebrow skeptically):

Oh really? How did you know that and when did you know it?

AUTOLYCUS:

Well, after the last time I saw you, business was a little slow. I headed back home and only did small jobs, you know, a statue here, a purse there. You get the picture. (sighs) Then one day this King came knocking on my door, said he had a job for me, something big. I may have been laying low but I was still the King of Thieves and was not about to give up the title. Unfortunately my wife didn't agree.

GABRIELLE:

You were married?

AUTOLYCUS:

I got married about a year after you two disappeared. Figured any chance with Xena was gone. (cheeky grin)

XENA (uncomfortable look):

Back to the point.

AUTOLYCUS:

Penelope, that was my wife, pleaded and begged for me not to go. Well my ego being the size of Mount Olympus I went. Stole the statue; that was easy, nothing to it. How was I to know the old beaten down building was actually a temple of Zeus' that was still in working order. There was other stuff in there, hidden where the statue was. The King's boys hauled it out of there and I went back for a better look around.

GABRIELLE (deadpan):

For your commission you mean.

AUTOLYCUS:

Whatever you want to call it. There were traps, lots of them. Worse than any others I'd ever encountered. I ended up on a cold stone floor in the dark; with no way out.

XENA (encouraging):

What happened?

AUTOLYCUS:

At first I was sure I was going to die. I had no food, and only a little water dripping from the ceiling. But then I thought--nah, they're not gonna get the King of Thieves that easily. So I started chipping away at the wall with another rock. A month went by and I was still alive, even though I was starving. That's when I started to think something funny was going on. It took me a year to get through that wall and to my freedom.

GABRIELLE (clearly amazed):

Wow, then what happened?

AUTOLYCUS:

I ate enough to pick the whole forest clean. (chuckles) I slowly made my way back home, but exhaustion won me over one day and I took refuge in an oracle's temple. This woman was weird (shudders theatrically) ...no, more than weird, she was scary. But she did have some interesting things to say.

[FLASHBACK]

The Oracle is standing over Autolykus' form; she is waving her hands around in the air. All of a sudden she stops and her green eyes transform into pools of black. Autolykus looks terrified but is too tired to run.

ORACLE (chanting to herself):

Blood of God, Blood of God, Blood of God, Blood of God. Your veins are immortal, within you flows life.

AUTOLYKUS (confused):

Mind explaining in non-oracle terms?

The Oracle looks straight at Autolykus with her dark eyes and whispers.

ORACLE:

The son of Hermes.

[END OF FLASHBACK]

AUTOLYKUS:

Lets just say the minute I felt better I was out of there. I wasn't entirely sure if I believed the old bag but if it was true, it sure explained a whole lot.

XENA:

So Hermes is your father?

AUTOLYKUS:

I guess so. The truth of it really only hit me when I didn't age, that was just...too weird.

XENA:

What happened to your wife?

AUTOLYKUS (sad look):

I'm getting to that. After weeks of traveling I made it home. My homecoming was not what I expected...Penelope was dead.

GABRIELLE:

I'm so sorry.

AUTOLYKUS:

Thanks.

XENA:

How did she die?

AUTOLYKUS:

Childbirth. A neighbor informed me that only a few days after I left she had found out there was a bun in the oven. I really do have bad timing. I'd lost my wife but gained a daughter, Anticlea.

GABRIELLE (the "bard" spark returning to her voice):

You have a daughter! How old is she, what does she look like, is she...

XENA (motions for Autolycus to continue):

Slow down, Gabrielle.

AUTOLYCUS (smiles):

She's just turned twenty-three. She has my eyes and her mother's hair, prettiest girl in all of Greece.

XENA (smiles):

Spoken like a true father.

AUTOLYCUS (smile falters):

Unfortunately, she has inherited my sense of adventure...but not the skills to go with it.

GABRIELLE (confused):

What do you mean?

XENA (interrupts):

He means that she's a thief as well, but not a very good one.

AUTOLYCUS (sigh):

Yep, you got it. She tried to steal something from King Eurystheus, and now he's got her imprisoned. We have a score to settle and he's using her as bait.

GABRIELLE:

What did she try to steal?

XENA (gives him a probing look):

Something to do with the Olympians?

AUTOLYCUS:

Yeah.

XENA:

Why am I not surprised.

[FLASHBACK]

Camera pans back to show a large cave illuminated in a red glow. Hephaestus is in a corner making weapons presumably for Ares. Zeus appears in a golden light. Hephaestus looks up from his work but does not move.

HEPHAESTUS:

What can I do for you, Zeus?

ZEUS:

I need you to make me a chalice of sorts.

HEPHAESTUS:

Another present for Mom?

ZEUS (irritated):

No. I want it to be in the form of a statue, and made of solid gold, I also want it sealed.

HEPHAESTUS (looks interested):

Well that's not an everyday request.

ZEUS:

Just do it!

HEPHAESTUS:

Fine, fine...don't get your thunderbolts in a twist, Dad.

Hephaestus picks up a piece of parchment and a quill. He licks the end and waits patiently for Zeus to describe what he wants.

ZEUS:

This statue must be stronger than the brass jar that held Ares.

HEPHAESTUS:

See you don't want to mention that little incident in front of him, I accidentally said someth--

Hephaestus stops when he sees the look on Zeus' face. The King of the Gods doesn't look too impressed.

ZEUS:

As I was saying, it must be strong. I don't want a Hydra to be able to get in this thing...or even worse, Hera.

HEPHAESTUS (under his breath):

That was way harsh...

ZEUS:

Sapphires for eyes, rubies for lips, make it beautiful, make it quick.

HEPHAESTUS:

I'll have it done in a candle mark, what exactly do you wanna put in it?

ZEUS (pulls out the white ball of light):

This.

[END OF FLASHBACK]

GABRIELLE:

Wow. So Eurystheus has this statue now? And that's the statue Anticlea wanted to steal? Obviously, she's ambitious.

XENA (chuckles):

A chip off the old block.

AUTOLYCUS:

The story I heard is, Eurystheus is completely obsessed with the damn statue. Who knows what he might do to someone who tried to steal it...

GABRIELLE:

So what are *you* going to do?

AUTOLYCUS:

Rescue my daughter, what else?

XENA:

Sounds like you could use some help.

FADE OUT

ACT TWO

FADE IN

Close up of a puddle of water on a gray stone floor, pan back to see a wall where water is dripping down. The sound of water hitting water is incredibly loud and slowly dies down to the sound of crying. We move across to see Anticlea huddled in a corner, her long hair hanging forward, covering her face.

Two guards are sitting at a table playing a game of rock, dagger, parchment. The older of the two looks over at the girl and gives an irritated snort.

GUARD #1:

Is she ever going to shut up?

Anticlea looks up quickly and fresh tears stream down her cheeks. Both guards look at her for a moment.

GUARD #2:

Well not if you keep asking that, it seems to set her off even worse. You have three daughters; I thought you of all people would be slightly more sympathetic.

GUARD #1:

Look, my daughters never tried to steal from our King before.

GUARD #2:

You got a point there. I'm just not sure sticking her down here is the right thing to do.

Anticlea sobs loudly yet again rather dramatically.

GUARD #1:

That's it! I need to rest my legs and stretch my ears...dammit, I mean the other way round. See what a state she's gotten me into? I'm going go get something to eat, want anything?

GUARD #2:

No thanks; I'll be fine.

The older man gets up and moves toward the exit. He turns back and spares a knowing glance for his companion before slipping out. The second guard stares at the young girl silently for a few minutes before she looks up.

ANTICLEA (irritated):

What?

GUARD #2 (smiles awkwardly):

My name's Laertes.

ANTICLEA (softens):

Anticlea.

LAERTES:

Yeah, I know.

ANTICLEA (whispers):

What are they going to do to me?

LAERTES:

I really don't know. You're the first person that I know of that ever tried to steal from the King. He's not exactly known for handing out candy and kissing babies. (pause) Why did you do it? Was it just the money?

ANTICLEA (ponders whether to tell or not, gets a feeling she can trust him):

No. It wasn't that at all. (sighs) Ever since I was little my father would tell me wonderful stories. Adventures of Xena, Hercules, slaying hydras, defeating armies... He knew them; I even met Hercules a few times. My father was a thief, and yet he was friends with these wonderful people. They saw good in him, so did I. The last job he ever did almost killed him. King Eurystheus hired him to steal a statue, he heard some story and wanted it.

[FLASHBACK]

Young King Eurystheus looks around the small town with disgust. He is surrounded by dozens of guards and looks as if this is the last place he wants to be. He slowly makes his way towards a door and knocks. The door swings open and a woman in her mid twenties with long chestnut color hair is standing there.

PENELOPE (smiles brightly):

May I help you?

YOUNG KING EURYSTHEUS:

Ah yes, I'm looking for Autolycus.

PENELOPE:

Come in; come in. Autolycus, honey, there's someone here to see you.

Autolycus rises and shakes hands with the King before motioning to sit.

AUTOLYCUS:

What brings you to my home?

YOUNG KING EURYSTHEUS (looks pointedly at Penelope):

I want to discuss a matter of business with you.

A startled look overcomes Autolycus' face before he smiles slightly and clears his throat.

AUTOLYCUS:

Penny, can you please get our guest a mug of water, he must be thirsty.

PENELOPE (smiles obliviously):

Be back before you can say "slay a hydra".

The cheerful Penelope happily goes off to fetch some water. King Eurystheus pulls a map out of a saddlebag and opens it before laying it upon the table.

YOUNG KING EURYSTHEUS:

I've been told you are the best; I need the best. I'm offering to pay you three thousand dinars to steal a small statue for me.

AUTOLYCUS (smiles slightly):

What's the catch?

YOUNG KING EURYSTHEUS:

There is a little tiny story behind the statue, nothing big.

AUTOLYCUS:

No story, no Autolycus. I want to know what I'm getting myself into.

YOUNG KING EURYSTHEUS (defeated sigh):

Years ago when only a few mortals roamed the earth, Zeus became infatuated with a water nymph named Inyx. He stalked her day and night, never letting her rest. After months of Inyx denying him, the King of the Gods decided he wasn't going to take no for an answer. But as he accosted her, Hera appeared and answered the nymph's prayers. Hera saved her soul, or so she thought. It is said that after the Queen of the Gods left, Zeus imprisoned her soul in a solid golden statue.

AUTOLYCUS:

So you want me to steal a statue that belongs to Zeus?

YOUNG KING EURYSTHEUS:

Belonged. He's dead now thanks to Hercules and the Warrior Princess.

AUTOLYCUS:

Look, I'm not really a big fan of stealing from the Gods, even dead ones. It tends to come back and bite you.

YOUNG KING EURYSTHEUS (smirks):

Fine then, I'll just get Gyges to do it. He's pretty new on the scene but I heard he can become invisible.

King Eurystheus stands and turns to leave but is halted by Autolycus also standing quickly.

AUTOLYCUS:

Fine...I'll do it. I need a day or two to get prepared.

YOUNG KING EURYSTHEUS:

Wonderful.

[END OF FLASHBACK]

ANTICLEA:

While my father was stealing the statue, he fell into a trap...he went missing for over a year, and my mother died while giving birth to me. Every day of his life, he has regretted that she died alone, and blamed your King and that stupid statue. For as long as I remember, I was going to get that statue back. I was hoping that your King wanted it badly enough to be miserable without it...maybe as miserable as my father was without my mother.

LAERTES:

So this is a vengeance thing. Do you really think your father wanted you to do this?

ANTICLEA:

I needed to do it!

LAERTES (softly):

You don't blame King Eurystheus; you blame yourself for your mother's death.

CUT TO

Xena, Gabrielle and Autolycus are walking along a worn dirt road. Everyone is silent, even the birds are keeping quiet. Tall dark, green trees tower over the three, casting shadows in every direction. Xena stops and looks around for a moment.

XENA (whispering):

Three in the trees, four on the ground--think you're up to it, Autolycus?

AUTOLYCUS:

Been a long time but I think I'll live. (grin)

XENA:

Ayiyiyiyi...

Xena flips up onto one of the tree branches and knocks out one of the men who falls to the road with a loud thud. The four men on the ground come out of hiding and rush the bard and thief.

GABRIELLE:

Work out time.

She pulls out her sais and easily knocks her attacker unconscious. Autolycus has a bit of a harder fight but eventually manages to get two soldiers to knock each other out. Xena flips from one branch to another and disposes of the other two in the trees. She jumps down and puts the pinch of the last fighter.

XENA:

30 seconds, no blood to brain, yadda, yadda, yadda.

SOLDIER (finding it hard to talk):

I'm aware of that.

XENA:

So start talking, 25 seconds.

SOLDIER:

King Eurystheus sent us, he wanted to make sure Autolycus came alone.

Xena takes the pinch off him and he passes out.

XENA:

Well now he has company.

GABRIELLE:

What do we do with these guys?

XENA:

Ah, let them sleep it off. (smiles sweetly)

FADE OUT

ACT THREE

FADE IN

Anticlea is bright red with fury and she's now standing. Her hands are wrapped around the cell bars so tight that her knuckles are white.

ANTICLEA (her voice thick with hate):

How dare you! Your stupid King killed my mother! You yourself said he wasn't a nice guy. So why are you defending him, huh?

LAERTES:

I wasn't defending him, I was just...

ANTICLEA (shakes her head and interrupts):

And I thought *you* were a nice guy. Guess I was wrong.

LAERTES (gets up and steps close to the bars of the cell and shouts):

I'm not the one going around stealing things!

ANTICLEA (reaches through the bars and grabs his shirt):

You're just as much of a jerk as your King! (sarcastic) You two related?

LAERTES (growls):

If you must know, he's my father!

ANTICLEA (shocked):

Then what are you doing down here in the dungeon?

LAERTES (looks down):

It's Dad's idea of punishment...I told him he shouldn't be putting so many people in the dungeons and he sent me down here to guard them until I've learned my lesson.

ANTICLEA (fiercely):

And you're still sticking up for him!

LAERTES (defensive):

You love your father even though he's a thief. I love mine even though he's a despot.

ANTICLEA (derisively):

You're just a spoiled royal brat, aren't you?

LAERTES:

And you're just a no-good thief!

ANTICLEA:

Pig!

LAERTES:

Harpy!

While shouting at each other, the two have been getting closer and closer; they now stand nose to nose. They look as if they're about to hurl more insults...and then their lips are joined in a passionate kiss.

CUT TO

The outside of a castle. Two guards are standing at the gate engrossed in conversation.

GUARD OUTSIDE GATE #1:

Light and airy in the summer but so breezy in the winter.

GUARD OUTSIDE GATE #2:

Togas? I dunno... In theory they sound great but when you get down to basics, you're wearing a bed sheet.

GUARD OUTSIDE GATE #1:

Romans! What do you expect? The men wear skirts for Gaia's sake.

GUARD OUTSIDE GATE #2:

I could never take an order from a man in a skirt let alone wear one.

GUARD OUTSIDE GATE #1:

I don't know...I think you've got the legs for it.

Pan back to see Xena, Gabrielle and Autolykus crouched behind some bushes. All three are desperately trying not to laugh.

GABRIELLE (to Xena):

So do we have some elaborate plan to get in there?

XENA:

I really don't think we need one.

AUTOLYCUS (sarcastic):

So what, we just walk in there?

XENA:

That's what I was thinking.

GABRIELLE:

Are you crazy? (pauses) Actually, considering what happened in Lycia last week...don't answer that. (grins)

XENA (growls):

Ha ha ha. Very funny.

AUTOLYCUS:

What are you two on about?

XENA:

Never mind. I don't think they're a threat, just walk on by, say hi and keep on walking.

CUT TO

Anticlea and Laertes still kissing through the bars.

CUT TO

Xena, Gabrielle and Autolykus standing up and brushing twigs off themselves.

CUT TO

Anticlea and Laertes still kissing through the bars.

CUT TO

Xena is the first to move and she makes her way towards the gate. Autolycus and Gabrielle follow reluctantly behind.

XENA:

Hi!

Xena walks confidently passed the guards; they look up quickly.

GUARD OUTSIDE GATE #1 and #2:

Morning.

They both go back to the previous conversation. Gabrielle and Autolycus look at each other and shrug before following their friend.

GUARD OUTSIDE GATE #1:

Hey wait a minute.

Xena, Gabrielle and Autolycus all turn and hide their worried expressions.

GUARD OUTSIDE GATE #2 (to Xena):

What do you think of a man in a toga?

GUARD OUTSIDE GATE #1:

Yeah; manly or not?

XENA (raises an eyebrow):

Um...depends on the wearer.

GABRIELLE (smiles):

She prefers black leather.

The three friends continue passing the guards who once again go back to their conversation.

XENA (hisses):

Gabrielle, I did *not* appreciate that!

GABRIELLE (brightly):

So where do you think Anticlea will be?

XENA:

Most likely the dungeon.

CUT TO

Laertes and Anticlea both pull back rather flushed. Smiles quickly turn to annoyed pouts as they remember the fighting.

ANTICLEA (breaking the ice):
So your father is the King?

LAERTES:
Unfortunately.

ANTICLEA:
If you were here in this cell, do you think your father would come and save you?

LAERTES:
No, not my father...but yours...

ANTICLEA:
I just...

Laertes moves closer, Anticlea moves closer, their lips lock yet again. Xena, Gabrielle and Autolycus burst through the door just in time to see the private moment. Xena raises an eyebrow wryly; Gabrielle blushes; Autolycus looks furious.

XENA (smart-alecky):
Told you she'd be in the dungeon.

GABRIELLE:
And under such terrible torture, too.

AUTOLYCUS:
Get your hands off my daughter!

Laertes and Anticlea both turn suddenly at the yelling.

ANTICLEA (stunned):
Daddy?

FADE OUT

ACT FOUR

FADE IN

Back outside the gates, the two guards suddenly stop their conversation.

GUARD OUTSIDE GATE #1:
Hey, weren't we supposed to be looking out for something?

GUARD OUTSIDE GATE #2:

Yeah, that thief's father.

GUARD OUTSIDE GATE #1:

Don't 'spose it was the three that passed by...do you?

GUARD OUTSIDE GATE #2 (shakes head):

What, the leather girl, the small blonde and the guy with the mustache?

GUARD OUTSIDE GATE #1:

Yeah...them.

GUARD OUTSIDE GATE #2 (frowns in consternation):

So which one of them was supposed to be the girls' father?

CUT TO

The dungeon. Autolycus is doing his best imitation of Xena's death glare.

ANTICLEA:

Now Daddy, I know this doesn't look very good...

AUTOLYCUS:

Not look very good? What were you trying to do, charm your way out?

XENA (quietly to Gabrielle):

Looks like she was doing a good job.

GABRIELLE:

I don't think she needs our help.

Autolycus turns to give his friends "his version" of the glare.

XENA:

Hey, don't you try that look on me, mister. I invented it.

ANTICLEA (registers that there are other people in the room):

Who are you?

XENA (points to Gabrielle):

That's Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE (points to Xena):

That's Xena.

ANTICLEA:

You're supposed to be dead.

XENA:

Luckily, things don't always turn out the way they're supposed to.

ANTICLEA:

So you're the real Xena and Gertrude?

GABRIELLE:

That's Gabrielle.

ANTICLEA (apologetic look):

Sorry.

GABRIELLE (under her breath):

Looks like he talked more about you than me...

Xena glances at her, raising an eyebrow.

GABRIELLE:

She thought my name was Gertrude!

XENA (studies Gabrielle for a moment):

You don't really look like a Gertrude.

AUTOLYCUS:

Can we get back to the point?

GABRIELLE and XENA:

Sure.

AUTOLYCUS (stamps his foot):

Anticlea! Come out here this minute!

ANTICLEA:

Um, dad? I happen to be locked in a cell.

AUTOLYCUS:

Sorry. (to Laertes) Open the cell, you vile creature!

LAERTES:

That was uncalled for.

Laertes takes out the key and unlocks the door.

AUTOLYCUS:

Ah, that's better. (stamps his foot and repeats in an identical tone) Anticlea! Come out here this minute!

Anticlea remains glued to the spot.

AUTOLYCUS:

Now what?

ANTICLEA (crosses her arms over her chest):

Apologize to Laertes, Father.

AUTOLYCUS:

You have got to be kidding me! (realizes that she isn't) Fine, fine, I'm very sorry I called you a vile creature, Laertes...honesty isn't always the best policy! Hah!

Xena shakes her head and sits down, realizing that this could take all day. Gabrielle starts fidgeting and looks very uncomfortable.

ANTICLEA:

For your information, he's a Prince!

AUTOLYCUS:

So what's he doing, moonlighting as a prison guard?

ANTICLEA:

His father is King Eurystheus.

AUTOLYCUS (smiles gleefully):

Really...well, now you're a vile creature who's bait.

GABRIELLE:

Huh?

XENA:

Can we stop with the bait, please?

AUTOLYCUS (smug):

Have a better plan do you? (realizes that he just talked back to Xena and goes white)

XENA:

Actually--yeah. But first, I need to know something. (to Anticlea) Anticlea, why did you want to steal the statue?

ANTICLEA (angrily):

Because it ruined my father's life!

GABRIELLE (looks at Autolycus):

Wait a minute...when you got trapped underneath the temple of Zeus, this is what you were stealing, wasn't it? This statue?

AUTOLYCUS (slightly embarrassed):

Well, not to mince words...yeah.

LAERTES (bitterly):

I wish you'd stolen the damn statue! As time goes by, my father just becomes more and more obsessed with it... He's not paying any attention to the affairs of state anymore...though, of course, in his present condition, it's probably *better* if he doesn't get too involved in governing.

XENA:

Really... (thinking) Come on, Laertes. I think you can help us out.

CUT TO

The throne room. King Eurystheus is pacing back and forth, literally wearing a hole in the carpet. The long piece of red shag has seen better days. The statue of Inyx has been moved to the throne room. It is dressed in rich garb.

The camera pans back to show a courtier on his knees.

COURTIER:

Your majesty, pardon my insolence...but I beg you to get rid of statue! Think of all the money you could make if you sold it! Instead, you are plundering the treasury to buy those gorgeous clothes for it!

KING EURYSTHEUS:

No, I won't.

COURTIER:

Won't get rid of the statue?

KING EURYSTHEUS:

Won't pardon your insolence. Guards, take him away.

The guards standing at the door glance at each other a little doubtfully but then come over and grab the courtier.

COURTIER (being dragged off):

No, no. Nooooo!!

CUT TO

Xena hiding behind a curtain waiting for the guards to leave. The doors finally shut and she steps out.

KING EURYSTHEUS (startled):

What do *you* want?

XENA:

I'm here to make you an offer you can't refuse.

KING EURYSTHEUS (lewd grin):

Oh really?

XENA (rolls her eyes, then pulls Laertes out from behind the curtain, holding her chakram to his throat):

The statue for your son.

KING EURYSTHEUS:

Keep my son, he's not worth half as much as that statue.

XENA:

Such a caring father. Okay then, what about your life for the statue?

She points the chakram at him.

KING EURYSTHEUS:

Is that supposed to scare me?

XENA (smiles sweetly):

No, but this is.

She send her chakram flying at him but at the last minute it separates. One side goes for a wall and the other for the statue. The statue falls of its pedestal and lands on the stone floor with a crash.

KING EURYSTHEUS (blanches):

You will regret that!

AUTOLYCUS:

No, she won't.

The thief steps out of the shadows, followed by Gabrielle and Anticlea.

KING EURYSTHEUS:

Autolycus...my, my...it's been a while. Your offspring tried to steal my statue. Your idea, no doubt?

ANTICLEA:

He had nothing to do with it!

KING EURYSTHEUS:

How sweet. She's standing up for you.

XENA:

Are we going to stand around all day and talk?

KING EURYSTHEUS:

Now where are my manners? Guards!

A group of guards rush in with swords drawn.

Xena smiles like a cat who just got the cream and draws her sword. Gabrielle pulls out her sais and they both rush to meet the guards. The fight begins.

LAERTEUS (trying to shout over the sound of clashing swords):

Father, you've got to stop this madness. Your obsession with this statue is ruining you and the kingdom!

KING EURYSTHEUS:

And what are you going to do about that?

The camera pans over to the fallen statue and focuses on a crack in its side that the chakram made. Slowly a white light appears to be seeping out. Suddenly the white light turns into a ball of light and that in turn turns into a white dove. Xena, Gabrielle, Autolycus, Anticlea and the guards all stop in their tracks and watch. The bird flies out the window and disappears.

ANTICLEA:

The story was true! The nymph's soul really was imprisoned in the statue!

KING EURYSTHEUS (screams and runs toward the statue):

No, no, no, no! My statue, my beautiful statue has lost its soul! (he cradles the statue in his arms, then turns to Xena, sniveling) You, you...you broke my toy! (breaks into loud childlike sobs)

LAERTEUS (to the guards):

The King isn't well. Take him to his chambers!

The guards hesitate, but then two of them come up to the king, take him by the arms and lead him away as he continues to cry.

LAERTEUS:

That was easier than I thought.

XENA:

Do you wish to claim the throne?

LAERTEUS:

Can I do that?

XENA (shakes her head):

In your father's condition... I don't think anyone would mind.

The remaining guards look at each other, then salute Laertes.

GUARDS (in a chorus):

Your royal majesty!

LAERTEUS (flabbergasted):

Wow...I mean...wow.

GABRIELLE (quietly to Xena):

You think he's ready to be the king?

LAERTEUS (to the guards):

All right...go to the dungeons and release everyone my father has imprisoned for speaking out against him!

HEAD GUARD:

Yes, sire.

The guards leave.

XENA (quietly to Gabrielle):

He's getting off to a pretty good start.

CUT TO

Xena, Gabrielle, Autolycus and Anticlea walking out through the city gates. The same two guards are still there, engrossed in conversation.

GUARD OUTSIDE GATE #1:

I'm telling you, they conceal too much of a woman's figure...

GUARD OUTSIDE GATE #2:

Personally, I think kimonos look very ladylike.

Xena, Gabrielle and Autolycus smirk at each other as they walk past the guards.

GABRIELLE:

So Anticlea, you think you might come back to visit Laertes?

ANTICLEA (blushes):

Maybe.

AUTOLYCUS:

No way!

ANTICLEA:

Daddy...I'm a big girl.

AUTOLYCUS:

Yeah, that's precisely what I'm worried about. (catching her exasperated look) Okay, okay...we'll see.

XENA:

I have to say this has been the strangest day I've had in a long time.

GABRIELLE (mischievously):

You mean, stranger than the day Theias cast that spell and--

XENA (curtly):

I hear you.

AUTOLYCUS:

What are you on about? What's that about a spell?

XENA (with exaggerated enthusiasm):

But that's enough about us! Autolycus, my friend, let's talk about you... (their voices fade as they walk away) ...we've got so much catching up to do...

FADE OUT

THE END

[Gabrielle never did get her Indian food. She is still looking for a good place that offers camp delivery.]