

SHIPPER SEASON SEVEN



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Story By: Aurora
Written By: Aurora
Edited By: Amber, LadyKate and Tango
Story Inspired By: Maureen
Collage By: Aurora
Images Gathered By: Aurora

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Logline

When a relaxing vacation is cut short by a deadly disease, Xena, Gabrielle, Eve and Virgil must help a village by stopping a terrible creature that has been haunting it.

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TEASER

FADE IN

Xena, Gabrielle and Eve are leading their horses through a forest, beside a fast-flowing river. It is overcast and looks like it could rain any minute.

GABRIELLE:

I hope we get to Messene soon. (looks up at the sky) Those clouds don't look too friendly--I'd rather not get caught in a storm.

XENA:

Nothing wrong with a little rain.

GABRIELLE (indicating her velvet top and skirt):

Of course not, as long as there's a roof between it, and this outfit. It takes forever to dry.

XENA:

You're the one who said leather doesn't match your complexion. Buuuut, if you rethink your position, you could do some shopping in Messene.

GABRIELLE (perks up):

Shopping?

XENA:

Messene is known for its tanners--best leather for miles around. (chuckles) And that's about all there is to see there.

The three of them continue on until they get to a bridge over the river. They cross it, leading their horses. There are a few holes and loose boards in the bridge, which they watch out for as they cross. On the other side, there is a man standing with his horse--which is tied to a tree--tending to its leg, trying to bandage it with a piece of cloth--but the horse is agitated, moving around and frustrating the man. He is grumbling under his breath.

Xena, Gabrielle and Eve see and walk toward him.

EVE:

You need any help there?

The man lets go of his horse and turns around. It is Virgil. He smiles and embraces them warmly.

XENA:

Virgil, it's good too see you again.

GABRIELLE (grins):

We have *got* to stop meeting like this.

VIRGIL (laughs):

Why? I quite like it. (motions over his shoulder at the road) I was just on my way to Messene to get some leather for a new saddle. (pats horse's flank) Evidently, he prefers the old one.

EVE (looking at the horse):
What happened?

VIRGIL:

Oh, he stepped on one of those loose boards on the bridge and went through. I don't think it's serious, but he won't let me close enough to bind it properly. (looks back at the horse) Stubborn fellow.

EVE (smiling):
So we saw.

XENA:

Want me to take a look?

VIRGIL:

You know, I was hoping you'd say that.

Virgil hands Xena the bandage he has been holding throughout the conversation. Xena takes it, and examines the horse.

XENA:

Hey, you're all right, aren't you? (she strokes him, calming him down) You just scraped your ankle here. You're gonna be all right. (kneels down and starts wrapping the cloth around the horse's front left leg) Just need to be careful for a few days, huh? (stands up) There you go--he'll be fine.

VIRGIL (smiles):

Thanks. You know, you're annoyingly good at that.

XENA (deadpan):

I have many skills.

GABRIELLE:

And so modest, too.

VIRGIL:

So, are you three also on the way to Messene?

XENA:

Yep. We're planning on staying there for a few days, before the next catastrophe shows up.

VIRGIL:

Sounds like a good idea. Mind if I join you for a while?

GABRIELLE:

Not at all.

Several raindrops splash into the dust, more follow.

GABRIELLE:

And I think we'd better hurry if we want to beat this storm.

EVE:

I think it's beaten us already.

XENA:

Come on, then.

They continue onward toward the village, Virgil's horse limping slightly, but not badly hurt.

CUT TO

A long shot of the four of them going through the gates of Messene. It's almost dark, and the rain is coming down harder.

CUT TO

A crowded, noisy tavern. There are a lot of people there, mostly trying to get out of the rain. A young, friendly-looking man, the innkeeper, approaches them.

GABRIELLE:

Can we stay here tonight?

INNKEEPER:

Of course. You're not from 'round these parts, are you?

XENA:

No, just spending a few days here.

EVE (looks around):

It's a nice place.

INNKEEPER:

Well, it would be if it wasn't for all that. (jerks his head towards the entrance, where a bedraggled couple are making their way in) Drag all the mud in, they do. (sighs) It should clear up in a few hours, though--won't be this noisy for you all night.

XENA:

Thank you.

INNKEEPER:

Come with me. I'll find you some rooms.

They follow him through a doorway at the back of the inn.

CUT TO

It is night, no longer raining. Outside, a young woman is carrying a pail towards a well in the center of the village; she goes to dip it in. Suddenly, the pail drops from her hand and she springs back from the well, wide-eyed and speechless with horror.



A giant object--it is too dark out to tell what it is, only a shadow is seen--rises from the well. In the dim moonlight a brownish-yellow cloud appears in the air, surrounds the woman and then dissipates. The woman seems to grow weak and falls to the ground, unconscious. The object then retracts back into the well, all without a sound.

CUT TO

Xena, Gabrielle and Eve are asleep in their beds when suddenly, a shattering scream erupts from outside.

EVE:

What was that?

XENA (sitting up):

Our cue.

FADE OUT

ACT ONE

FADE IN

Xena, Gabrielle and Eve exchange a glance and rush to the window to look outside. There is a small group of people standing in the square around the well with torches in their hands.

EVE:

What's going on there?

XENA:

Don't know, but we're going to find out.

GABRIELLE:

Or die trying.

Eve and Xena give her stunned looks.

GABRIELLE:

Okay, bad joke. I'm not a morning person. Especially when morning happens at night.

Xena has put her armor on while they have been talking and reaches for her chakram and sword. She, Gabrielle and Eve rush out of the room.

CUT TO

Outside. The three of them run through the dark square, toward the crowd of people; everyone is looking at something in front of them. They bump into Virgil, who looks tired.

XENA:

Virgil, what's going on?

VIRGIL:

I was hoping you could tell me.

Xena, Gabrielle, Eve, and Virgil move through to the front of the crowd to see what everyone is looking at. A young man, Vasilis, in his early twenties, is kneeling beside the woman at the well. He has short dirty-blond hair and a gentle look about him. An elderly woman, presumably a healer, is beside him, sprinkling something on her.

XENA (in her best authoritative voice):

What happened?

Vasilis looks up at her. His eyes are worried.

VASILIS:

I thought she was dead, at first--I screamed for help. She's not--but I don't know what's wrong with her.

GABRIELLE:

She was just lying there when you found her?

HEALER (clucks):

She has been struck with a terrible disease.

XENA (skeptical):

Very sudden, for a disease.

VASILIS:

She was fine just a few hours ago!

EVE (to the healer):

What kind of disease could this be?

HEALER:

I don't know, but look at her face--she's burning up.

VASILIS (almost crying):

I can't lose her. I can't lose another sister.

The healer starts to sprinkle more herbs over the woman's body.

GABRIELLE:

What are those herbs for?

HEALER:

Perhaps evil spirits have invaded her body and caused this malady. This will help ward them off.

Xena makes a sarcastic sound, but says nothing.

VIRGIL:

Are you sure you don't know what else could have caused it?

HEALER:

If I did, I'd be giving her the cure.

The woman moans softly.

VASILIS:

She's in pain! Isn't there anything you can do?

EVE:

I might be able to help. (shyly) I know of some herbs that could ease the pain, quite common ones. It won't take long to find them; I'll be back soon.

She tries to leave, but Xena puts an arm out to stop her, doing the "protective mother" bit.

XENA:

Eve, you won't find anything in the middle of the night! (waves in the direction of the forest) It's pitch black out there.

EVE (irritated):

Mother, this woman is hurt!



XENA:

Wait a few more hours, until there's at least some light to see the plants. (looks appraisingly at the sick woman) She'll hold out until morning.

VASILIS:

If you wait until morning, she might be dead!

HEALER:

We can't do anything now. We don't know what's wrong and it's the middle of the night, as this woman has pointed out. (gentler) I don't mean to sound callous, Vasilis, but if her illness takes a turn for the worse, no painkillers could be of help. Go and get some sleep, all of you.

EVE (not impressed; but she knows she can't fight Xena and the healer at the same time):

All right. I'll find them in the morning.

VIRGIL:

I'll come with you, if you like.

Eve smiles. Vasilis stands up and looks at Eve and Virgil.

VASILIS:

I hope your herbs work.

CUT TO

Morning. Virgil and Eve are standing outside the inn with Xena and Gabrielle.

EVE:

We'll be back soon, Mother. Stop worrying about me.

XENA:

It's my job to worry.

Eve rolls her eyes.

EVE (to Virgil; only half-kidding):

Come on. Let's go before she decides to ground us.

Eve and Virgil head off into the forest surrounding the village. Gabrielle turns to Xena.

GABRIELLE:

You know, for all she's your daughter; she is a grown woman. One more capable than most of looking after herself.

XENA (ruefully smiling):

I know. But, like I said, it's my job.

GABRIELLE:

She and Virgil will be fine.

Pause.

XENA:

I'm turning into my mother...I can feel it.

They both laugh.

GABRIELLE (sobering):

We've got to find out what's wrong with that woman. You don't really think it could be evil spirits, do you?

XENA:

No. (smiles slightly) At least, none that I've met.

GABRIELLE:

Well, I suppose that's something. Still, it does seem too sudden to be...natural. She just keeled over--what would cause that?

XENA:

I don't know--

MAN #1:

I do.

Xena and Gabrielle look over at a man, in his late thirties, walking up to them. He has light brown, long hair and a gaunt look about him, as though he has been getting little food and sleep.

XENA (angry):

If you do, you better have a good reason for not speaking up last night.

MAN #1:

Like you said, last night it would have done no good. I know she has a few more days--I figured it would be slightly more believable when people are fully awake.

XENA:

All right, we're awake. So tell us.

MAN #1:

My village, Sphacteria, had the same problem: people getting seriously ill with no warning--and no one could figure out why. People were dying, friends, neighbors... My sister fell ill a week before she was to get married, and died, too. I lost my parents and two sisters to the disease.

GABRIELLE:

I'm sorry.

MAN #1 (nods):

I left, because I had no choice. We all did--to stay meant certain death.

XENA (bluntly; she is not interested in sob-stories--she wants to get to the point):

So, did you discover what caused it?

MAN #1:

Yes. It's a creature, a serpent dragon called the quivre. It has no legs or wings but it has venomous breath, bringing plague onto anything that it touches--it can kill plants instantly, leaving the land barren. Everywhere, the quivre means death and destruction. We're lucky there's only one left--Hercules slew most of its kind years ago.

Xena and Gabrielle glance at each other.

GABRIELLE:

I don't blame it for being a little...angry...with humanity.

XENA:

I'm guessing it had a nasty habit of being angry with humanity *before* Hercules became angry with it. (to the man) Do you know how it can be defeated?

MAN #1:

That I don't know. No one's been able to get close enough to find out, without being struck by the disease. But I think I can tell you why that woman fell ill--

GABRIELLE:

Why?

MAN #1:

The quivre likes water. It must have emerged from the forest in the rain last night, and become stranded when the storm cleared.

GABRIELLE:

And then it found the well.

MAN #1:

That would be my guess. The creature was probably looking for a way back into the woods. I believe it usually makes its home near a lake or a stream...

XENA (looking worried; to Gabrielle):

I have a nasty feeling Eve and Virgil are gonna manage to run into this thing. Gabrielle, stay here and tell the village what we know about this quivre. I'm going to go help them out.

GABRIELLE (attempting a joke):

All right, Mom.

Xena rolls her eyes.

XENA:

I told her it wasn't safe.

She walks out of the village, Gabrielle watching as she does so. The man looks at Gabrielle, thinking. He suddenly smiles; he has had an idea.

MAN #1:

There is one other thing that may help you...

CUT TO

Eve and Virgil are walking in the forest, picking up plants and examining them meticulously. Most are discarded, but a few are put in a small basket Eve carries.

VIRGIL:

How many more do we need?

EVE (looking at the basket, which is about half full):

A few more, I think. (smells a leaf and puts it in the basket) They're not strong--if any more people get sick we won't have any left. I just hope they work.

There is silence for a moment as Eve reaches down and picks another plant.

VIRGIL (awkwardly):

It's...kind of you to help these people.

EVE:

You mean, you wouldn't have expected it from the Bitch of Rome. (bitterly) And you'd have been right.

VIRGIL:

That's not what... Well... Yes, I suppose that's true.

EVE:

After what I did, I expect nothing--and yet, there is such kindness in people. I look into those faces and wonder, what would they think of me if they knew what kind of monster I was? How much suffering I caused? (sadly) I hope only to one day deserve their kindness. I will never expect their forgiveness.

VIRGIL:

Perhaps no one can *expect* forgiveness--but those people, if they saw you now, they couldn't hold hatred in their heart forever. Even those who can't forgive will stop hating, one day.

EVE:

And if they do, what will they have left? Only pain, pain which I caused--by destroying their lives, taking away their families. (shakes head) No one should have to hurt over those they love.

VIRGIL:

But that's a part of loving someone! Having to hurt over them, to treasure every moment you're with them. To learn to forgive.

Virgil and Eve look at each other a little uneasily. Virgil lifts his hand and gently rubs her cheek.

VIRGIL:

It's hard to forgive others--but the hardest thing is forgiving yourself.

Eve looks down at her collection of herbs.

EVE (awkwardly):

We'd better get back. My mother will have sent out the search parties by now, I expect.

Virgil is staring at something up ahead of him.

EVE:

What is it?

Virgil walks forward into a part of the forest that looks different from what they've previously been in. The grass and shrubs are shriveled and dying and the trees have no leaves on them.

VIRGIL:

What's happened here? Looks like someone's set fire to the place.

EVE:

And what is that disgusting smell?

We see a creature slithering in the shadows of the forest, behind a large pile of rocks. Slight fear grows on both Eve and Virgil's faces. The creature doesn't come any closer for a moment, but then it appears out of the shadows, crawling toward Virgil and Eve. In the bright sunlight it can be seen perfectly.



Its body is at least thirty feet long, and it slithers like a snake. Its scales are an interesting shade of orange, with a healthy amount of brown and yellow all mixed together.

VIRGIL:

What...is that thing?

EVE:

I think we're about to find out...

The creature stares at them with unblinking, reptilian eyes. Eve and Virgil slowly back away. The creature raises its head and directs a foul breath at them; a brownish cloud forms in the air and at the sight of it, Eve and Virgil turn and run back into the forest, towards the village. The cloud drifts after them for a while, until it finally dissipates into the air.

CUT TO



Xena is in the forest, searching for Eve and Virgil. She moves cautiously, her sword drawn, prepared for anything.

ARES (appearing before her, blocking her way):

Now, what are you doing this fine day? Lose something?

XENA (shoulders past):

Yeah. My patience.

ARES (turns around, sarcastic and a little put out):

Oh, that's too bad--it's always been your strong suit. Should I forget about offering to help then?

XENA (softens; she didn't mean to be cross with him):

Sorry. I'm having a bad day.

ARES:

I can tell.

Xena continues to walk through the forest, looking. Ares follows.

ARES:

So, you going to answer my question?

XENA:

I'm looking for Virgil and Eve.

ARES:

They're lost?

XENA:

No. But they might be in danger if I don't find them.

ARES (interested):

Danger? What kind of danger?

XENA:

What is it with the questions today, Ares? You're starting to sound like Gabrielle.

ARES (shudders):

Zeus knows what the world would be like with more than one of her.

They turn a corner, and a lake comes into view. Xena stops. She looks around for a moment suspiciously, and then sees the same patch of charred forest that Virgil and Eve saw. In the shadows, something large and scaly moves slowly, almost imperceptibly. Abruptly, the guivre's head emerges from the trees. Xena and Ares stop in their tracks.

XENA:

You wanted to know what the danger was. Well...now you know.

ARES:

I would've been content with a description.

XENA:

That's Gabrielle's specialty.

ARES:

I take that back. Can't beat the real thing.

The guivre lowers its head to stare at them.

ARES:

Uhh...I'm no expert on these things, but whatever it is you wear that's attracting it, I suggest you dump it.

XENA (sweetly):

I tried, but you wouldn't go away.

ARES:

I only attract the good stuff. You, for example.

XENA:

Ares, *move!*

The guivre slithers toward them; Xena runs forward, somersaults over its head, trying to strike it with her sword, but it simply swings its head aside and slithers around. Xena makes a few more attempts, Ares just watches her in admiration, grinning a little. The guivre lets out its breath, which swirls in the air. Xena dodges it and pushes herself and Ares down to the ground, rolling them out of the guivre's way.

ARES:

Xena, I know it's hard, but could we wait until that thing's gone? It's a little kinky with a homicidal dragon in the background.

XENA (rolls her eyes):

This is your cue to get us out of here.

ARES:

Although, if I had to die, I'd prefer it to be like that.

The guivre is crawling towards them again.

XENA:

Ares, shut up.

ARES:

It was meant to be a compliment, but...

He pulls Xena close to him--closer than she probably needs to be--and they blink out of existence in a flash of blue light.

CUT TO

The edge of the forest. The village is in sight. Xena and Ares reappear, standing up, but still close together.

ARES:

What was that?

XENA (not making much effort to step away):

It's called a guivre.

ARES:

So tell me again why you're out here with it? If you're stuck for entertainment, you know whom to call. (he starts playing with her hair)

XENA (a little annoyed by all of Ares' questions):

I told you, I'm looking for Eve and Virgil.

ARES:

...who are, at this very moment, back in the village.

XENA (glares and jerks her head away from him):

Why didn't you mention that before?



ARES (shrugs innocently):

Hey, it slipped my mind, okay? Your incredible beauty distracted me, not to mention your sunny personality.

XENA (huffs):

And watching me fight a serpent.

ARES (grins):

The highlight of my morning so far.

XENA:

Thanks for all your help.

ARES:

Well, I wouldn't want to steal your thunder. A few more of these and you'd have your own Legendary Journeys. And besides... (he touches her cheek, she closes her eyes briefly) ...you've never needed my help before.

XENA:

I don't need it now.

ARES:

'Course not. (he grins and disappears).

XENA (to herself):

But you could have offered.

FADE OUT

ACT TWO

FADE IN

Messene. Gabrielle sees Eve and Virgil emerge from the forest and looks relieved; they run to her.

GABRIELLE:

Eve! Virgil... You're all right?

EVE (impatient):

Yes, we're fine, but there's a terrible creature in the for--

GABRIELLE:

I know.

VIRGIL:

You know?

GABRIELLE:

It seems that Messene isn't the first village with this problem. It's a creature called a quivre...

EVE (looking around, not seeing Xena):

Where is my mother?

GABRIELLE:

She went looking for you not too long ago. She should be back soon.

VIRGIL:

I hope she hasn't run into this...guivre out there.

GABRIELLE:

I'm sure she'll be fine. You know her.

EVE:

That's exactly why I'm worried. She's just going to try to take it out on her own, with no thought for her safety--

GABRIELLE:

She won't have to do that--they say there's a man in the next village that has dedicated his life to killing dragons. If we can find him, he might know a way to kill the guivre.

EVE:

If he does, why is it still alive?

GABRIELLE:

That's a good question. One I'm sure Xena will ask him.

EVE:

I hope so. (lifts her basket of herbs) I better go help that woman. No one else has fallen ill?

GABRIELLE:

Not that I've heard.

EVE:

Good. (she looks at Virgil) Come on, Virgil. Gabrielle, if she's not back soon, come and find us, all right?

GABRIELLE:

She'll be back. (looks at Eve's worried expression) But all right.

EVE:

Thanks.

Eve and Virgil walk further into the village and Gabrielle stays where she is, waiting for Xena.

CUT TO

A room in the village. There's a bed, a table and two chairs. The ill woman is lying on the bed, and her brother is standing by her, watching as Eve feeds her a brew made from the herbs. Gabrielle and Virgil are watching from the chairs on the other side of the room.

VASILIS (very worried):

Is that stuff helping?

EVE (soothing):

I think so. Her fever's gone down a little.

Xena enters, and we see a relieved smile appear on her face when she sees Eve and Virgil are safe.

XENA (talking to Virgil, as Eve is still focused on the woman):

You're safe! How long have you been back?

VIRGIL:

About half an hour--we were starting to get worried about you.

XENA:

Likewise. Did Gabrielle tell you about the dragon?

GABRIELLE:

I did. They ran into it.

EVE (who has been half-listening to the conversation; from across the room, not even turning her head):

And we're both fine.

XENA:

Good. I saw it too--not pretty.

GABRIELLE:

Xena, it's a dragon--I'd start worrying if you thought it was pretty.

XENA:

Ha ha. (turns to Eve) How's she doing?

EVE (looks at her):

Her fever's going down, but it won't last long. The herbs aren't enough.

XENA:

She looks a little better--but I expect you're right.

GABRIELLE (looks at Xena):

Xena, you know that man we were talking to earlier? (Xena nods) Well, he said there might be a man in the next village that knows how to kill the quivre. He's known as the Dragon Slayer.

XENA (dryly):

How creative.

GABRIELLE:

I think we should go and see if we can find him--it's worth a shot, right?

XENA:

Yeah, it is. (to Eve and Virgil) We'll be back soon. The sooner we can find out how to get rid of it, the better.

Eve and Virgil nod. Xena and Gabrielle leave.

CUT TO

Xena and Gabrielle are walking through the forest.

GABRIELLE:

Are you sure this is the only way to the village? I don't really feel like running into the guivre *before* we know how to kill it. Do you?

XENA:

I've already run into it once.

GABRIELLE (rolls her eyes):

That's not the point.

XENA:

The man lives in Pylos, right?

GABRIELLE:

Yeah. If he's there.

XENA:

Well then, this is the fastest route.

GABRIELLE (not looking where she is going):

I sure hope you're prepared in ca--

Gabrielle is cut off when she trips over a log. She falls forward and lands in a pool of mud, probably left from the rain the night before; it splashes everywhere, including all over Xena.

They look at each other.

GABRIELLE (looking at her wet, muddy outfit):

It hadn't even dried from last night!

Xena looks at her with exaggerated seriousness, trying desperately not to look smug.



GABRIELLE:

Don't. I'll say it for you. You told me so. Velvet is impractical.



XENA:

Don't know what you're talking about. (flicks a bit of mud at Gabrielle) It's perfect for mud-wrestling.

GABRIELLE (yelps and scrambles to her feet):

Stop that!

Xena chuckles and starts to clean off her leathers; she manages it without too much difficulty.

GABRIELLE (resigned sigh):

Maybe I *should* consider leather. (sniffs air) What's that smell? (looks down at herself) Xena... There's something in this mud. Oh, *yuck!*

XENA:

The guivre must have been through here. That's great!

GABRIELLE:

Excuse me?! Which part of that is *great*, exactly? I'm covered in serpent dung!

XENA:

At least we know it's not a ghost. Or an "evil spirit".

GABRIELLE (rolling her eyes):

Splendid. But if it's all the same to you, I'd rather not turn up in Pylos like this.

XENA:

Come on. There's a lake this way, you can clean off the worst of it.

CUT TO

The same lake that Xena had seen the guivre at earlier. At the moment, the creature isn't there.

XENA:

This is where I saw the quivre before--be quick.

GABRIELLE:

I'm trying!

Gabrielle dives into the water, dressed, then takes off her clothes and starts washing them. She cleans herself off as best as she can. Xena is making sure the quivre is not in the vicinity when she hears quiet rustling in the bushes up ahead. She stiffens and motions to Gabrielle to stay still. Gabrielle stands in the water, shivering, holding the bundle of clothing. Ares walks out from behind the bush toward them, grinning.

ARES:

You know, they say there's a time and place for everything and I *really* don't think this is the time for hygiene...given the circumstances.

GABRIELLE (irritated):

Ares, would you mind? I'd rather not have an audience when I'm bathing.

ARES (holding up hands innocently):

Hey, I was here first. (looking at Xena) I thought you weren't coming back here, seeing as how there's, oh, this dangerous creature lurking around.

Xena goes to answer him but she sees the quivre appear behind him.

GABRIELLE:

I think it heard you.

Ares looks behind him.

ARES:

Aw, great. Xena, what is it with you?

The quivre slithers around the lake, circling them. They watch cautiously.

ARES:

Do we have a plan?

XENA:

It'll involve my sword.

ARES:

Any more details?

XENA:

I'll let you know once I have them.

The quivre moves closer to Xena, rears and breathes out a puff of its plague breath, which Xena skillfully avoids.

ARES:

Remember what happened last time you met up with this creature, Xena? As I remember, you had a pretty hard time trying to kill it.

XENA:

Then I'm just gonna have to try again.

Xena starts trying to stab the quivre again, dancing around it, using her mobility as well as she can. Ares watches for a moment, shrugs and starts throwing lightning bolts at it--but to no avail. They glance off the quivre's body; it hardly notices them.

XENA (over her shoulder):

Gabrielle, this would be a good time to get out of there.

GABRIELLE:

I'm with you.

Gabrielle steps out of the lake, clutching her clothes to herself. The quivre swerves away from Xena's sword and swings its head in Gabrielle's direction; it opens its jaws and exhales plague.

Gabrielle screams and rolls out of the way, dropping her clothes. Suddenly, a change comes over the quivre. Its body recoils, its face suffused with color as it tries to direct its eyes away from Gabrielle's naked figure on the ground. In a matter of seconds, the mighty dragon flees, gliding rapidly away through the bushes. Xena is stunned, along with Gabrielle and Ares.

GABRIELLE (quickly reaching for her clothes):

What happened?

XENA (stunned):

I think it blushed!

GABRIELLE (to Xena, half-joking):

Maybe it ran away because it realized you're Hercules' friend.

Ares rolls his eyes.

XENA:

No, can't be me...or Ares--I fought it before, and Ares stood around and made sarcastic comments.

ARES:

A very appropriate division of labor.

GABRIELLE:

Are you suggesting that I scared it off?

XENA:

That's absurd. (Gabrielle raises an eyebrow and a change starts to come over Xena's face) But maybe you are right. It was going to attack you, before you dropped your clothes--

ARES:

Fancy that.

XENA (ignoring him):

--and then it blushed and fled!



ARES (in a tone of voice to provoke Xena):

Now there's something you don't see every day: a creature that's afraid of naked women.

XENA:

Well, now we know how to scare it off. But I don't think that turning Messene into a nudist colony is going to work.

ARES (sly grin):

Hey, maybe we could get my sister to enchant another scroll and bring back the three naked--

GABRIELLE (glares at him):

No, thank you very much. (to Xena) Let's go find this Dragon Slayer.

ARES:

Well, I guess you don't need my help then.

GABRIELLE:

Do we ever?

ARES:

How about my wonderful company?

XENA and GABRIELLE:

Nope.

Ares puts up a mock look of hurt on his face then disappears. Gabrielle shakes her head, smiling a little and looking at Xena.

GABRIELLE (smart-alecky):

What exactly is it that you see in him, anyway?

XENA:

What makes you think I *do* see anything?

GABRIELLE:

The fact that you can't seem to stop looking!

Xena laughs, but doesn't quite manage to hide her embarrassment. She follows a smug-looking Gabrielle as we:

FADE OUT

ACT THREE

FADE IN

The sickroom. Eve and Virgil are tending to the woman, who is still asleep. Eve is obviously very tired. The woman's brother is sitting down. Behind them is a steaming pot; Eve turns to crush some herbs into it, before returning to the woman.

VIRGIL:

You know, she'll be all right if you rest for a little while.

EVE (shakes her head "no"):

I'll rest when she's all right.

VASILIS:

Eve, you've done all you can--I know that. (he smiles sadly, but gratefully). I can look after her while she sleeps.

EVE (uncertain):

If she wakes up--

VASILIS:

I'll give her more of the tea. (gently) I know.

Eve looks from the sick woman to Virgil, who shrugs as if to say "might as well." After a moment, Eve stands up; she and Virgil turn to go.

VIRGIL:

We'll be at the inn.

EVE (frowns at the sleeping woman):

Call us if there's any change.

The man nods in response as Eve and Virgil leave.

CUT TO

A busy tavern. Eve and Virgil are sitting at a table, eating.

VIRGIL:

Do you believe the stories about Hercules killing all the quivres? They say this is the last one.

EVE:

It must have been just a baby when he came through here.

VIRGIL (thoughtfully):

You don't think it's wrong?

EVE:

What is?

VIRGIL:

To wipe out these creatures.

EVE:

They were attacking villages! Destroying the lives of innocent people.

VIRGIL (half-joking):

I guess it's hard to live in harmony with a pack of serpents at your door.

Eve looks at her feet, and chuckles. A scream is heard from outside.

EVE:

What now?

CUT TO

Outside, in the center of the village. Eve and Virgil appear in time to see a woman running toward them.

WOMAN #1:

The monster...it's out there! I saw it! It's right outside the town.

People begin to gather in the street after they hear the screams of the woman. Everyone looks scared.

EVE (taking control of the situation easily):

Everyone, just stay calm and go back inside your houses. Close all doors and windows--we won't have a plague outbreak here.

VIRGIL:

Xena and Gabrielle are looking for a way to kill it--but until they find it, we need to protect ourselves and stay inside.

Murmurs go through the crowd and then they start to scatter, going to their homes, locking doors and closing all windows.

EVE:

Come on, we can stay in the inn for now.

CUT TO

Virgil and Eve in a room in the inn; there is a bookshelf with some scrolls on one wall. Eve sits down on the bed.

EVE:

I really hope my mother can find a way to destroy this creature.

Virgil takes two scrolls off the shelf and sits down next to her.

VIRGIL:

She will, Eve. You know how she's always been able to find a way to get out of tough situations.

EVE:

I know. But even Mother is bound to mess up sometime.

VIRGIL:

If only to remind us that she's human.

EVE:

I just wish I knew what she's up to while we're here under house arrest.

VIRGIL (looking at the scrolls):

At least the company is good.

EVE (understanding):

Right--Sophocles and Homer.



VIRGIL (grins):

Them, too.

Eve colors a little.

EVE:

Virgil?

VIRGIL:

Yeah?

EVE:

I'm glad you're here.

They look at each other for a long moment, and then Virgil slowly puts his hand on hers, which rests in her lap. The scrolls fall to the floor.

Then, there is a flash to the side of them. They turn and see Ares.

ARES (seeing the closeness between Eve and Virgil and the way he has his hand on hers; teasingly):

Did I get you at a bad time?

Eve, somewhat embarrassed, immediately moves her hand away from Virgil's and stands up, glaring at Ares. Virgil follows her, glaring a little too.

EVE (spits):

What are you doing here?

ARES:

Just thought you might want to know that your mother discovered something rather interesting.

EVE:

You playing messenger?

ARES:

No, I'll leave that to you.

EVE:

Well, what is it?

ARES:

Apparently, the quivre isn't fond of the sight of naked humans. (looks meaningfully between Eve and Virgil) An unusual trait, you must admit.

He grins and disappears. Virgil and Eve look thoroughly embarrassed.

CUT TO

Xena and Gabrielle are walking through the busy streets of Pylos.

GABRIELLE (with exaggerated seriousness):

Now, remember--the man we're looking for is called the *Dragon Slayer*. (shakes her head) I assume his mother didn't pick that one.

XENA:

I wouldn't be so sure. She could've been dragged on a sleigh to the midwife's house when he was born.

Gabrielle groans; Xena laughs.

GABRIELLE (sees a woman tending to her horses, walks up to her):

Excuse me. Do you know of a man that goes by the name of Dragon Slayer?

WOMAN #2:

Unfortunately. He lives on the edge of town. (motions over her shoulder). You can't miss the place.

XENA:

Why's that?

WOMAN #2 (darkly):

You'll see.

CUT TO

Xena and Gabrielle walk up to the building, which would indeed be difficult to miss: it's covered with bones, from the ground to the roof--bones of all shapes and sizes, the effect reminiscent of a storeroom in a paleontology museum. A couple of dragon skulls scowl ferociously over the door.

GABRIELLE:

Tasteful.

XENA:

Not to mention, subtle.

Xena knocks on the door; a dark-haired, muscular man opens it. He has many scars on his face and arms, and a patch over one of his eyes. He wears very battered armor that looks like it has seen better days.

XENA:

Are you the Dragon Slayer?

MAN (with the air of a used car salesman):

Dragon Slayer, that's me. The complete source of information on local and foreign exotic species, all right here-- (taps his head). Are you in need of my services?

XENA (tolerantly):

As a matter of fact, we are.

DRAGON SLAYER:

You *are*? I mean, yes, yes of course you are. Come in. Come in!

He leads them inside.

CUT TO

Dragon Slayer, Xena and Gabrielle are sitting at a table. In the background, all sorts of weapons and shields hang on the walls.

DRAGON SLAYER:

So, you need help with a dragon? Well, you've come to the right place.

GABRIELLE:

The town just over the valley, Messene, is being terrorized by a creature called the quivre.

DRAGON SLAYER (suddenly uncomfortable):

You know, this is a really bad time... I-uh-have things to do. (gets up) Do you have an appointment? You really can't expect a busy man like me--

XENA (grabs his arm as he tries to sidle away):

Oh, no you don't. What's so special about this creature?

Defeated, the Dragon Slayer carefully extricates himself from Xena's grip, looking somewhat petulant.

DRAGON SLAYER:

Only that it ruined my career.

GABRIELLE:

What happened?

DRAGON SLAYER (with a wary look at Xena):

All right, I'll tell you--if you stop scowling at me like that.

XENA (drops the scowl):

Sorry. Force of habit.

GABRIELLE:

Go on?

DRAGON SLAYER:

When I was only a small boy, a wise man from this village, Kineas, told everyone that he had discovered how to rid the land forever of the plague brought on by the quivres--there were many of them then. He went into the cave on the far side of Mount Ithmos, where they made their home. But he never came back. Then, some years later, Hercules came and slew the monsters...

XENA:

How?

DRAGON SLAYER:

If I knew that, I'd still be in business.

XENA:

I hope you can tell us more than that.

DRAGON SLAYER:

Oh, there's more than that. By the time people learned that there was one last quivre left, I had gained quite a reputation as a dragon slayer, and I decided to fight the quivre. I went into its cave armed with my best weapon--a spear tipped with a rare black diamond, which could cut through the hardest scales of the most frightful monsters. But when I struck the quivre with my spear, its tip shattered like glass. The monster opened its mouth to release its plague breath at me, and I... (he fidgets a little and looks down in embarrassment) I ran away.

XENA (sighs):

Well, I guess now we know about one thing that *won't* kill it.

DRAGON SLAYER:

There is something that could help you...

GABRIELLE:

What?

DRAGON SLAYER:

When I was in the cave, I spotted some writing that had been scratched into the wall--by Kineas, I think. I only had time to read the first few words. It said that he was dying of the quivres' plague-infested breath, but he had discovered the secret of the monster.

XENA:

Which was?

DRAGON SLAYER:

Give me a break, I was running from a giant snake with foul breath! I can run faster than I can read.

XENA (nods):

Well, that's a start. (to Gabrielle) Let's go.

Gabrielle looks pointedly at the sulking Dragon Slayer, then coughs politely at Xena.

XENA:

Oh-uh--thanks for your help.

DRAGON SLAYER (cheering up):

You're welcome! (awkwardly) Say--Could I...have your autograph?

XENA:

My what?

DRAGON SLAYER:

You *are* the famous Xena, are you not? (overly friendly) I *thought* I recognized that armor--made in Messene, right? I know the best tanners there. I'm sure I could get your friend a discount for a suit just like it.

Gabrielle looks interested.

XENA:

I'm sure you could. (quickly puts an "X" on the parchment the Dragon Slayer puts in front of her) Now, if you'll excuse us, we have work to do.

DRAGON SLAYER (clutching autograph):

Thank you! Oh, and--good luck.

With a glance, Xena and Gabrielle leave.

CUT TO

Gabrielle and Xena are leaving Pylos.

GABRIELLE:

So, do you know how far Mount Ithome is?

XENA:

It's just north of Messene, but it'll probably take a day to get there.

GABRIELLE:

A day? That might be too long.

XENA:

Well, we don't have any other options, do we?

Ares appears in front of them.

ARES:

Yes you do. (pause) I'll take you to the mountain.

XENA:

You will?

ARES:

Yeah. If you're going on this little adventure, it's my job to make sure you get back in one piece.

XENA:

"Xena: Damsel in Distress". I like the sound of that.

ARES:

So...?

She stares at him, her mouth quirking up, waiting for the condition of his help.

ARES (rolls his eyes):

No, no strings attached. I thought we were over that one, anyway.

XENA:

All right then.

Xena and Gabrielle walk up next to him, but Ares shakes his head at Gabrielle.

ARES:

Uh, sorry, Gabrielle, three's a crowd.

XENA (glaring at Ares):

So you're going to take me and not Gabrielle?

GABRIELLE:

Are you surprised?

XENA:

I'm irritated. (pointed look at Ares)

ARES:

Hey, I'm doing you a favor, here, remember. (smirks) It's easier to transport one than two.

XENA (rolls eyes):

Oh, yeah, I'm sure. (she sees that Ares isn't going to change his mind; looks at Gabrielle) Could you go back to Messene? Someone's got to tell Eve and Virgil what's happening. They're probably wondering where we are by now.

GABRIELLE (sighs):

Fine. I'll meet you in Messene.

XENA (apologetic):

See you there.

Gabrielle starts walking off, quietly grumbling to herself. Xena and Ares look at each other for a moment, neither saying anything.

XENA (breaking the silence):

Are we going anywhere soon, Ares?

ARES:

Just waiting for you to say the word.

He takes her hand and in an instant, they disappear.

CUT TO

Ares and Xena appear at the cave's entrance. It is a dark, deep cave.

ARES:

Now what?

XENA:

The Dragon Slayer said that the quivre makes its home here.

ARES:

Isn't it a little early in the day for visiting?

XENA:

We're not visiting. We're breaking and entering.

Ares looks at the alarmingly dark cave where two reptilian eyes are glowing.

ARES:

Well, that explains the warm welcome. Looks like we'll have to enter before we can get around to the breaking. Any ideas?

XENA (thinking out loud):

Their weakness is being scared of nudity. So, we should exploit that.

ARES (grins):

I know what's going to happen now. I say it's a great idea.

XENA (not impressed):

Ares, just get on with it. We can talk about your great ideas later.

ARES:

Just remember you said that.

Ares snaps his fingers and their clothes disappear. Xena tries not to show her reaction to a naked Ares. Instead, she makes a point of continuing to stare at the cave.

XENA:

Ready?



ARES (staring at her):

Oh, yeah.

CUT TO

Inside, they see the guivre lying on the floor, with an interesting selection of bones as a cushion. It rears its head, but when it sees the two naked people before it, it sinks as far back into the cave as possible and starts trembling. Xena gives it her "look"; it whimpers and huddles even further from them as they get past.

CUT TO

The back of the cave. Ares and Xena are looking around for the writing the Dragon Slayer mentioned.

XENA (points to a piece of rock protruding from the cave floor):

I found it--over here! Hey, how about some light?

ARES:

I can do better than that.

He holds out his hand and, with a beam of blue fire, shears the rock neatly off the floor, then picks it up. He grins proudly at Xena.

XENA:

Okay, okay. I'm impressed. Now let's get out of here.

Ares puts his hand on her shoulder and they disappear in a flash of light.

CUT TO

Outside the cave. Ares and Xena reappear, Ares carrying the rock. Xena walks over to her clothes. As she reaches for them, there is a bright light around her and instantly, her clothes are back on her body. She looks down at herself and then over at Ares, who has his clothes on as well.

ARES:

What? I thought you were in a hurry?

Xena smirks as she and Ares disappear.

CUT TO

They appear outside an inn in Messene, it's getting dark. Xena looks at Ares, who is still holding the stone with the writing.

XENA:

I'll take it from here.

ARES (melodramatically):

Oh, I get it. You only want me around when you need something, is that it?

XENA (teasingly):

You have your uses.

ARES:

Aha. So you *do* want me around?

Xena just smiles and shakes her head. Ares grins and disappears.

Xena turns at the sound of footsteps; Gabrielle, Eve and Virgil approach.

GABRIELLE:

How'd it go?

XENA (holds up the stone):

Great.

EVE:

Does it tell you how to defeat the quivre?

Gabrielle, Virgil and Eve look curiously at the stone tablet in Xena's hands.

Close-up of the writing, in the same characters as Gabrielle's scrolls.

GABRIELLE (voice-over):
Is *that* all?

FADE OUT

ACT FOUR

FADE IN

Gabrielle, Virgil and Eve look curiously at the stone tablet in Xena's hands, then all look up at each other.

VIRGIL:
What's a whiteleaf?

EVE:
It's an herb--common around these parts. We ran into some back in the forest, actually, a whole patch.

XENA:
Do you think you could find it again?

EVE:
One step ahead of you. (takes out a pouch) I collected some this morning to refill my supply.

XENA (ten signs that your child is on drugs):
What were you going to do with a supply of herbs?

EVE (laughs):
Brew tea.

XENA (relieved):
Oh.

EVE:
...And smoke them behind the tool shed while you're not looking.

XENA:
Eve!

Gabrielle and Eve burst out laughing, Virgil gives Xena a sympathetic look.

CUT TO

Morning, the sun has just come up. Xena, Gabrielle, and Eve are walking out of the village and into the forest. Xena is wearing only an animal skin; Gabrielle and Eve are fully clothed. Gabrielle is carrying a large woven net and Eve is carrying the pouch of herbs.

CUT TO

The three of them reach the lake where they had seen the guivre before.

XENA:

All we have to do now is wait.

After waiting near the lake for several minutes, they see a shadow of the guivre slithering through the forest behind some bushes. Xena backs up near the lake edge, Gabrielle hides behind a large tree near the lake and Eve follows her example.

The guivre slithers toward the lake, not seeing Xena yet, the creature seems quite calm. Soon, it spots Xena standing near the lake. It rears its head and proceeds to open its mouth; prepared to release its diseased breath. Xena quickly glances over at Eve and Gabrielle and nods; they nod back, ready.



Just before the guivre releases its deadly breath, Xena drops the fur covering from her body, leaving her completely naked. The guivre sinks back, coiling itself, an expression of embarrassment on its face.

Gabrielle and Eve quietly walk out from behind the tree. While the guivre is distracted and about to flee, Gabrielle throws the net over the guivre's head and it rears back, surprised. It struggles to break free of the netting and as it does so, it releases its plague breath. Eve hurries toward it, avoiding the plague that hangs in the air, and throws the pouch of herbs into its open mouth.

The guivre gulps, then begins to shake wildly; Xena, Gabrielle, and Eve stand back. After several seconds of wiggling, the guivre rears up and gives an enormous belch in Xena's direction--but it is no longer plague-laden.

XENA (breathes):

Minty-fresh.

The guivre looks rather pleased about that. It tries to breathe again, then, satisfied, slithers away. Xena, Gabrielle and Eve look on, amazed.

GABRIELLE:

That was some powerful stuff, Eve.

The three of them sigh in relief; Xena covers herself back up with the fur. Then they hear clapping and quickly turn to one side to see Ares standing there with a grin on his face.

ARES:

Xena, sometimes it's a sheer pleasure to watch you at work. If we ever have a quivre infestation on Olympus, I'll know whom to call. (disappears)

CUT TO

The village. Xena, Gabrielle and Eve return and are surrounded by a group of villagers.

VILLAGE MAN #1:

Did you kill it? Is it dead?

XENA:

No.

A big sigh of disappointment--the villagers look dejected.

GABRIELLE:

Wait! We haven't killed the quivre, but we've found a way to make it harmless.

VILLAGE WOMAN #1 (sounds very doubtful):

Harmless?

XENA:

Years ago, a wise man from another village found out the quivre's secret. Its poisonous breath is neutralized if you feed it whiteleaf. If he was right, the effect should last for about a year. My daughter will show you where best to find the herb.

VILLAGE MAN #1 (skeptical):

So once a year, we're supposed to feed some herb to a deadly monster? What if it decides that the person trying to feed it will make for a much tastier snack?

GABRIELLE:

If you have any trouble with the quivre, there's a way to deal with it. You have to... (she stumbles and blushes a little)

VILLAGE WOMAN #1:

You have to what?

XENA (smirking):

You have to take your clothes off. If there's one thing that scares the quivre, it's a naked human body.

The villagers break out into laughter but they still seem a little uncertain.

VILLAGE MAN #2:

We're grateful for your help, Xena, but wouldn't it be better to just kill the thing?

GABRIELLE:

Not at all. If you think about it, the quivre can actually be very useful to your village. Now that it's no longer dangerous, you can spread the word about the unique and fascinating creature that lives in these parts. Curiosity seekers will flock from far and wide to take a look, and they are sure to spend a lot of money in the local shops and taverns...

XENA:

In other words, a great tourist attraction.

VASILIS (grimly):

Great news. Unfortunately, it may be too late for my sister...she shows no signs of getting better.

EVE:

This could help! (holds up the pouch with herbs) If the whiteleaf could rid the quivre's breath of its venom, maybe it can also cure someone who has been poisoned by its breath. (she walks resolutely toward the house) I'll prepare a potion.

CUT TO

The town square is bathed in sunlight. There is a man near the well, holding a big sign near that reads, "Pat the Guivre--only 2 dinars!" A crowd of onlookers gasps when the quivre's head appears out of the well. One brave man comes up and touches the quivre's head. The creature looks flattered by the attention, then disappears back into the well; the villagers cheer. The man pays his two dinars and steps away.

GABRIELLE (to Xena):

I think we've just put Messene on the map.

Eve and Virgil come up to them, Eve is holding a mug with a picture of the quivre on it.

EVE (holds it up):

Souvenir.

XENA (wryly):

Not just any map, Gabrielle--it's probably got a huge picture of the quivre in all its plague-breathing glory on the back.

VIRGIL:

As a matter of fact...

He unrolls the scroll he's carrying to show that it's a map--and turns it over. It does, indeed, have a stylized quivre drawn on it.

MAN'S VOICE (off-screen):

Gabrielle!

Gabrielle turns to see several burly men hurrying towards her. The one who called her name is carrying a suit of armor; another behind him is carrying gauntlets and boots. The armor is made of fine brown leather, with tooled bronze patterns over it.

MAN #2:

It's ready.

GABRIELLE:

Oh! Oh, wow...

She takes the armor and holds it to herself, then exchanges a happy look with Xena and Eve, before turning to examine it.

MAN #2:

It's a gift from our village. The least we could do for all your help.

GABRIELLE:

Oh--thank you!

The men nod, pleased, and walk away.

VIRGIL:

Well, that was thoughtful of them!

XENA:

M-hm.

GABRIELLE (suspiciously):

What?

XENA (hiding a grin):

Turn it over.

Gabrielle turns the cuirass so that the back piece is visible. On it, there is a prominent metallic decoration--a quivre.

GABRIELLE:

Hm. I guess I'll be making a statement in that.

XENA:

Yep. "Made in Messene". It might deter enemies.

GABRIELLE (smiles slowly):

Yeah!

The four of them start to walk further into the village.

GABRIELLE:

So. When I record this little adventure in a scroll, what should the moral of the story be?

XENA:

I'm not sure. Modesty isn't always the best policy?

GABRIELLE (groans a little):

Just as long as you don't say anything about the naked truth...

XENA:

Maybe it's that a dragon can be good for the local economy if you know how to approach it.

GABRIELLE:

Maybe it's the importance of having fresh breath.

VIRGIL:

Say, I'm still not clear on one thing. How did Hercules manage to slay the other quivres?

GABRIELLE:

One of the villagers remembers hearing stories that he wrestled them naked.

XENA (rolls her eyes):

Now they tell us.

GABRIELLE:

What if only a naked person can kill the quivre? Maybe that's why this one is so afraid of nudity...

XENA (with a little smile):

Hercules isn't that scary in the nude.

GABRIELLE (darts a quick look at her):

I hope Ares didn't hear that.

Xena smirks.

EVE (pensively):

Do you think it was wrong for Hercules to destroy all the quivres like that?

XENA:

Hercules was trying to help the people around here. He didn't know what else to do.

GABRIELLE:

Sometimes, finding a better way to solve the problem is just a matter of being lucky.

XENA (thoughtfully):

Now there's something you can put down in your scroll...

A wide shot of the four of them from the back as they walk down the street.



Then, the camera pans over and zooms in on the well, the guivre sticking its head out of it as we:

FADE OUT

THE END

[Xena and Ares had a "kodak moment" in the cave during the production of this motion picture.]