

SHIPPER SEASON EIGHT



**Production #XWP160/SS26
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Story By: LadyKate
Written By: LadyKate
Collage By: Aurora
Images Gathered By: Aurora

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Logline

Once again, a spell of Aphrodite's goes not exactly to plan and Xena and Gabrielle are there to set things right, but this time, the consequences could be devastating to a young man and woman who's hearts may be on the line.

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TEASER

FADE IN

A bright, sunny day. The edge of a wood. A river is visible at some distance, with a village on the other bank. A young man in his twenties, tall and handsome, with blue eyes and russet hair, comes riding out of the woods on a speckled gray horse. He stops, raises his hand to his eyes and stares hesitantly at the village, as if pondering whether to go there or not.

There is a familiar flash of golden light, and Aphrodite appears next to him. Smiling, she puts a hand on the bridle of his horse.

APHRODITE:

Well? Cold feet?

YOUNG MAN (nervously):

Are you sure she's going to be there?

APHRODITE (beaming):

Listen, I'm a goddess, I know what I'm talking about. (Playfully punches his leg) I'm telling you-- they got to this village last night. Go on, this could be your chance!



YOUNG MAN (softly):

Are you going to make her fall in love with me?

APHRODITE (makes a face and shakes her golden curls):

No can do, hon. It's not going to work that way. It's gotta happen all by itself.

YOUNG MAN (hesitates):

It just...doesn't seem fair to the girl.

APHRODITE (shrugs):

Who said life was fair? Go on... (gives him a mischievous look) Unless, of course, you want to stay the way you are...

With a sigh, the young man takes off toward the village.



APHRODITE (looks after him with a bright smile):
Yesssss!

She vanishes into the air in a shower of golden sparks.

CUT TO

A dimly lit, nearly empty dining room in the village inn. Xena, Gabrielle and Darion, the little boy Gabrielle adopted in "The Bonds We Choose," are sitting at a table, with Xena across from Gabrielle and Darion. As the camera moves in, Gabrielle's voice can be heard, the words still indistinguishable. She is obviously telling Darion a story while he is listening raptly and Xena is eating from a bowl, occasionally giving Gabrielle impatient looks.

GABRIELLE:
...and then, I looked up and saw three na-- (she stumbles and looks hesitantly at Darion) ...na--

DARION (helpfully):
Neighbors?

GABRIELLE:
Uhhh...

DARION:
Nails?

GABRIELLE (brightly):
I saw three girls who looked exactly like me, singing and dancing. It turned out that Joxer--

XENA (interrupts with a mischievous look at Gabrielle):
Aren't you going to tell Darion what the three Gabrielles were wearing?

GABRIELLE (blushes and gives Xena an angry look):
Xena!

DARION (curiously):
What were they wearing, Gabrielle?

GABRIELLE (sputters, scrambling for something to say):

Uhh...they were...

DARION:

Something you didn't like?

GABRIELLE (finally regains speech):

Wearing--*really* ugly hats.

Darion laughs and Xena chuckles.

DARION:

So, what did you do?

GABRIELLE:

I *really* hated looking at me in such an ugly hat. So I wrote some more in the scroll and sent them to the caves.

The door opens, and the young man from the previous scene comes in. He walks past Xena and Gabrielle and sits down a couple of tables behind them. The innkeeper, a paunchy balding middle-aged man, approaches him while in the background, Gabrielle continues to tell the story.

YOUNG MAN:

A steak, please. Make it rare.

INNKEEPER:

Wine?

YOUNG MAN (hesitates for a moment):

Water.

The innkeeper walks off and shouts "One steak, rare" to someone in the kitchen, then comes back with a pitcher of water and pours some into a cup.

YOUNG MAN (looks around and sees Xena, Gabrielle and Darion):

Tell me, who are those people over there?

INNKEEPER:

Over there? (proudly, pointing at Xena) That's Xena, Warrior Princess.

YOUNG MAN (flinches):

Princess?

INNKEEPER (nods):

That's what they call her.

He walks off. The young man gulps down the water, then rises and goes toward Xena and Gabrielle's table as Gabrielle's voice fades in again.

GABRIELLE:

...and it turned out that Joxer had sold the scabbard with the scroll inside it!

Darion laughs. Gabrielle stops as the young man approaches and looks up at him.

YOUNG MAN (rather timidly, to Xena):
You're Xena?

XENA (looks up from her bowl):
Who wants to know?

YOUNG MAN:
My name is Cyril. (coughs, obviously nervous) Tell me, please--are you a princess?

XENA (chuckles and shakes her head):
No, people just call me that. (gives Cyril a wry look) Why? Looking to meet a princess?

The camera pulls back to show the door opening. A young woman in a modest blue dress, with dark hair tied in a ponytail, comes in carrying a bouquet of field flowers.

CYRIL (uncomfortably):
I...really can't say that I am. Sorry to have bothered you.

He turns around and starts to walk toward the bar.

GABRIELLE (looks after him and shrugs):
That was strange. (turning back to Darion) So--where was I?

The camera follows Cyril and Gabrielle's voice fades into the background once again.

Walking with his head down, Cyril collides with the young woman. She gives a little cry of surprise and drops the flowers.

CYRIL:
Oh, I'm sorry--

Cyril and the young woman bend down simultaneously to pick up the flowers and butt heads. They stand up and laugh, the flowers still on the floor. Then they start to bend down again, at the same time.

CYRIL:
Please--let me.

He bends down, picks up the flowers and hands them to the young woman. They stare at each other, smiling.

CYRIL:
I hope they're not crumpled too badly. Are these for someone?

YOUNG WOMAN (shakes her head):
No, I just picked them for myself. The meadows around here are so beautiful--

They continue to stare at each other.

CYRIL:

Here-- (motions toward his table) --would you like to sit down?

The young woman nods and sits down at the table with him, putting down the flowers.

CYRIL and YOUNG WOMAN (speak simultaneously):

Are you-- (They laugh and pose, then start simultaneously again) You first. (They laugh again and pause.)

YOUNG WOMAN:

Are you far away from home?

CYRIL (sighs):

Actually, I don't have a real home.

YOUNG WOMAN (nods wistfully):

Sometimes I feel like I don't, either... But what about your family?

CYRIL (looks slightly lost for words for a moment):

My mother's dead and I--never actually knew my father.

YOUNG WOMAN (sympathetic):

Oh. My mother died when I was just a baby, and my father--he's so busy, I feel like I barely know him sometimes...

CYRIL:

But you must have lots of friends. I mean--you seem like the kind of person everyone would like.

YOUNG WOMAN (smiles):

You're funny. (off his startled look) I mean in a good way.

CYRIL:

What about you--are you far away from home?

YOUNG WOMAN:

Pretty far. I live in Salonae.

CYRIL (gives her an odd look):

I've heard the king's daughter is passing through the village--are you traveling with her by any chance?



YOUNG WOMAN (smiles):
What if I *am* the princess?

CYRIL (taken aback):
Please don't say that--not even as a joke. Let's talk about something else.

The camera pulls away from Cyril and the young woman as their voices fade, moving in on Xena, Gabrielle and Darion again. Xena has finished eating and is darting impatient looks at Gabrielle and Darion.

GABRIELLE:
And once we got Xena to come back, she figured out right away how to undo the powers of the scroll and put everything back in its place. All I had to do was write down exactly what was happening. Then--

XENA (interrupts briskly):
Then, Theodorus and his army attacked, I kicked their a- (looks at Darion and catches herself) butts, Gabrielle wrote it all down, the scroll lost its power, Ares and Aphrodite got their powers back, and--

GABRIELLE:
Xena! I was telling the story my way.

XENA:
If you keep telling it your way, you two will finish dinner by the time they start serving breakfast.

GABRIELLE:
It wasn't just any battle, Xena. You fought an army with a wagonload of fish!

XENA (shrugs):
Food can be a deadly weapon. Someday you should tell him about Joxer's radish stew.

DARION (claps and laughs):
Joxer! I want to hear about Joxer.

XENA (gives Gabrielle an exasperated look):
Strange case of hero worship...

GABRIELLE (slyly):

Well, Xena, it's not as if I haven't told him a lot of stories about you, too...

XENA:

Hmph...

She glares at Gabrielle with an annoyance that is part mock but part real. Meanwhile, Gabrielle has turned her eyes to Cyril and the young woman, who are engrossed in conversation, bending closer toward each other. She looks at them, smiling.

XENA:

What are you staring at?

The camera starts moving away again, zooming in on Cyril and the young woman just as the innkeeper brings the plate with his steak.

INNKEEPER:

Your dinner, sir.

YOUNG WOMAN (laughs):

You really like your meat rare, don't you?

CYRIL (embarrassed):

Uh...yes, I do.

YOUNG WOMAN:

So do I. It's amazing how we seem to like the same things...

CYRIL:

Has anyone told you that you're incredibly pretty when you laugh?

YOUNG WOMAN (laughs):

No...actually, no one's ever spoken to me the way you do. Do you always say exactly what you think?

CYRIL:

Yes, I suppose so.

YOUNG WOMAN:

What are you thinking right now? (He blushes and looks down) Come on.

CYRIL (quietly, lifting his eyes):

That I would really like to kiss you.

The young woman laughs and leans toward him, taking his hand.

The doors of the inn swing open and two richly dressed people, an elderly man and a young woman, rush in.

MAN:

There you are!

The young woman and Cyril turn toward them.

WOMAN:

Your royal highness!

A close-up on the horrified look on Cyril' face.

YOUNG WOMAN:

Polemos! Eliante! This is my--friend. (To Cyril) It's so funny, I don't even know your name. (sighs) Yes, I'm Princess Ariadne. Don't look so upset. Look, I did try to tell you I was the princess but you didn't want to hear it. I just wanted you to give me a chance.

The camera pans quickly to Xena and Gabrielle, who are staring at the scene unfolding before them while Darion is busy twirling his wooden chakram.

Cyril leaps to his feet, yanking his hand out of Ariadne's.

ARIADNE (imploringly):

Please don't be mad! Do you think we can't be together because I'm a princess and you're just a common man? Nonsense! My father will understand--

CYRIL:

Good-bye, Ariadne...I'm sorry! (He rushes toward the door, muttering as he runs past Xena and Gabrielle) Aphrodite, I'm sorry...but I can't go through with this!

Xena and Gabrielle exchange quick looks.

GABRIELLE:

Aphrodite?

Ariadne tries to rush after Cyril but Polemos and Eliante grab her arms.

ELIANTE:

No, your highness, don't!

ARIADNE (shouts):

Stop! Come back!

Cyril runs out and disappears. In shock and distress, Ariadne sinks back on the chair as we:

FADE OUT

ACT ONE

FADE IN

On the same scene in the tavern. Xena and Gabrielle, who have stood up, are looking sympathetically at Ariadne, who has tears streaming down her face.

ARIADNE (whispers):
I ruined everything...

DARION (tugs at Xena's skirt):
Aren't you going to bring him back?

XENA (looks down at him):
Me?

DARION (as if it were self-evident):
Yeah. That girl--she's really upset because he left. Gabrielle told me you always help people when they're in trouble.

GABRIELLE:
Darion, this really isn't Xena's kind of thing...

ARIADNE (stands up; she seems slightly stunned):
I feel so foolish... (Her eyes fall on Xena and she walks toward her) He was talking to you when I came in--do you know him?

XENA:
No, he just came up to ask me something.

GABRIELLE:
I think he said his name was Cyril.

ARIADNE (nods):
Thank you.

She starts walking toward the door. Eliante and Polemos start following her, but she turns and holds out her hand to stop them with a gesture more imploring than imperious.

ARIADNE:
Please don't follow me. I--want to be alone right now.

She walks out.

CUT TO

A deserted stretch of road, with a field on one side of it and woods on the other. Cyril comes riding at breakneck speed. Seeing a flash of golden light ahead of him, he slows down. Aphrodite appears, lounging casually on a large piece of rock by the roadside.

CYRIL (angrily):
Aphrodite.

APHRODITE (with amused exasperation):
Well?

CYRIL (bitterly):
Just leave me alone. You've meddled enough.

APHRODITE (pouts):

Hey! I was just trying to give you what you wanted. It's not my problem if you chickened out.

CYRIL (quietly):

I'm in love with her. Don't you get it?

APHRODITE (sighs):

Okay, I guess that wasn't really part of the plan.

CYRIL (pleading):

Aphrodite, can't you reverse the spell?

APHRODITE:

Oh, so now you want it reversed. Well, sorry--it can't be done. I mean it just doesn't work this way. (She notices Cyril's stricken look and frowns a little, then perks up) Hey, maybe you've just got the jitters.

CYRIL:

Forget it, Aphrodite.

He kicks his horse in the sides and takes off riding again.

APHRODITE (looks after him, pursing her lips, and sighs):

He's got the jitters.

She disappears in the usual shower of golden sparks.

CUT TO

The dining room at the inn.

ELIANTE (sighs):

Poor girl! She's such a sensitive creature...

POLEMOS (grumbling):

Too sensitive, if you ask me, for someone who may have to rule a kingdom someday. (After an awkward silence, he turns to Xena and Gabrielle and smiles.) Xena! Gabrielle! It's good to see you again. I'd heard all these stories that you were still around and hadn't aged, but wasn't sure whether to believe them.

XENA (looks at him, smiling almost in disbelief):

Polemos.

POLEMOS:

I know, I looked a lot younger last time we met. You're still remembered very well at King Nestor's court. (Turns to Eliante) It's been almost thirty years since these two wonderful women were passing through our kingdom and rescued the king's younger sister from a terrible... (he pauses, hemming and hawing, obviously uncomfortable)

DARION (excited):

--monster?

POLEMOS (looks at him curiously):

Xena, is that your--? (Xena shakes her head with a wistful look on her face) Gabrielle--?

GABRIELLE (her face reflects a momentary struggle, then she smiles):

He's--adopted.

POLEMOS (beams):

Ah. Anyway--yes, from a terrible monster. (He gives Xena and Gabrielle a surreptitious "don't say anything" pleading look)

DARION:

Great! (To Gabrielle) You're going to tell me about it sometime, aren't you?

GABRIELLE (pats him on the shoulder):

Darion, I have so many stories to tell you...

XENA (to Gabrielle in a half-whisper):

Yeah, but how many of them involve a princess with a gambling addiction?

GABRIELLE (nods toward Polemos):

Shhh!

There is a commotion outside. The door is pushed open, and a warrior in ornate armor runs in. He is stocky, with dark curly hair, a ruddy complexion, small eyes and a wide nose.

WARRIOR:

The princess!

POLEMOS (alarmed):

What about the princess?

WARRIOR:

She bolted! Took my horse and rode away!

POLEMOS:

Mopsus, you dolt! You should have stopped her! You're the captain of the guard!

MOPSUS (embarrassed):

Well, it's not as if I could just grab her royal highness...

ELIANTE:

Did you see which way she went?

MOPSUS (fidgets):

I...I didn't look--I was in too much of a rush to tell you...

DARION:

She probably went looking for that man she liked.

MOPSUS (glares at him):

What man?

POLEMOS:

Never mind. (nervously) Xena--Gabrielle--do you think that maybe you could help out, for old times' sake? King Nestor is a good and kind ruler, but if he finds out that we lost his little girl... I'm sure you could help us find her...

MOPSUS (outraged):

Wait a minute--what about me? I'm still the captain of the princess's guard--it's *my* job...

XENA (smirks):

Behave yourself and you might keep it.

Mopsus almost visibly chokes on his indignation.

POLEMOS (hopefully):

You'll help us then?

GABRIELLE (smiles at him and pats his arm):

We will.

ELIANTE:

We'll go get our things right away--

XENA:

While you do that, Gabrielle and I need to go have a private chat with--a friend. (Gabrielle gives her a questioning look and Xena mouths, "Aphrodite.") We'll meet you back here in an hour. Come on, Gabrielle.

They start walking toward the door, Darion right behind them.

XENA (to Darion):

You wait for us here.

DARION (looks stricken):

Please take me along--*please!* You're going to meet your boyfriend, aren't you?

XENA (chokes):

My bo--

GABRIELLE (gives Xena an amused look, then to Darion):

No, we're not, honey.

XENA (thoughtfully):

We may have to.

GABRIELLE:

Xena, Aphrodite's the one who seems to be mixed up in this.

XENA:

I know, but at least Ares always shows up when you call him.

GABRIELLE (teasing):

When *you* call him.

XENA (innocent look):

That's what I said.

DARION:

Take me with you--I want to see him too! *Please?* I want to see that light trick!

XENA (wryly, to an uncomfortable-looking Gabrielle):

Well, at least he likes someone else besides Joxer... (to Darion, with a sigh) All right, come on.

GABRIELLE (defensively, as they walk through the door):

Maybe the boy just wants a male role model.

CUT TO

A meadow outside the village. Xena and Gabrielle come out of the grove on the edge of the meadow, Darion tagging along and holding Gabrielle's hand.

XENA:

All right, do it your way. You call Aphrodite. I count to ten and if she doesn't show, I'm calling Ares so he can get Aphrodite for us.

GABRIELLE:

Aphrodite!

XENA (mutters rapidly):

One-two-three--

There is a flash of golden light and sparks, and a beaming Aphrodite stands before them.

XENA (slightly disappointed):

Aphrodite.

DARION (awed):

She can do that light thing too?

APHRODITE (squeals):

Warrior Babe! Gabrielle! It's great to see you again.

XENA (suspiciously):

Did you happen to be nearby?

APHRODITE (slightly embarrassed):

No... (off Xena's glare) Oh all right, I was. So? First you call me and now I'm like, what--not welcome?

XENA (wryly):

That wouldn't have anything to do with a young man named Cyril?

APHRODITE (fixed up her hair, giggling a little):

Well...

XENA:

Come on, Aphrodite, out with it. What are you up to?



APHRODITE:

Well, it was a little over a year ago... See, I was in one of my temples--you know, inspecting the offerings--and the door was open and this dog ran inside...

GABRIELLE:

Aphrodite...can we just focus on Cyril?

APHRODITE (offended):

That's what I'm trying to do here! Hold on a minute, will ya...? So, where was I?

DARION (helpfully):

In one of your temples.

APHRODITE (looks at him curiously):

Oh yeah...big bro said you had a kid tagging along with you!

DARION (indignantly):

I'm not tagging along. I'm her sidekick! (points to Gabrielle)

Gabrielle laughs.

XENA (impatiently):

Can we cut to the chase?

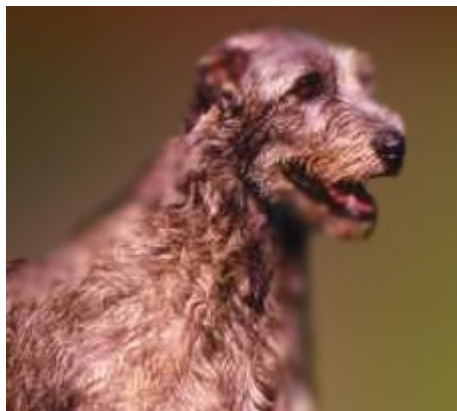
APHRODITE:

Okay, okay. Don't be so grumpy. So, I was in my temple, and what do you know--

As she speaks, we dissolve to:

[FLASHBACK]

Aphrodite is in a temple, which has many decorations but looks like it's starting to get a little shabby, with some of the vases broken or chipped and some of the rich drapery torn. She goes through the offerings, sometimes smiling, sometimes pouting. A bark is heard behind her and a big gray dog runs in. Aphrodite looks back at the dog and smiles, patting it on the head.



APHRODITE (laughs):
Hello, pooch.

The dog licks Aphrodite's hand. Suddenly there is a rustling noise on the altar, and the camera zooms in on a huge rat running across the altar. It snatches a bracelet left there as an offering and scampers away with it.

APHRODITE (scrunches up her face):
Ewww!

The dog gives a bark and chases after the rat. Off-camera, we hear snarling and a brief squeak. The dog comes back to Aphrodite carrying the bracelet in its teeth.

APHRODITE (takes the bracelet, beaming at the dog):
Awesome! (The dog barks.) Oooh...let's see...can I do something nice for you?
How about--

She waves her hands, and a cloud of golden light envelops the dog. When the light fades, we see a naked man on the floor on all fours. He looks up in confusion at Aphrodite. It's Cyril. Aphrodite laughs and claps her hands.

[END OF FLASHBACK]

GABRIELLE (shocked):
You turned the dog into a man...just like that?

APHRODITE (beaming):
Yeah! Piece of cake--well, for a goddess.



GABRIELLE:

That's *not* what I meant! Didn't you think about the consequences? You know--playing with somebody's life like that?

APHRODITE:

Come on, Gabrielle, give me a break. (pouts) I had only just gotten my godhood back--I was, you know, trying out my powers to see if everything was still working and all... Besides, it was a *dog!* Hello?

XENA (obviously wants to say something sharp but then bites her tongue):

So, then what happened?

APHRODITE:

Then... Well, I gave him some nice clothes and that bracelet he got back for me and sent him to a nearby town. Then I thought I'd check up on the kid a coupla months later...you know, like following up on my, what do you call it... (crinkled up her eyebrows) ...project or something.

XENA (impatiently):

The princess. Where does she come in?

APHRODITE:

Ex-squeeze me! Are you gonna let me tell the story or not? So, I checked up on the kid a couple of months later...and the poor thing was *soooo* majorly bummed. Said he'd never had any idea that it was so tough to be human. (giggles) Boy, can I *ever* relate to that! So...oh yeah. Anyway, he said he wanted to be a dog again.

GABRIELLE:

And--?

APHRODITE:

And, I thought I'd do something--you know, *different*. Fun. Creative. Instead of just going "poof!" and turning him back into a doggie. Something that would be in my line of work. You know--as the Goddess of Love. So, I came up with a *really* cool spell...

XENA (grimly):

And that would be--?

APHRODITE:

A princess has to fall in love with him. As soon as she kisses him, he's going to turn back.

Xena frowns and Gabrielle stares at Aphrodite in dismay as we:

FADE OUT

ACT TWO

FADE IN

On the same scene in the meadow.

A close-up of Gabrielle's horrified face.

GABRIELLE:

He's going to *what*?

APHRODITE (pouts impatiently):

Turn back. Into a dog.

GABRIELLE:

But...why?

APHRODITE:

Well, I thought it would be nice if the kid had a special experience in my field before he threw in the towel on being human.

GABRIELLE:

But why a princess?

APHRODITE (proudly):

That was the "special" part.

GABRIELLE:

And what about *her* feelings?

APHRODITE (slightly at a loss):

Well....

GABRIELLE:

Aphrodite, the poor girl falls in love with a sweet young man, and he's going to turn into a *dog*?

APHRODITE (giggles):

Honey, you have no idea how often *that* happens.

GABRIELLE:

Aphrodite, come on--this isn't a joke! That was a terribly cruel thing to do! It's going to break her heart!

APHRODITE:

Gabrielle, you're talking to the Goddess of Love here. Happens all the time, you know? (beaming) Nobody said love was perfect.



XENA (chuckles bitterly):

Perfect? I guess not. But it usually doesn't sprout fur and a tail after a first kiss.

APHRODITE (shrugs and spreads her arms in frustration):

Oooohhh...look, so I suppose it was a little thoughtless of me. (sighs) Anyway, the poor kid ran off. I guess he fell in love with her too. I kinda hadn't counted on that, you know? I mean--how often does it happen? Somebody falls in love at first sight and it's, like, totally mutual?

Gabrielle shakes her head in dismay.

XENA (businesslike):

All right, that's enough chit-chat. Aphrodite, we're going to go find Cyril and you're going to undo that spell.

APHRODITE (makes a face):

I, uh--I can't.

XENA:

You *can't*?

APHRODITE:

Uh-huh. There are some spells you just can't reverse.

XENA (gives Aphrodite a pointed look):

Trying out your powers, huh? (shakes her head in exasperation)

GABRIELLE (her face lighting up):

Wait! Wait! I think I have a solution. What if we can explain everything to Ariadne and they can kiss, and after he turns into a dog you turn him right back?

APHRODITE (sighs):

Uh-huh. It only works once.

GABRIELLE:

What does?

APHRODITE:

You know, that whole turning-an-animal-into-a-human thing.

XENA (suspiciously):

Aphrodite, are you making this up?

APHRODITE (affronted):

Am not! Look--it says so right here in the rulebook... (she snaps her fingers; in an instant, she is holding in her hands a huge rolled-up scroll which she unfolds to reveal some ornate writing) You don't believe me--take a look.

XENA:

There's a *rulebook*?

APHRODITE:

Of course! What did you think, we gods can just up and do the first thing that comes to our heads?

Xena glares at her, obviously biting her tongue. Aphrodite points out a passage in the scroll to Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE (sighs):

That's what it says.

XENA (rolls her eyes):

Great. A rulebook.

Aphrodite waves her hand and the scroll disappears in a puff of gold-tinted smoke.

GABRIELLE (gently but with obvious exasperation):

Aphrodite, do you have any idea what kind of mess you've created here? The poor girl has gone off--

APHRODITE:

I know, I know. I saw what happened. (sighs) Look, I'm really bummed about it too, but take it easy, okay? I mean, we all screw up sometimes, even gods...

XENA:

Even gods?

Aphrodite closes her eyes, clenches her fists and shakes her head.

APHRODITE:

Argh--don't gang up on me like that! I'm totally wiggling here! (squeals in frustration)

There is a flash of blue light. Darion laughs and claps his hands as Ares appears.

ARES:

What's the commotion?

APHRODITE:

They're making me out to be the bad guy here!

ARES:

Really, sis--trying to steal me out of a job? What'd you do?

XENA:

She decided to have a little fun.

DARION (tugs at Ares' sword to get his attention; Ares gives him a slightly alarmed look):

She turned a dog into a boy and then she made it so that if the girl he likes kisses him, he'll turn back into a dog. (makes a face) I don't like it when girls kiss me. (points to Gabrielle) Except for her.

ARES:

Good. The other one's taken. (looks back and forth from Xena to Aphrodite) Okay, what's going on here?

APHRODITE:

I-it's pretty much like the kid said.

GABRIELLE:

These two people are in love. And the moment they kiss, the young man is going to become--

ARES:

A dog.

XENA:

Yeah.

ARES (thoughtfully scratches his chin):

What kind of dog?

APHRODITE (scrunches up her face):

Umm...a big gray one. A wolfhound, maybe?

ARES:

Oh well. At least it's not some yappy little lapdog.

GABRIELLE (indignantly):

This isn't funny.

ARES (to Xena):

So, let me guess. You're about to save the day.

XENA (shakes her head):

First things first. Let's find the girl.

GABRIELLE:

And then?

XENA:

And then--we'll think of something.

CUT TO

Ariadne on horseback, riding at breakneck speed through the woods at dusk, tree branches lashing at her face and shoulders.

CUT TO

A village. It's evening and there are only a few people in the streets, tending to animals and doing other chores. The camera zooms in on an isolated corner where a golden light flashes, and Aphrodite appears with Gabrielle.

APHRODITE:

He's right there in the tavern, two houses over. (sighs) Probably crying into his wine, poor thing.

GABRIELLE:

I'll talk to him. Xena said the tracks showed that Ariadne was headed this way too.

APHRODITE (brightens):

You know, maybe I should find her and make sure she comes here. You know, bring the kids together and all--I mean, I *am* the Love Goddess...

GABRIELLE (gently puts a hand on Aphrodite's arm):

Aphrodite, you've--er--done enough. Just leave them alone for now. You said you'd keep an eye on Darion.

APHRODITE:

Sure.

GABRIELLE (gives Aphrodite a wary look):

And please don't--you know--try out your powers on him or anything.

APHRODITE:

Are you kidding? (beams) Maybe I can give him some tips about girls.

GABRIELLE:

Aphrodite! He's eight years old.

APHRODITE:

So? Better late than never. (off Gabrielle's imploring look) Okay, okay...I'll baby-sit for you, don't worry.

She dissolves in a shower of golden sparks while Gabrielle walks toward the tavern.

CUT TO

Inside the half-empty tavern. Cyril sits at the bar, staring pensively into a nearly full goblet of wine. Gabrielle comes up, approaches him and stands behind him.

GABRIELLE (gently):
Cyril.

He flinches and turns toward her.

CYRIL:
I--know you from somewhere, don't I?

GABRIELLE:
You remember Xena? I'm her friend, Gabrielle. We saw you at the inn in Linnea just before you met-- (she trails off as Cyril nods wearily) May I sit here?

CYRIL (listlessly):
Sure.

Gabrielle sits down on the stool next to him and they are silent for a few moments.

GABRIELLE:
Cyril. I know what's going on. Aphrodite told me. (Cyril turns to her; he looks embarrassed.) I'm really sorry.

CYRIL:
Well, if you know--then you understand that I can never see Ariadne again.

GABRIELLE (softly):
You're really in love with her, aren't you...

CYRIL (lowers his eyes):
It was amazing. When we talked, it was if we'd known each other forever.

GABRIELLE:
Do you still want to go back to being--you know--what you were?

CYRIL (chuckles unhappily):
A dog? I'm not even that sure anymore. You know, when Aphrodite turned me into a man, it seemed to me that being human was really tough. As a dog, you just--do what comes naturally. As a human, you have to make all these decisions, all the time.

GABRIELLE (nods sympathetically):
Do you still feel that way?

CYRIL:
I'm not sure... There are so many--possibilities. You know, after Aphrodite cast her spell, I didn't have much hope that it could work. I mean, why would a princess ever fall in love with a guy like me?

GABRIELLE:
Cyril, I think you're a great guy.

CYRIL (smiles faintly):

Do you say that to every guy you've known for ten minutes? Anyway, I decided I had to get used to being human. I started learning things. Like reading.

GABRIELLE (her eyes lighting up):

You like to read?

CYRIL:

I love it. It's like--you can stay in one place and discover a whole new world. I started reading one of Homer's poems recently.

GABRIELLE:

That's wonderful. (smiles) I bet you want to know how it ends.

CYRIL (wistfully):

Sort of... But still, when Aphrodite showed up and told me she was going to fix me up to meet a princess, I thought I'd go for it. It seemed--better. (pauses) I just didn't expect to fall in love with-- Ariadne like that. (dreamy) Isn't she the most beautiful girl in the world?



GABRIELLE (touches his hand):

Cyril, every girl is the most beautiful girl in the world to somebody.

CYRIL:

So--about being human... Just recently, Gabrielle, I had started thinking that it's not such a bad thing to have to make decisions. And then, suddenly, I have to make the worst decision of my life. (shudders) Can you imagine what it would be like if I kissed her?

GABRIELLE:

I know. (sighs) Aphrodite's my friend, but she's really made a mess of this one... Cyril, I'm sure she meant well.

CYRIL:

I know. She's so sweet and nice, you really can't get mad at her. I wish I could...

GABRIELLE:

Cyril, there's no point in getting mad. Maybe we can come up with some solution...

CYRIL (shrugs):

How? Aphrodite told me the spell couldn't be reversed.

GABRIELLE:

Look, you've got Xena on your side. She's very good at solving problems. If anyone can find a way out, she can. (Cyril nods and sighs, then takes a sip of wine) Cyril, Ariadne is out there looking for you--

CYRIL (gives her a horrified look):

What?

GABRIELLE:

She jumped in the saddle and rode off after you, just a few minutes after you left. She may be coming here.

CYRIL (tries to get up but she grabs his arm):

I have to get out of here, then.

GABRIELLE:

Cyril, no! You *have* to talk to her. Right now, she's very hurt and confused. She's wondering if it's her fault, because she didn't tell you that she was the princess. She's wondering if you were just toying with her. She doesn't know what to think.

Behind her, in the background, a door can be heard opening.

CYRIL (a strange look on his face):

She'll know.

Suddenly, he takes Gabrielle in his arms and passionately kisses her. Gabrielle's eyes widen and she makes a muffled sound of protest.

CYRIL (pulls back, quietly):

I'm sorry.

GABRIELLE (baffled):

Cyril--what are you--

Following his stare, she turns around and sees Ariadne standing a few feet behind them. Her posture is very stiff, her arms at the side of her body, her head thrown back slightly. Her dress has a couple of rips in it, the hem is muddy. Her arms and face have been scratched by the branches. Slowly, she starts coming toward Cyril and Gabrielle.

CYRIL (hisses at Gabrielle):

Don't you *dare* tell her! (As Ariadne comes closer, his face softens and he gazes at her adoringly) Ariadne...you came after me.

ARIADNE (harshly, her voice a little hoarse):

You want to know why? Just so I could tell you that I don't care about you one bit. I bet you thought I'd fallen in love with you, right? Well, I'd rather marry the first man who comes through that door than have anything to do with you. In fact, I swear by Aphrodite that that's exactly what I'm going to do!

GABRIELLE:

Ariadne--

Cyril kicks her. Ariadne walks away stiffly and sits down at a table some distance away.

CYRIL (quietly):

I have to leave... No, wait--if I leave, she'll know I'm running from her and then she'll know how I really feel--

GABRIELLE (gives him a pained look):

Cyril...you *are* very human.

CYRIL (to the tavern hostess, a middle-aged strongly built woman who is busy watering down a cup of wine):

Excuse me. (The hostess turns to him) Could you do me a favor? I'm going to go up to my room now. Could you please lock me in?

The hostess looks skeptically at him and then at Ariadne.

HOSTESS (briskly):

Nope. Can't.

CYRIL:

Why not?

HOSTESS (businesslike):

Just put in a brand-new lock. It'd be a shame if you broke it down.

CYRIL (through clenched teeth):

All right, all right. (He gets up. Gabrielle opens her mouth to speak but he shakes his head sadly.) Good-bye, Gabrielle. Thank you. And I'm sorry about-- (he blushes) *that*.

He rises. Just then, the door opens. Ariadne flinches and looks up. Xena stands in the doorway and Ariadne looks slightly relieved.

XENA:

Ariadne. There you are.

ARIADNE (looks puzzled at first, not recognizing Xena, then obviously remembers her from the other inn and looks even more baffled):

You followed me here?

Before Xena can answer, the door opens again and hits her in the behind. With a small "ow!", Xena steps aside, rubbing the sore spot. Captain Mopsus rushes in.

MOPSUS:

My princess! Thank the gods you're safe!

A close-up of the dismayed look on Ariadne's face. Then, she gets hold of herself and slowly rises to her feet.

The camera pans over to Gabrielle, who looks at Ariadne in alarm.

ARIADNE (coldly):
Captain Mopsus.

GABRIELLE:
Ariadne, don't do it!

XENA (puzzled):
Don't do what?

ARIADNE (to Mopsus):
Will you marry me?

In a general shocked silence, a stupid disbelieving grin spreads on Mopsus' ruddy face.

MOPSUS:
Well...if your royal highness so commands...

ARIADNE (bitterly):
Good.

CYRIL:
Ariadne, no!

ARIADNE:
I don't want to hear another word out of you.

CYRIL:
Ariadne, please listen--

ARIADNE (to Mopsus):
We're going home today.

She heads toward the door. Beaming, Mopsus attempts to take her arm.

ARIADNE (gives him a chilly look):
I said I was going to marry you. I didn't say you could touch me.

The grin on Mopsus' face gives way to a look of comical disappointment. Ariadne walks past Xena and out the door, followed by Mopsus. Xena gives Gabrielle a "What the hell?" look as we:

FADE OUT

ACT THREE

FADE IN

A road. Xena and Gabrielle are riding on horseback toward a large walled city with the setting sun as its backdrop. Darion is riding in the saddle with Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE:

I can't believe we're going to Ariadne's wedding with that clown.

XENA:

Not if we can do something about it, we're not.

GABRIELLE:

Meaning what?

XENA:

There won't be a wedding to go to.

DARION:

Why not? Weddings are fun.

GABRIELLE:

Except when the girl is marrying the wrong guy. (sighs) I wish we could find Cyril. (gives Xena an uncertain look) Maybe Aphrodite--

XENA (curtly):

Aphrodite better stay out of this or she's liable to do more damage.

DARION:

I like Aphrodite. Hey, Gabrielle, you're going to tell me some more stories about her, aren't you?

XENA (throws a sharp look at him):

Can we discuss a more pleasant subject? Like the snake-haired Gorgon?

GABRIELLE:

Oh, come on, Xena. Aphrodite meant well.

XENA:

So did the Gorgon. I bet when she turned people into stone, it was just her way of trying her hand at sculpture.

GABRIELLE:

You know, you never get this pis- (glances at Darion) uh, annoyed at Ares when he messes up.

XENA:

Ares is *supposed* to do damage. That's his job.

DARION:

Can I have his job when I grow up?

XENA (gives Gabrielle a teasing look):

Looking for a male role model, huh?

CUT TO

The edge of a village. A group of men and women in peasant garb, carrying various farming tools, are coming back from the fields. Among them is Cyril, with a rake on his shoulder. The camera follows him as he walks toward a small hut, puts the rake down by the wall, and goes inside the hut.

It is half-dark inside. Suddenly, there is a flash of golden light and a "whoosh," and in the next moment Aphrodite is sitting on a rickety chair.

APHRODITE:

Kinda sad, isn't it--to waste your humanity on this?

CYRIL (snaps):

Leave me alone, Aphrodite. All I want is to have a quiet ordinary life. No princesses. Certainly no goddesses.

APHRODITE (not fazed in the least):

You know, you're cute when you're angry. Come to think of it, you're *always* cute.

CYRIL (with bitter resignation):

Okay, Aphrodite. What game do you want to play now?

APHRODITE:

Really, I just want to help. (gives Cyril a mischievous look) Are you sure you're really in love? If you were, I think you would have *totally* lost your head and just kissed the girl back there in the tavern. You would have been like--Who cares what happens next? What's with being so sensible? (Off his glare) All right, all right. I'm sorry, I shouldn't tease you. Look, you're not really going to let the poor girl go ahead and marry that-- (pauses, looking for a word) --*that*. Are you?

CYRIL:

What am I supposed to do?

APHRODITE:

D'oh! Tell her the truth.

CYRIL:

And that's going to make her feel better?

APHRODITE:

Better than thinking she fell in love with a pig.

CYRIL:

No, she fell in love with a *dog*. What a relief.

APHRODITE:

Look, it's going to make her feel better. Trust me on this one, okay?

CYRIL (visibly wavering):

How am I supposed to get to her?

APHRODITE:

Honey, don't forget, you're talking to a goddess.

CYRIL (bitterly):

As if I could forget *that*.

APHRODITE:

Awww...that was *mean!* (looks upset for a moment but quickly recovers) Come on! Xena and Gabrielle are on their way to town. I'll take you there. The girls will find a way to help you out.

CUT TO

Xena, Gabrielle and Darion in a room at an inn. There is a knock on the door. Gabrielle goes to the door. When she opens it, Cyril stands in the doorway.

GABRIELLE (smiles joyfully):

Cyril!

He gives her a wan smile.

CUT TO

A richly decorated room at the palace where Xena and Gabrielle are waiting. Polemos comes in.

POLEMOS (overjoyed):

Xena! Gabrielle! It's so good to see you.

XENA:

Hello, Polemos.

GABRIELLE:

How are you?

POLEMOS:

Not too good. (Shakes his head) This wedding... The girl is as stubborn as a mu- (he bites his tongue, obviously mindful that he's talking about the princess) She's very stubborn, anyway. She's got it into her head that she has to fulfill her vow and go through with the marriage. None of us have been able to talk her out of it. But we can all see that it's killing her. (Sighs mournfully) And then, too, we have to deal with this tyrant...

GABRIELLE (surprised):

Tyrant? King Nestor?

POLEMOS (hastily):

No, no--not the king! I'm talking about Captain Mopsus. *General* Mopsus, these days. When the king saw that the poor girl was determined to marry him, he made Mopsus a general. Well, between being engaged to the princess and being granted a general's title, it all really went to his head. And the wedding is tomorrow...

XENA:

No, it isn't. Polemos, can you arrange for us to talk to Ariadne?

POLEMOS:

I will. I hope you can do something, because otherwise.... (he shakes his head) Wait here.

Polemos leaves.

XENA:

If we can just get Ariadne to see Cyril, she'll call off this ridiculous wedding.

GABRIELLE (sadly):

I think she will...but what happens to her and Cyril?

XENA (her face turns grim):

I'm not sure anyone can find a way out of that one, Gabrielle.

Gabrielle ponders this for a moment. Then, her eyes sparkle--she has obviously gotten an idea.

GABRIELLE:

Xena--

XENA:

What?

GABRIELLE:

Remember when Aphrodite enchanted the scroll and it messed everything up--

XENA:

Oh yeah. (teasing) The three nay--nay--the three Gabrielles in the really ugly hats.

GABRIELLE:

Xena, this is serious. Remember how you found a way to undo the magic?

XENA:

I asked you to write down exactly what was happening, without making anything up.

GABRIELLE:

No, no. Before that--

Before she can finish, the doors are thrown open. General Mopsus is standing in the doorway, with about a dozen guards behind him.

MOPSUS:

Well, well. Xena. One of the servants told me you and that back-stabber Polemos are plotting to stop my marriage.

XENA (unflappable):

Captain Mopsus.

MOPSUS (yells, his face even redder than usual with anger):

That's *General* Mopsus to you!

XENA (smirking):

No, no. You may be General Mopsus to everyone else. Me, I don't even know how you got to be captain.

MOPSUS (even more enraged):

Arrest these women!

He charges at Xena. Xena punches him out and he staggers back, knocking down four of the guards behind him. They roll about in a tangled heap on the floor trying to get up.

XENA:

Works every time.

The other guards attack Xena and Gabrielle. One of them charges Gabrielle with a sword; she repels the attack with her sais and then hits him on the head with the hilt of a sai, knocking him out, while at the same time downing another attacker with a kick.

Meanwhile, Xena punches out one of her attackers and kicks the sword out of another's hand, then sends him staggering back with another kick. He sprawls in a large cushioned armchair.

XENA:

At least you got a good seat.

Another guard comes up behind her but she throws a backward punch, getting him right in the nose.

While Gabrielle is fighting off two more guards, Mopsus and the other four who were taken down with him are getting back on their feet. Xena steps back to get a running start, then somersaults over them so that she is now behind them. She grabs two of the guards, knocking their heads together, and then shoves them at their comrades. Mopsus goes down again with a frustrated yell.

XENA (to Gabrielle):

Are you done yet?

The only guard still left standing charges at Gabrielle. She dodges him so that the momentum carries him past her, then delivers a kick to his behind that makes him fall on his face.

GABRIELLE:

I am now.

She catches up with Xena at the door and they run out of the room.

MOPSUS (sits up and yells):

After them!

CUT TO

The hallway. As Xena and Gabrielle stop and look around, another large group of guards comes running toward them.

GABRIELLE:

I think we'd better get out of here for now.

They run, with the guards after them. Mopsus gets back on his feet, though he seems a little wobbly, and runs after the guards.

Xena stops for a moment and throws her chakram at a large chandelier that hangs from the ceiling. The chandelier falls, landing on top of the guards. Several of them collapse in a heap, blocking the way for the others, who run into them and fall down as well in a chain reaction.

Xena catches the chakram and smirks at Mopsus, who limps up behind the heap of guards flailing about on the floor.

MOPSUS (yells):

You'll never get to see the princess anyway... *or* the king! The Fates have decreed that I should marry the princess!

XENA:

You could be right. The Fates have always had a twisted sense of humor.

GABRIELLE (looks on as some of the guards start getting up):

Uh, Xena--can we save the witty one-liners for later?

XENA:

Good idea.

They race down the hallway.

CUT TO

The room at the inn. Xena stands leaning against the wall, Gabrielle is sitting on one of the beds and Aphrodite on another. Cyril paces nervously about the room. Darion is in a corner playing.

GABRIELLE:

It's not going to be easy. The palace is heavily guarded--Mopsus knows we're going to try to crash the wedding.

APHRODITE:

Hey, you know I could just zap--

XENA (gives her a curt look):

No thanks, I think you've done enough zapping. Gabrielle, remember when we were here years ago, helping King Nestor with his sister's little problem?

GABRIELLE:

Yeah?

XENA:

Remember how she used to sneak out of the palace through a secret passage to go to those gambling dens?

GABRIELLE:

Yeah, but the king had it sealed, didn't he?

XENA (smirks):

Don't worry, I'll find a way to unseal it.

CYRIL (stops pacing and looks back and forth between Xena, Gabrielle and Aphrodite):

Okay, so I get to see her and I tell her the truth. And then what? We part forever? Or stay together and never once kiss?

XENA (suddenly remembers):

Wait a minute. Gabrielle--you said something before about how, back when Aphrodite enchanted your scroll, I found a way to undo the spell.

GABRIELLE (her eyes light up):

Yeah! You asked Aphrodite to tell you exactly what words she used to cast the spell. So I was thinking--

XENA (interrupts):

All right, Aphrodite, this may be your chance to fix this mess. What exactly did you say when you cast the spell?

APHRODITE:

When you receive a kiss of love
From a princess of royal blood,
A kiss of love that's true and steadfast,
To your true form you'll return at last.

(off Gabrielle's wince, defensively) *What?* At least it rhymes...sorta.

XENA:

Hold on. (she thinks for a moment) Okay...this may work. (the corners of her mouth curve up in a slight smile)

CYRIL (backs away a step, slightly alarmed):

What may work?

XENA:

I'll tell you later--come on! Aphrodite, you stay here with Darion.

DARION (looks up):

So there's not going to be a wedding?

XENA (smiles):

With luck, there may be. Eventually.

FADE OUT

ACT FOUR

FADE IN

A large hall in the palace festively decked out in garlands of white, pink and red roses. A priestess in a pink gown wearing a pink flower wreath stands on a small elevation, up a few steps. General Mopsus, dressed up in an impressive dark red leather outfit with a large gold medallion on his puffed-

out chest, stands in front of her with his arms folded on his stomach, looking very pleased with himself. A group of musicians with flutes and lyres stand to the side. The hall is filled with courtiers standing on both sides of the aisle.

There's a loud sound somewhere outside the hall and General Mopsus flinches and looks nervously in the direction of the sound.

CUT TO

A secret passage, weakly lit by the lantern in Gabrielle's hand. Xena, Gabrielle and Cyril are walking through the passage. They stop at a dead end, before a locked door.

XENA:

Okay. This leads into one of the royal bedrooms...should be empty now. Stand back.

She takes a few steps back, then starts running and flips in the air, ramming both her boots into the door before landing on the floor. The door shakes a little but doesn't give.

CUT TO

The wedding hall. The large ornate doors are thrown open. The musicians start playing "Here Comes the Bride." Ariadne in a wedding gown and a veil walks in, escorted by King Nestor, a gray-haired, gray-bearded man in a rich robe of gold brocade with a fur mantle, a golden jeweled crown on his head. Ariadne's face is expressionless. King Nestor looks upset and confused, occasionally casting timid glances at his daughter as if trying to muster the courage to say something.

As he sees them come in, Mopsus smiles with a relieved expression and wipes beads of sweat from his forehead.

A close-up of King Nestor and Ariadne.

KING NESTOR (softly):

Sweetheart, you don't have to do this.

ARIADNE:

Don't make it worse, Daddy. I do.

The camera pans over to Polemos and Eliante, who are standing on the side of the aisle.

POLEMOS (mutters):

Xena, where are you?

CUT TO

The secret passage. Xena does yet another flip, crashing her boots into the door. The door groans but remains intact.

There is a flash of golden light, and Aphrodite appears.

APHRODITE:

Really, Warrior Babe--you are so stubborn! No wonder you and Ar are a match.

She extends an arm and touches the door, which instantly falls, opening up the way into a room. Aphrodite smiles a satisfied smile.

XENA (reluctantly):
Thanks, Aphrodite.

APHRODITE (blows Cyril a kiss):
Good luck, kiddo.

She disappears.

XENA:
All right, let's go.

CUT TO

A palace hallway. Xena, Gabrielle and Cyril come out of a door.

GABRIELLE:
Now, this would be a lot faster if we knew which way to go from here--

XENA:
They'll tell us. (points toward four guards who emerge from behind a corner)

GUARD #1:
Hey, it's them! Stop them! (To one of the guards, as they draw their swords.) Go get help!

GABRIELLE:
No, you don't. (She throws a sai with the blunt end forward and knocks him out)

Xena does a flip and simultaneously kicks two other guards in the face with her boots, knocking them down. Guard #1, the only one left standing, looks from Xena to Gabrielle and lowers his sword.

XENA (smirks):
Smart move. Now, if you want to be even smarter, you'll tell us where the wedding is.

CUT TO

The wedding hall. Ariadne stands stiffly next to a grinning General Mopsus.

PRIESTESS:
We are gathered here to celebrate the union of Princess Ariadne and (sighs) General Mopsus.

CUT TO

Xena, Gabrielle and Cyril racing down the hallway toward the open doors of the wedding hall.

CUT TO

The wedding hall.

PRIESTESS:

If anyone knows of--

As she continues to speak off-camera, we see Xena, Gabrielle and Cyril running up to the doors.

PRIESTESS:

--a reason why these two should not be joined together in matrimony, speak now--

Two guards cross spears to stand in Xena, Gabrielle, and Cyril's way. Xena and Gabrielle exchange glances and deliver simultaneous kicks that knock down the guards.

The camera pans to General Mopsus, who looks back at the noise, a panicked expression on his face, and then to the priestess.

PRIESTESS:

--or forever hold your peace.

XENA (walks through the open doors):

A reason? Just one? We could go down the list until nightfall.

A murmur in the hall. The camera pans quickly to Polemos, who breathes a visible sigh of relief, and then to King Nestor, who looks slightly befuddled but immensely relieved. Ariadne's eyes lock on Cyril's. For a moment her face lights up with joy, then it hardens and she turns away defiantly.

MOPSUS (yells):

Get her out of here!

XENA (ignoring him as she, Gabrielle, and Cyril walk down the hall):

But here's reason number one. (points to Cyril)

ARIADNE (a pained look on her face):

I don't want to hear this. Can we just get it over with?

XENA:

Ariadne, no! You've got to hear him out! Believe me, you *want* to hear him.

There is a long, tense pause as Ariadne visibly hesitates. Mopsus draws his sword and charges at Xena with a snarl.

XENA:

Still haven't learned your lesson, have you?

She knocks the sword out of his hand. He stands still for a moment, looking bewildered, and then turns. Xena gives him a kick in the behind that sends him flying and then sprawling on his stomach. There is a somewhat hesitant laughter in the crowd.

POLEMOS (loses his self-control for a moment and pumps his fist in the air):

Yeah! (off King Nestor's startled look) Sorry, your majesty...

KING NESTOR:

Oh, that's, uh, quite all right. I know how you feel--after all, I'm the girl's father.

ARIADNE:

All right. Everyone, leave us alone. *Please*. (She starts out with an imperious note in her voice, but her tone softens and becomes almost imploring by the end)

KING NESTOR:

You heard what the princess said. Let's go, everyone!

The murmur grows louder as the courtiers starts streaming out of the hall. General Mopsus scrambles to his feet and walks out too, giving Cyril a hateful look.

When everyone has left, the servants close the doors.

ARIADNE (approaches Cyril, who stands still with his eyes downcast):

What did you want to tell me?

CYRIL (looks up):

That I love you.

CUT TO

The hallway outside. King Nestor is eavesdropping at the keyhole. His face lights up in a big smile.

KING NESTOR (in a loud whisper):

He said he loves her!

GABRIELLE (reproachfully):

King Nestor--really, you know--isn't this a little beneath your royal dignity?

KING NESTOR:

Look, I'm just worried about my daughter, okay? Shh-- (listens again)

CUT TO

The wedding hall.

ARIADNE:

I don't believe you. Why did you--

CYRIL:

Ariadne, please listen. I'm under Aphrodite's spell. If a princess falls in love and kisses me, I'm supposed to turn into... (he pauses and looks down again)

ARIADNE (frightened):

What--a monster?

CYRIL:

No. A dog.

CUT TO

The hallway. King Nestor stands up straight, a look of dismay on his features.

CUT TO

The wedding hall.

ARIADNE (frowns):

Is this some sort of sick joke?

CYRIL:

Aphrodite's joke, maybe. Ariadne, I swear it's true. I was a dog and Aphrodite turned me into a man. I didn't like being a man and I asked her to turn me back...and she came up with this spell.

A close-up of Ariadne's horrified look. Slowly, she covers her face with her hands.

CYRIL:

I'm sorry, Ariadne--I'm so sorry. That's why I ran when I found out who you were. I didn't want to hurt you. And that's why--

ARIADNE (lowers her hands and lifts her head):

I understand. (she comes up to Cyril and takes his hands) I love you.

They gaze at each other silently for a moment.

CYRIL:

Ariadne...

ARIADNE:

What are we going to do? Can she reverse the spell?

CYRIL (shakes his head):

No. (off Ariadne's stricken look) But Xena thinks there may be a way out.

CUT TO

The hallway.

KING NESTOR:

Oh dear. The poor girl is going to be very upset. (sighs) Well...I suppose at least a dog isn't as bad as a lizard or something...maybe we could keep him as a pet?

GABRIELLE (shakes her head):

I don't think Ariadne would go along with that.

CUT TO

The wedding hall. Ariadne and Cyril are holding each other. Slowly, gazing into each other's eyes, they move closer until their lips meet.



A cloud of golden sparks rises from the floor and envelops them, swirling around them, growing bigger and bigger. A slight tremor shakes the room, making a vase fall and the chandelier on the ceiling tremble and clank.

CUT TO

The hallway. The courtiers exchange startled looks as they feel the vibration.

POLEMOS:

What was that?

XENA (tensely):

That was the kiss.

POLEMOS (under his breath):

That just the kiss?

KING NESTOR:

Oh my...I guess if we hear barking, we'll know what happened.

CYRIL (off-camera, behind the doors):

Xena! Gabrielle! I'm all right!

A close-up of Xena's face. She looks profoundly relieved. The camera then pans to Gabrielle, who is overjoyed as well.

ARIADNE (off-camera):

Daddy!

A close-up of the joyous look on King Nestor's face.

Xena pushes the door open. She, Gabrielle, Nestor, and Polemos rush into the wedding hall, followed by the others.

GABRIELLE:

Cyril, you're okay! (she runs up to hug Cyril)

KING NESTOR:

Sweetheart! (With tears in his eyes, he hugs Ariadne)

ARIADNE:

Daddy... (raises her voice) Everyone--this young man (points to Cyril) is my fiancé!

A chorus of cheers goes up.

KING NESTOR (gives Xena a puzzled look):

So the spell wasn't real?

XENA:

Oh, it was real all right.

KING NESTOR (even more puzzled):

Then--you did something so it wouldn't work?

XENA:

Nah. I just got an idea. The spell said that when a princess fell in love with Cyril and kissed him, he would return to his true form. Well, by now (points at Cyril) this *is* his true form. He's just as human as you or me or anyone else.

King Nestor nods, obviously impressed by her reasoning.

CYRIL:

Xena...you saved my life. How can I ever thank you?

XENA (obviously pleased):

Don't forget to thank Gabrielle, too. It was something she said that made me think of it.

GABRIELLE (smiles):

I'm just glad I could help.

KING NESTOR:

Listen! I have an idea... We've got the priestess here, you're in a wedding gown, we've got all the wedding decorations...why don't we just go ahead and have the wedding right now?

ARIADNE (to Cyril):

What do you say to that?

CYRIL (a happy, almost incredulous look on his face):

Sounds good to me!



XENA:

Congratulations, you two.

GABRIELLE (sighs):

Too bad Darion is going to miss the wedding.

In a flash of golden light, Aphrodite appears with Darion.

APHRODITE:

No, he's not!

DARION (looks dizzy for a moment, then grins broadly, grabbing Aphrodite's wrist):

Wow! Can we do that again?

There is a chorus of gasps in the hall.

APHRODITE:

Hey, let go of the goddess, kid!

DARION (lets go, more seriously):

Please, can we do it again? It was too fast--I didn't see how you did it...

APHRODITE:

Maybe another time. (To Cyril) Hey, kiddo.

CYRIL:

Hello, Aphrodite.

A murmur of "Aphrodite, Aphrodite" runs through the hall.

APHRODITE (comes up to Cyril and Ariadne and addresses Cyril):

So. Still mad at me, kiddo?

CYRIL (shakes his head and smiles):

I guess not. It's all worked out for the best in the end.

APHRODITE (beaming):

Yeah--don't you just *love it* when that happens? All right, you two lovebirds...be good!

She blows the couple a kiss, then waves at Xena and Gabrielle and disappears in a cloud of golden sparks.

The camera pans over the happy faces of Xena, Gabrielle, Polemos, Eliante and King Nestor, and then back to Cyril and Ariadne as they kiss again.

DISSOLVE TO

A road outside the city. It's a beautiful sunny morning. Xena and Gabrielle are riding, with Darion in the saddle in front of Gabrielle.

DARION:

Hey, Gabrielle?

GABRIELLE:

What, honey?

DARION:

Aphrodite told me that story about how she enchanted a scroll.

GABRIELLE (suspiciously):

She did?

DARION:

Yeah. She said when Joxer wrote in the scroll and those three Gabbys showed up, they weren't wearing ugly hats. (Gabrielle blushes profusely while Xena gives her a teasing look) Actually, she said you weren't wearing--

GABRIELLE (cuts him off):

Darion! Don't believe everything you hear from Aphrodite.

DARION (smirks):

I bet that was pretty embarrassing. Especially with all those guys around--Joxer and Ares--

Xena glares at him and he trails off.

GABRIELLE (to Xena, exasperated):

I can't believe she would tell him that!

XENA (smirks):

I thought it was you who told me not to be so tough on her when she messes up?

Gabrielle fumes for a moment but then calms down. They ride silently for a moment.

GABRIELLE:

Xena. When you figured out that Cyril might stay human after the kiss--were you sure?

XENA:

Of course I wasn't.

GABRIELLE:

So they were taking a pretty big risk.

XENA:

You always do when you fall in love.

GABRIELLE:

I guess so... (thinks for a moment) I guess true love can make anyone human.



XENA (a pensive, faraway look on her face):

Yeah, it can...

GABRIELLE (gives her a curious look):

Why do I get the feeling that you're thinking about somebody else?

XENA (glances at her, startled out of her reverie):

Like who?

Gabrielle chuckles indulgently as we:

FADE OUT

THE END

[The spell used in the production of this motion picture was not actually tested on animals. Often.]