

SHIPPER SEASON EIGHT

“Love’s Creation”

Production #XWP162/SS28

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Logline

While Xena and Gabrielle are on the island of Cyprus helping a woman-hating king with not only a personal problem but also the problems of the unhappy citizens that are affected by it, the events eventually bring Xena to realize something about Ares that she never dared to admit before.

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TEASER

FADE IN

A clearing in the forest. Gabrielle is sitting on a tree stump, opening up a new scroll. She holds the quill in her hand, slowly tapping it against her cheek, deep in thought. Finally she starts to write.

Suddenly, Xena's battle cry, "A-yi-yi-yi-yi!" cuts through the silence. Gabrielle looks up in alarm, puts down the quill and reaches for her sais. In a moment, Xena bursts out onto the clearing in a series of spectacular flips, giving her battle cry again, then comes to a halt, draws her sword and assumes a fighting stance. Gabrielle gives her a very puzzled look. Darion comes running after Xena, laughing excitedly. He is carrying three large fishes on a string.

GABRIELLE:

Uh, Xena--are you fighting a ghost?

XENA (sheathes her sword with a chuckle):

Nah, I just promised Darion that if he caught a fish, I'd do some flips and the battle cry for him.

DARION:

That was *great!*

GABRIELLE (looks from Darion to Xena, a little uncomfortably):

Oh...okay. (to Darion, smiling) You caught a fish?

DARION (points to the largest of the fishes):

Yeah! It was this one.

XENA (teasing):

Ya think?

DARION (hotly):

I know it was!

GABRIELLE:

That's wonderful, sweetheart.

She puts down her sais and picks up the quill again.

XENA:

Whatcha doing?

GABRIELLE:

Writing the story of how Agrippina and Nero came to power in Rome.

XENA (smiles at her):

Good story. (suddenly serious) Once we know how it ends.

GABRIELLE:

Xena, I know they're going to do good. (puts down the quill) Want me to go gather some firewood?

XENA (looks at her and Darion):

I'll go. You two stay here--you can show Darion how to clean fish.

GABRIELLE:

Good idea. Come on, Darion, bring the fish over here.

Xena smiles at Gabrielle as Darion runs toward her, then heads off into the forest.

CUT TO

Xena walks through the forest gathering wood. Suddenly, a contented look appears on her face and she closes her eyes, her lips parting a little. In a flare of blue light, Ares appears before her. He puts his hands on her shoulders and their lips lock in a brief but ardent kiss. When he pulls away, he looks into her wide eyes.

XENA (regaining breath):

That was, uh, quite a hello.

ARES (smirks):

I do my best.

XENA (teasing):

That was your best?

They stare at each other, silence between them, then Ares grins and leans toward her, kissing her again. She drops the firewood and wraps her arms around him. They kiss passionately for a few moments; then Ares breaks the kiss and caresses Xena's cheek with the back of his hand.

ARES:

How was that?

XENA (playful but tender):

That was better.

ARES (insinuating):

You know, it can be even better than that.

XENA (dreamily):

I know. (she pauses, then shakes her head slightly, snapping out of her reverie) So, are you here for any particular reason?

ARES:

Other than--the better-than-that part?

XENA (wryly):

Other than that.

ARES (suddenly serious and uncomfortable):

Um, actually...I didn't get a chance to say this before... (he stumbles a little while she waits for him, calm but slightly tense) Xena, look--I did want to talk to you about Sabina...

XENA:

What about Sabina?

ARES:

Xena, I never... (shakes his head) She was never my champion--or anything else. (pause, obviously about to say something else)

XENA:

But--?

ARES (sighs):

But--when she said she wanted to fight and conquer in my name, I won't deny that I was--interested.

XENA:

And you let her believe that she had the job. (Ares gives her a slightly startled look and she chuckles bitterly) I know how you do things, Ares. (she pauses) Of course you were interested. She offered you something that you knew I would never give you.

There is a moment of uncomfortable silence between them, neither of them looking at each other.

ARES (quietly):

You've given me more.

He takes her hand.

XENA:

Ares--that thing with Sabina--I'm not holding it against you. It was just a reminder... You have your job and I have mine--and sometimes we're going to be on opposite sides.

ARES:

I hope it doesn't mean that we can't have a little fun on our days off.

XENA (chuckles):

Maybe.

She raises his hand to her face, pressing her cheek to the back of his hand. They stand silently for a few moments.

ARES (breaks the silence and steps back):

So, where are you headed to?

XENA:

Cyprus.

ARES:

What's in Cyprus?

XENA:

Just a vacation.

ARES:

Really. When did you last go on *just* a vacation?

XENA (her face is clouded for a moment):

Andros Island.

ARES:

And we know how well *that* worked out.

XENA:

Who knows, maybe if I hadn't gone there we wouldn't have brought your family back. (Ares nods thoughtfully) Anyway, next week is Darion's birthday. (off Ares' surprised look) He's never been on a ship before. Gabrielle told him all these stories about traveling by sea and it was something he really wanted.

ARES:

So you *had* to take a boat trip.

XENA:

It was either that or get him a pet rabbit.

ARES:

That kid's really got you both wrapped around his little finger, huh?

XENA (cool façade):

Not true at all. We're just taking care of him until we can find him a real home.

ARES (sarcastic):

Oh yeah.

XENA:

Besides, it'll be a chance for us to relax.

ARES (sarcastically):

Forget it. The moment you set foot on Cyprus, there's bound to be a pirate raid, or a civil war, or some monster will decide to pay a visit. You know how trouble follows you.

XENA:

I thought I followed trouble.

ARES:

Either way, you always seem to find each other. (suavely and a little playfully) You know, if you *really* want to relax, I have a much better idea...

He comes up behind her and begins, slowly, to rub her shoulders. She closes her eyes in pleasure but then opens them again.

XENA (shakes her head):

Sorry, Ares. Your offer...won't do much for Gabrielle and Darion.

ARES:

So, let them go to Cyprus and have their fun. (grins) And we'll have ours.

XENA (smiles):

Look me up on Cyprus.

They smile at each other. Xena picks up the firewood and starts to leave, then stops and looks at Ares. She walks back toward him, drops the firewood, puts her hand behind Ares' head and gives him a short but passion-filled kiss. When she steps back, Ares is the one looking at her wide-eyed.

ARES (grins):

And that was quite a goodbye.

Smiling back at him, Xena picks up the firewood again and walks off.

ARES:

Enjoy your vacation!

CUT TO

A square in a city, dominated by a large palace of marble and gold surrounded by tall cypresses. The square is filled with angry women who are shouting and banging on their pots and pans.

WOMAN #1:

Down with King Pygmalion!

WOMAN #2:

We're mad as hell and we won't take it anymore!

WOMAN #3:

It's about time Cyprus had a decent king!

Guards in armor of gold and silver run out into the square and attack the women, trying to push them back with their spears. The women fight back with their pots and pans. A wild melee ensues as we:

FADE OUT

ACT ONE

FADE IN

A zoomed-out shot of a harbor in the morning. People are bustling around the docks, getting onto a large ship. Xena, Gabrielle, and Darion are seen walking through the harbor, approaching the ship, talking briefly to a tall, powerfully built man who is obviously the captain, and then getting on the ship.

CUT TO

Darion running wildly along the deck, with Gabrielle chasing him.

DARION:

This is so much fun! I *love* being on a ship.

GABRIELLE (stops, looking a little queasy):

Wish I could say the same.

DARION (snickers):

Yeah, Xena told me about how you got sick on that ship when you helped Cecrops.

GABRIELLE:

That wasn't very funny!

DARION (snickers again):

You ate squid.

GABRIELLE:

Octopus.

DARION:

Can I have some octopus?

GABRIELLE (looks uncertain):

Uhhh...I'm not sure you'd like it very much.

DARION:

Well, I want to try it anyway. I want to try everything. (he climbs up on the railing and slings a leg over it)

GABRIELLE (rushes toward him, panicked):

Darion! Don't do that--it's dangerous! You could fall!

She grabs Darion and pulls him down on the deck.

DARION:

That's okay. I've climbed trees and I've never fallen. (pauses and scrunches up his face) Well... *almost* never. (his face brightens) Besides, even if I fell, Xena would just come after me and flip in the air and save me.

XENA (off-camera):

Is that so?

The camera pans to Xena walking up to them.

DARION (confidently):

Sure!

Xena approaches and ruffles his hair with a chuckle. Darion puts his elbows on the railing and looks out over the water, watching the waves lap against the side of the ship. Gabrielle stands next to him.

GABRIELLE (with a dreamy smile):

Isn't the sea beautiful?

XENA (shrugs):

It's...big. (pauses) And it's blue.

GABRIELLE:

Look at how the sun glitters on the water...almost like someone's scattered silver on--

DARION (turns to her, interrupting):

Are we gonna get there soon?

XENA (points into the distance in front of them):

Look--there it is!

A small green spot is visible in the distance.

DARION (awed):
That's Cyprus?

GABRIELLE (smiling):
I believe it is.

CUT TO

A montage: Xena, Gabrielle, and Darion walking off of the ship, then walking through the busy streets of a city filled with street vendors, donkeys and their drivers, warriors, street dancers and other performers, etc.

CUT TO

The three travelers arriving at an inn and entering a murky anteroom. They are greeted by a middle-aged innkeeper.

GABRIELLE:
We'll need a room for three. Two beds and one cot.

INNKEEPER (looks them over):
It's just the three of you?

XENA:
What, you expecting anyone else?

INNKEEPER (looks slightly embarrassed):
Sorry, but...I'm afraid I can't give you a room.

GABRIELLE (puzzled):
What do you mean, you can't?

INNKEEPER:
It's the law... (uncomfortably) It's forbidden to let a room at an inn to a woman unescorted by a man.

XENA (about to grab him by the collar):
Why, you...

GABRIELLE (stops her):
This is a joke, right? (points to Darion and laughs) We're escorted by a man!

INNKEEPER (nervous):
Look here, this isn't funny. I don't like this law any more than you do. It's costing me money. But a king's decree is a king's decree.

XENA (outraged):
Your king issued such a decree?

INNKEEPER (grumbles):
He's issued lots of decrees, our king. (in a half-whisper) Some says he's-- (taps a finger

meaningfully on his forehead) Anyway, I don't know what his problem is, but he's got a huge grudge against women, that's for sure. (apologetically) I'd love to put you up, believe me. But if the king's men show up with an inspection-- (he spreads his arms in a gesture of resignation)

GABRIELLE:

That's all right--we don't want to cause you any trouble. We'll just go outside the city and make camp. (to Darion) You like camping out, right, Darion?

DARION (makes a face):

I'm kinda tired of camping out all the time. (his face brightens as he looks at Xena) Hey, maybe if Ar--

Before he can finish, Xena puts a hand over his mouth.

XENA (chuckles):

Now, now. We'll be fine. No need to bother--anybody. We'll camp out.

CUT TO

Xena, Gabrielle and Darion standing in front of a rather dilapidated-looking shack in a clearing overgrown with tall grass and surrounded by trees.

XENA:

Looks like we found our lodgings.

CUT TO

Inside the cabin. The three of them are looking around. It's a small, one-room house; everything is dusty and shabby. There are two small beds by the walls, an old fireplace, and a table with two chairs in front of a window. Darion is running around poking at everything.

XENA:

Probably an abandoned hunters' cabin.

GABRIELLE:

Actually, it looks a lot like your childhood home, hmm, Xena? (smirks) Though in better shape.

XENA (unflappable):

It's better all right. No nosy neighbor coming around the corner all the time trying to chat up the owner...

GABRIELLE (laughs):

I *knew* you were jealous of Greba!

Xena gives her "the look."

DARION:

Hey, this is great!

He runs across the cabin and then jumps up, attempting to do a Xena-like back flip and land on one of the beds.

GABRIELLE:

Darion, don't--

Darion belly-flops on the bed, which groans and collapses with a loud crash.

GABRIELLE:

--do that. (she winces)

DARION (jumps to his feet):

Wow! That was *cool*!

XENA (rolls her eyes):

All right, why don't we just leave our things here and head back into town?

GABRIELLE (surprised):

Back to town? What for? We can just stay out here. It's beautiful. So peaceful, so quiet--

XENA:

We need to find out what's going on with that king.

GABRIELLE:

I thought we were on vacation.

XENA:

All right, you two can stay out here and finish tearing down the house, and I'll head to town on my own.

DARION:

I want to go to town!

XENA (gives Gabrielle a mocking glance):

Whatever Darion wants, Darion gets.

CUT TO

Xena, Gabrielle and Darion walking through the streets of the city. A noise is heard off-camera--it sounds like the roar of a large crowd. Xena and Gabrielle exchange a look.

XENA (through clenched teeth):

Well, looks like trouble has followed us after all.

GABRIELLE:

What?

XENA (shakes her head):

Nothing. Just--something somebody said to me. Let's go check it out.

CUT TO

The same square we saw in the teaser. There is a large crowd gathered in front of the palace, much larger than the first time--mostly women, some banging pots and pans, others holding rotten fruits

and vegetables in their hands, but also some men. Their voices can barely be heard above the racket.

YOUNG WOMAN #1:

We want justice!

Xena, Gabrielle and Darion come out on the square and approach the crowd.

GABRIELLE (to Darion):

Darion, stay behind me--don't let go of my hand.

He nods, looking a little frightened. They approach a group of people on the edge of the crowd. Shouts of "Down with Pygmalion!" are heard.

XENA (to Woman #2, a woman in her thirties; shouting over the din of the crowd):

What's going on?

WOMAN #2 (also shouting):

We're protesting, what does it look like? We're fed up with the king and we're not gonna take it anymore.

GABRIELLE:

What has he done?

WOMAN #2 (scoffs):

What *hasn't* he done! We're saddled with a king who hates all womankind.

WOMAN #3 (in her twenties):

They don't call him *Pygmalion* for nothing. He's a royal pig if you ask me!

WOMAN#2:

He's banned us from public assemblies and the theater.

WOMAN #4 (elderly):

He's even banned women vendors from the main market square!

XENA:

Yeah, we had a close encounter with one of his decrees. How long has this been going on?

WOMAN #5 (middle-aged):

Pygmalion took the throne about a year ago, after his mother the queen died. Ever since then, things have been going to Tartarus in a handbasket!

MAN #1 (in his thirties):

It's not just the women. The king doesn't care about anything. He doesn't hear the appeals of those who believe they have been unjustly treated by the courts.

WOMAN #5:

Or who have complaints about officials.

WOMAN #3:

They say he never shows up at council meetings. He hardly ever leaves the palace lately!

GABRIELLE:

And no one knows why?

WOMAN #2:

No, his advisors just keep saying he's busy.

XENA (looks at Gabrielle):

Well, it looks like we've got our work cut out for us. (thinks for a moment) Why don't you take Darion back to the house and I'll go see if I can talk to this king.

GABRIELLE:

Xena, they said he's not talking to anyone--especially women.

XENA:

I'll find a way to get in.

WOMAN'S VOICE (off-screen):

There goes one of the king's servants! Get him!

The camera pans to a teenage boy in a green jacket with a gold-embroidered collar and an image of a golden crown embroidered on the front. He is carrying a basket. Woman #5 raises a hand with an egg in it and throws it at the boy, who flinches fearfully. Xena's hand shoots out and she quickly catches the egg and throws it back at the surprised woman.

XENA:

Save that for dinner. (shakes her head) Attacking an innocent servant of the king's is not the way to go.

WOMAN #5:

We're fed up with all of them! The king and his lackeys!

XENA (to the servant):

Come on, let's get you out of here.

She pulls the boy away from the crowd.

CUT TO

A quiet spot behind a corner. The rumble of the crowd is heard in the distance.

SERVANT (nervously):

I have to get back there! I need to deliver this basket to the palace--it's cheese for the king's table.

While he's talking, Gabrielle is looking at him thoughtfully.

GABRIELLE (smiling mischievously):

Xena, I have an idea.

XENA:

About what?

GABRIELLE:

How to get into the palace.

A close-up on the puzzled look on Xena's face as we:

FADE OUT

ACT TWO

FADE IN

The same street corner. The camera pans up the green pants and jacket of the king's servant, and then up to the face of the person wearing the jacket. It's Gabrielle, a satisfied smile on her face.

GABRIELLE:

Think it will work?

DARION (impressed):

Wow. You look good as a boy.

The camera pans to the servant, wrapped in a cloak.

SERVANT (nervously):

I hope it's worth it. If you can talk some sense into the king, we'd all appreciate it. He's gotten really weird lately. Spends most of his time cooped up in his private quarters in the palace, walking around and talking to himself...

DARION:

Maybe he's just crazy.

GABRIELLE:

We'll see. (picks up the basket) All right, Xena--you take Darion back to the house and I'll try to get to the king.

XENA:

Good luck. (smirks) I guess it's my turn to baby-sit.

DARION (grins):

Don't worry, Gabrielle! I'm sure we'll have lots of fun!

Gabrielle watches them walk away; she smiles and shakes her head. Then she turns to the servant.

GABRIELLE:

Thanks for the help! (she presses some money into the servant's hand and heads toward the square)

CUT TO

The square. The guards have come out of the palace and the people are now dispersing, though some of them are giving Gabrielle hostile looks as she walks toward the palace. Gabrielle approaches the palace doors, with a guard standing on each side.

GUARD #1:

Where do you think you're going?

Gabrielle stops, looking at him nervously, obviously thinking he's on to her.

GUARD #1:

The servant's entrance is that way, you dolt! (points left)

GABRIELLE (speaks in a deliberately low voice):

Oh...sorry, sir. Guess I just got nervous because of that crowd out there.

CUT TO

Gabrielle enters a palace through a side door.

CUT TO

Gabrielle walks into the kitchen. She looks around, noticing with obvious astonishment that all the cooks and their assistants, dressed in green but with white hats, are men and boys. She shakes her head slightly and puts the basket down on a table. Then, obviously getting an idea, she grabs a knife, cuts off a large slice of cheese before putting the rest back in the basket, grabs a silver plate from a shelf and hides the cheese and the plate behind her back.

GABRIELLE:

Cheese for the king's table! (puts down the basket)

HEAD COOK (turns to her):

It's about time.

CUT TO

Gabrielle walking through the corridors of the palace. The hallways are beautifully decorated, with murals on the walls depicting battle scenes and past rulers and torches with elaborate carvings on them embedded in the walls.

CUT TO

Another corridor. Holding the plate with the cheese on it, Gabrielle approaches ornate golden doors with a guard standing in front of them.

GUARD (sternly):

What's your business here?

GABRIELLE:

A special delivery for the king, sir--a new brand of cheese that was just brought to the kitchen.

GUARD:

All right.

He opens the door with a loud creak and shows Gabrielle in.

CUT TO

An exterior view of the house. Xena and Darion are sitting on the porch. Xena is obviously telling a story and Darion is listening.

DARION:

And then what happened?

XENA:

And then Gabrielle told the warlords Ares was hiding in a cave and they all went out there and they never bothered him again.

DARION (puzzled):

What happened to them?

XENA (shrugs):

I guess the beast ate them. Most of them, at least.

DARION:

What beast?

XENA:

The beast with eight heads.

DARION:

You didn't say anything about a beast.

XENA:

The beast lived in the cave.

DARION (thinks for a moment):

What did it look like?

XENA:

What, the cave?

DARION (impatiently):

No! The beast!

XENA (shrugs):

It had eight heads.

DARION:

What kinds of heads? You mean like...lion heads? (makes a face, baring his teeth) Or big lizard heads? Or...

XENA (getting testy):
How would I know?

DARION (looks at her thoughtfully):
You know, some day you should ask Gabrielle to teach you how to tell stories.

XENA (in mock anger):
Watch it!

DARION (shrugs):
Well, it's true.

Xena shakes her head. Then, suddenly, her face breaks out in a little smile.

XENA (stands up, staring straight ahead of her):
Ares. Back to try and impress me again?

Ares appears in front of her in a flash of blue. Darion jumps to his feet, beaming.

ARES (grins devilishly):
Not in front of the kid.

DARION:
That's okay. I won't watch.

He covers his eyes with his hands. Ares looks at him, amused, then turns to Xena.

ARES:
Shall we? (he draws an arm around her waist and leans in to kiss her)

XENA (pulls back hastily):
Ares--don't.

ARES (sighs):
Oh--okay.

DARION (takes his hands away from his eyes and walks around Ares, as if to make sure he's real; then turns to Xena):
How did you know he was here? (off Xena's slightly uncomfortable look) Can Gabrielle do that too?

ARES (mischievously):
Oh, I hope not. (looks around) So--seems like Blondie has left the building. What's she up to?

XENA:
Trying to get into the palace and have a chat with King Pygmalion. If he doesn't change his ways, he'll have a riot on his hands pretty soon.

ARES (crosses his arms and smirks):
What did I tell you about finding trouble?

XENA:

I guess you had a point.

ARES:

So, Gabrielle wants to be the hero for a change, huh? Good for her. Maybe one of these days, you'll be out of a job and then you'll have time for (looks at her suggestively) other things.

XENA (chuckles):

Right.

ARES:

So...while you're sitting here playing sidekick, you want to have some fun?

XENA:

As long as it's something that's okay for Darion to see.

ARES (thinks for a moment and then grins at her):

I have an idea.

CUT TO

The guard ushers Gabrielle into a room lavishly decorated with statuettes, jewelry, candleholders and lush fabrics, then closes the door while Gabrielle enters and walks around. There doesn't seem to be anyone in the room.

GABRIELLE:

King Pygmalion?

She walks around and spies a small door ajar at the back of the room. The faint sound of a voice is heard coming from the room. Gabrielle walks toward the door.

GABRIELLE (louder):

King Pygmalion?

The voice stops. A man comes quickly out of the back room and closes the door behind him, then locks it. He is a handsome young man in his early twenties with short golden-brown hair and blue eyes. He's wearing blue and green robes of fine silk fabric, lined with small flakes of sapphires and emeralds that sparkle in the sunlight that shines in through the one large window in the room. A small golden crown adorns his head.

PYGMALION (looks at Gabrielle, angry):

What are you doing here?

GABRIELLE (still keeping her voice low):

Your majesty--the kitchen sent me with a sample of a new brand of cheese.

PYGMALION:

Leave it over there. (waves toward a table with a marble top) I'm busy.

Gabrielle puts down the plate. Pygmalion heads toward the door of the back room again.

GABRIELLE:

Your majesty!

PYGMALION (turns):

What now?

GABRIELLE:

I want to talk to you.

PYGMALION (scowls):

What about?

GABRIELLE:

What's happening to the kingdom, for one. The people are--

PYGMALION (peers at her intently):

What sort of impertinence is this? (pauses) You're not one of my servants, are you.

GABRIELLE (in her normal voice):

No.

PYGMALION (approaches her, outraged, and looks her over):

You're a *woman*! Well, isn't it just like a woman--lying, snooping around...

GABRIELLE (slightly taken aback, still keeps her cool):

Your majesty, I'm a stranger in your land. I've heard what the people are saying out there--

PYGMALION:

Oh, you're a stranger and you're going to tell me how to rule *my* kingdom. What would you know about it? Women--always sticking their nose in where it doesn't belong.

GABRIELLE:

I just want to help.

PYGMALION:

Well, I don't need your help. Since you're a guest here, I won't have you thrown in the dungeon. As long as you get out of here right away.

GABRIELLE:

But--

PYGMALION (points to the door):

Don't try my patience!

Gabrielle hesitates and walks toward the door.

CUT TO

Gabrielle, still in her servant's outfit, is walking down a wooded path toward the house when she hears Xena's war cry. She stops, momentarily alarmed, then smiles and shakes her head, obviously

assuming that Xena is just playing with Darion. Then the sound of clashing swords is heard, and Gabrielle becomes alarmed. Drawing her sais, she runs toward the house.

GABRIELLE (shouts):
Darion?

She stops in her tracks when she sees Darion sitting on the porch, watching Xena and Ares spar under the trees in the shade. Xena and Ares are grinning widely, swinging their swords and moving around in almost dance-like fashion. Ares swings his sword at her again and she flips over him. He turns around to meet her sword and they freeze in that pose, their swords locked together. Gabrielle watches with a bit of amusement showing on her face.

DARION:
Wow! How'd you do that flip?

Xena and Ares relax and look at Darion, smiling. A close-up on Gabrielle, who stands with her arms crossed, a look of mock indignation on her face.

GABRIELLE:
I thought we talked about things that aren't fit for a child?

XENA:
What? These are just combat moves. Darion likes combat moves-- (turns to Darion) --don't you?

DARION (enthusiastic):
Yeah!

GABRIELLE:
Uh-huh. (nods toward Ares) And what are you doing hanging around here? You know, if you were getting paid to do your job, you'd get fired.

ARES:
Hey. I could be doing something *really* nasty with my time if you'd prefer that. (looks her over)
That's an unusual look for you, isn't it?

GABRIELLE:
I had to get into the royal palace.

ARES:
And it's what, no girls allowed?

XENA:
Yeah, you got it. (smirks at Ares as he rolls his eyes, then to Gabrielle) So--what did you find out?

GABRIELLE:
Not much. Except that the king has a pretty big grudge against the entire female race.

XENA:
We already knew that.

ARES (chuckles):

So, this guy doesn't like playing with the girls, huh?

GABRIELLE:

Putting it mildly.

XENA (with a catlike smile):

Well, I think it's *my* turn to go.

GABRIELLE:

Xena, you can't just bust his head and get him to change his mind about women.

XENA:

Only as a last resort.

ARES:

Sounds like a plan.

GABRIELLE:

A plan? We don't *have* a plan yet. That's the problem.

XENA:

Don't worry, we will.

CUT TO

Night. Inside Pygmalion's chambers. The distant noise of a crowd is heard. The room is empty and dark, but some light emanates from the door of the back room, which is ajar. A voice is heard from the room. The camera pans closer and we hear Pygmalion's voice.

PYGMALION (off-camera):

What a beauty you are. Perfect, absolutely perfect.

CUT TO

The palace garden. The camera zooms in on Xena hiding in a tree. In the darkness, she makes a giant leap from the branch to a small balcony. The gap between the tree and the balcony is quite large and Xena almost misses the balcony, but manages to grab its edge with one hand. Slowly, she positions herself so that she can put her other hand on the edge of the balcony. She grips the edge of the balcony with both hands and pulls herself up, leaping onto the balcony.

CUT TO

The room. The camera now enters the back room where Pygmalion is. He stands with his back to the camera, looking at someone in front of him who is shielded from view.

PYGMALION:

You know, when I look at you, I can see a beautiful soul in your eyes and your face. A pure and noble soul, unlike that of any other woman.

CUT TO

Xena, carefully pushing open the window and entering the room.

CUT TO

The back room. A close-up of Pygmalion's face, his eyes full of tenderness.

PYGMALION:

Here, I've got something for you.

He holds up a pearl necklace in his hand. The camera pulls back to show that he is talking to a beautiful statue of a nude woman made of smooth ivory. It is very life-like, with locks of wavy hair flowing over its shoulders. Its eyes are made of blue stone and seem to be alive. Pygmalion reverently places the necklace around the statue's neck and then leans forward to kiss it as we:

FADE OUT

ACT THREE

FADE IN

Xena walks cautiously around the grand chamber, looking around. She sees the light coming from the back and heads toward the back door. She walks toward it.

XENA:

King Pygmalion?

CUT TO

The back room. Startled by Xena's voice, Pygmalion quickly grabs a white sheet and covers the statue. Xena pushes the door open and comes in.

PYGMALION (dismayed):

Who are you? How did you get in here? Women are not allowed in these chambers! (looks her over, taking notice of her armor and weapons) If you *are* a woman, of course.

XENA (smiles coolly):

I'm probably your worst nightmare. A woman who can kick ass.

PYGMALION (choking):

You're talking to a king!

XENA:

And you're talking to a warrior princess. Xena, Warrior Princess.

A little fear crosses his features.

PYGMALION:

You're *Xena*? (Xena nods, unimpressed) But I thought you were dead.

XENA:

I got over it. You know, for a king, you sure don't keep up with the news very well.

PYGMALION:

Why should I care? (looks at her bitterly) So I suppose you're here to avenge all womankind.

XENA:

I'm here to talk some sense to you.

PYGMALION (snorts):

I've never yet met a woman who could talk any sense.

XENA (looks around):

So, what's the secret you're hiding in this little room, huh?

She catches a glimpse of the covered statue behind Pygmalion. Before he can stop her, she reaches out and pulls the sheet off the statue.

PYGMALION (furious):

How dare you! Isn't that just like a woman--no respect for a man's privacy.

Xena doesn't pay attention to him, focused on the statue. We now see all of it. There are bouquets of roses at the foot of the statue, and a cage with two white doves.

XENA (turning to Pygmalion):

Pygmalion, let me ask you something. (points to the statue) You know this isn't a man, right?

PYGMALION (indignant):

Of course! I'm no idiot and I'm *not* blind.

XENA (chuckles):

You coulda fooled me. I thought you *hated* women.

PYGMALION:

I wouldn't--if they were like her!

XENA (glares at him):

She's a statue.

PYGMALION (dreamily):

She's perfect. All those women out there... (winces) They're anything but. All my life, they've been trying to boss me around. Lying, prying into everything, thinking one thing and saying another... I finally got sick of them. So I decided to create the perfect woman--one who was everything they aren't.

He approaches the statue and reaches out to touch its cheek. Xena watches with crossed arms.

PYGMALION:

Galatea... Look at her. She's beautiful... (he seems to have almost forgotten that Xena is there) She'll never try to judge me. She'll never nag me. She'll never argue until she's proved to me that I'm

wrong about everything. She'll leave me in peace when I want to be alone, and she'll always be here when I need her. (bitterly) And she'll never lie to me. She is perfection itself.

Xena looks at him as he starts to caress the statue's face and is almost lost in its gaze.

XENA (incredulous):
You're in love with it.

PYGMALION (gives Xena an irritated look):
Her. Not *it.* (sighs and looks at the statue) Yes, I love Galatea. She's perfect.

XENA:
Well, of course she's perfect. You *created* her that way. How can you be in love with a statue?

PYGMALION (angrily):
You talk like someone who's never been in love. You've never had anything touch your soul the way Galatea has touched mine. (Xena looks away briefly) I can't explain to you how I feel. Why should I?

XENA:
Pygmalion. What do you think your people would say if they knew that the reason you're neglecting your duties is that you're having a romantic relationship with a piece of ivory?

PYGMALION (panicked):
You can't tell them! They'd hate me.

XENA:
Oh, they *already* hate you. But it could get even worse.

PYGMALION:
You're not going to take her away from me! (runs past Xena into the main chamber and yells)
Guards!

Xena follows him as the doors burst open and three guards in armor and helmets of silver and gold burst in.

PYGMALION:
Arrest her!

Instead of charging at Xena, the two guards charge at him, knock him down and draw their swords.

GUARD #1:
Down with Pygmalion!

GUARD #2 (a woman in disguise judging by the voice):
Kill the tyrant!

Xena charges at them and beats them back with powerful kicks and punches. In a few moments she knocks them all down and disarms them.

WOMAN:

Why did you stop us? You're a woman--don't you know how he treats us?

GUARD #3:

He's ruining the whole kingdom!

XENA (shakes her head):

This isn't the way to go. (to Pygmalion, helping him to his feet) You okay?

PYGMALION (stunned):

You--you saved my life! (pause) You're not like any woman I've ever met, Xena.

XENA:

Yeah, I get that a lot.

PYGMALION:

No, I mean it. If more women were like you, maybe I wouldn't dislike them so much.

XENA (smirks):

Trust me, you wouldn't want more than one of me around.

The doors are flung open and several guards burst in.

GUARD:

Your majesty, are you all right?

XENA:

He is--no thanks to you. (off their stunned looks) Yeah, I'm a woman and I'm here in the palace. Get used to it. (to Pygmalion) I'll be back later and we're going to have a long chat about how to fix things, okay? (points to the would-be assassins) And remember--revenge isn't the way to go.

Xena leaves the room, leaving Pygmalion looking very thoughtful.

CUT TO

Inside the house. It's dark. Darion is asleep on the intact bed and Gabrielle on the one that has collapsed. Xena walks in and turns on an oil lamp. Gabrielle sits up, rubbing her eyes.

GABRIELLE (in a half-whisper):

Xena--you're back. Did you get to talk to Pygmalion?

XENA:

Yes, I did.

GABRIELLE:

Did he listen?

XENA:

Sort of.

GABRIELLE (amazed):

He *did*? Well, I guess you really do have many skills.

XENA (shrugs and grins):

He kinda warmed up to me after I saved him from assassins.

GABRIELLE (gasps):

Somebody tried to kill Pygmalion?

XENA (smirks):

Are you surprised? Actually, believe it or not, he's not quite as bad as he seems. I found out what his problem is. Well, one of them, at least. He's been spending all of his waking hours on one thing--a statue of a woman. He created it himself and he's fallen in love with it. (she gets a distracted look on her face for a moment, as if thinking of something else)

GABRIELLE (pauses in shock):

You know--of all the things we've run into over the years...this just *might* be the weirdest.

XENA:

This statue has become his whole life.

GABRIELLE:

That's...really sad.

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

APHRODITE:

It is, isn't it?

GABRIELLE (puts her finger to her lips):

Shhh... (points to Darion, who stirs but continues to sleep)

XENA (suspiciously):

Aphrodite. This isn't one of your little games, is it?

APHRODITE (indignantly):

No! Why does everyone always think I'm up to something?

XENA (wryly):

Maybe it's for a good reason.

APHRODITE:

Nothing like that. Actually, I'm feeling *really* bad for Pygmalion. Yeah, yeah, he's kind of a jerk (makes a face), but it's like--he's so completely in love, and so depressed because he can't get his love returned. He just keeps kissing that statue and wishing it were real.

GABRIELLE:

Real... (gets an idea) Oh, Aphrodite. You're a genius.

APHRODITE (flattered):

Yeah, I know. (curious) Why?

GABRIELLE (turns to Xena):

What if Galatea could be brought to life?

XENA:

And that would do what--other than making Pygmalion happy?

GABRIELLE:

Well, maybe once his beloved turns into a woman of flesh and blood, it's going to change his attitude toward real live women. And maybe he'll stop being so obsessed and actually get back to the business of being a king.

XENA (thoughtfully):

Good idea. (looks at Aphrodite) Can you do it?

APHRODITE (beaming):

Sure! Honey, I keep telling you--I'm a goddess, I can do it like that. (snaps her fingers) Literally. (pouts) I don't know why I didn't think of it myself. I can just pop over there now and--

XENA:

No, wait. I have a better idea. Can you bring her here?

APHRODITE (puzzled):

Here? (looks around) No offense, Xena, but this isn't exactly the kind of place where a future queen should get her start.

XENA:

Hey, Aphrodite. Trust me. It's all a part of the plan. Are you in?

APHRODITE (giggles):

Am I in! I'm going to *love* this plan.

CUT TO

Pygmalion in the back room in his chambers, still gazing sadly at Galatea.

PYGMALION:

Galatea, my love... I wish I knew what you were thinking. (pauses) Am I crazy? (shakes his head) No, I *know* there's a soul behind those beautiful eyes. (he leans forward and kisses the statue on the lips, but sighs in frustration when it remains unresponsive to his kiss) Aren't you ever going to kiss me back? (with a sigh, he caresses the statue's face) Good night, my love. I'll see you in the morning.

CUT TO

Pygmalion comes out of the back room, locking the door behind him, and leaves the chamber.

CUT TO

The back room. Aphrodite materializes next to the statue, smiling.

APHRODITE (to Galatea):

Hmm...you *are* a cutie, aren't ya?

CUT TO

Exterior of the house in the moonlight. Xena and Gabrielle (now dressed in her usual outfit) are sitting on the porch. Xena seems lost in thought.

GABRIELLE:

Thinking about something?

Xena glances at Gabrielle.

XENA:

What?

GABRIELLE (chuckles):

I was hoping you'd tell me.

XENA (shakes head):

It's nothing. (sighs) Somehow, this whole thing with Pygmalion made me think--

GABRIELLE (nods):

About you and Ares? (off Xena's shocked look) Don't look at me like that, Xena. I know what's on your mind. I can usually tell from your eyes.

XENA (smirks):

Oh, really? What are they saying now?

GABRIELLE (smiles):

That you want me to leave you alone.

Xena chuckles, then becomes thoughtful again.

XENA:

Pygmalion created that statue and then fell in love with it...

GABRIELLE:

And you've changed Ares and-- (Xena looks up sharply, her face suddenly very vulnerable; Gabrielle pauses) I think you always knew there was some goodness in him, ever since that first time he lost his sword and became mortal. Remember when you told him he had been not just mortal but human?

XENA (softly):

Yeah...

GABRIELLE:

You've believed that ever since, haven't you? Even after all the games he played and all the horrible things he did, you still believed that little bit of humanity was there--but it would take a miracle to bring it out.

XENA (lowers her eyes):

Yeah... (softly) And then it happened.

GABRIELLE:

Because of you, Xena. You were the miracle--you made him change.

XENA (smiles tensely):

You mean, I created a new and improved Ares?

GABRIELLE (grins):

You might say that.

XENA (pensively):

And I've...fallen for him.

GABRIELLE (teasingly):

What happened to your thing for bad boys?

XENA (snorts):

Ares is *always* going to be a bad boy. (serious) But you're right--he is...different.

GABRIELLE:

You know something? If you think about it--Ares created you, too. Long ago, he wanted to mold you into his perfect warrior--the mortal champion of the God of War. (Xena nods, looking at her thoughtfully) And then *he* fell in love with his own creation.

Xena gives her an odd look. Just then, there is a flash of golden light and Aphrodite appears with Galatea, setting the statue down on the grass.

APHRODITE:

Done.

GABRIELLE:

That's the statue? (impressed) It really *is* beautiful.

APHRODITE (smirks):

Yeah, Pyggy's a talented kid. He just needs his head set straight.

XENA:

All right, Aphrodite--hit it.

APHRODITE (squeals with joy):

Done.

She points a finger at the statue and a stream of yellow sparkles begins to cover the statue in a shimmer of light. The camera zooms in on the statue showing it from the chest up. We see the skin gains color--a light, slightly tanned hue. The hair turns a deep rich brown, the blue eyes come alive. She looks around, clearly bewildered. The camera pans to Xena and Gabrielle, who look awed.

DARION (off-camera, inside the house):

Gabrielle?

His steps are heard approaching the door.

GABRIELLE (to Aphrodite, panicking):
Quick, get her some clothes!

She interposes herself between Galatea and the door of the house. Just as Darion comes out on the porch, Aphrodite giggles and waves her hand. The camera pulls back to show Galatea clothed in a beautiful flowing gown of light blue fabric, perfectly complemented by the pearl necklace.

DARION (peers around Gabrielle):
Wow! Who's the lady?

GABRIELLE (slightly at a loss for words):
Uh...that's a *very* long story.

GALATEA (looks around, opens her mouth rather uncertainly and speaks):
Pygmalion?

APHRODITE (sighs theatrically, clasping her hands and pressing them to her chest):
Isn't that sweet. She already loves him.

FADE OUT

ACT FOUR

FADE IN

A hallways in Pygmalion's palace. A commotion is heard behind the closed doors of a hall. The doors are thrown open and Pygmalion runs out, followed by several counselors.

COUNSELOR #1:
Your majesty--come back! The meeting's only just started!

PYGMALION (clearly distraught):
Leave me alone!

COUNSELOR #2:
These are urgent matters! The villages are rebelling!

PYGMALION:
I don't care!

He takes off running with the counselors following him. As he turns a corner, he bumps into a palace guard running toward him and they both fall. Two counselors help Pygmalion to his feet.

COUNSELOR #1:
Your majesty, are you all right?

PYGMALION (abruptly):
No, I'm not! I said, leave me alone!

GUARD (scrambles to his feet):

I'm sorry, your majesty--we have a situation outside. Another riot--this one is worse than ever--they're threatening to burn the palace down--

PYGMALION:

Well, you're supposed to keep the peace! Do your job and stop them!

GUARD:

We're trying! Your majesty, if you were to come out and talk to them, tell them to calm down--maybe they'll stop...

PYGMALION (with bitter irony):

Really? As if the people still had any respect for me. If they want to riot, they'll riot--there's nothing I can do about it.

GUARD (can't contain himself any longer):

And whose fault is that? (Pygmalion gives him a shocked look; the guard seems shocked by his own boldness but continues) I'm sorry, sir, but you've locked yourself up in this palace for weeks on end, paying no attention to anything that's going on... No wonder the people don't respect you!

There is a long, uncomfortable silence. The guard looks frightened. Pygmalion looks furious at first but then sighs, his face softening. He turns from the guard and the counselors.

PYGMALION:

Just...do what you can to stop them and leave me be. I want to be alone.

He walks away.

CUT TO

Pygmalion's chamber. Pygmalion is standing by the window looking out on the city and the setting sun. The shouts of rioters are heard from the distance.

PYGMALION (nearly crying):

I've lost her. I've lost everything. Where are you, Galatea? Who could have stolen you? How?

FEMALE VOICE (off-camera, far below):

Down with Pygmalion!

PYGMALION (sighs):

They're right. I don't deserve to be the king.

APHRODITE (off-screen):

Oh, honey. You just need some pointers.

Pygmalion turns around, startled to find Aphrodite standing by a large indoor fern, popping a grape in her mouth from a bowl that sits on the table beside her. Pygmalion looks very startled.

PYGMALION:

Who are you?

APHRODITE:

Chill, sweetie. I'm not going to hurt you. Do I look like the type?

PYGMALION (calms down):

No. I guess not. So why are you here? Where did you come from? (bitterly) Just another meddling woman?

APHRODITE:

Nope. (smiles) Another meddling goddess. (he looks at her, wide-eyed) Goddess of Love.

PYGMALION (shocked):

Go-Goddess of Love?

APHRODITE:

That's right.

PYGMALION:

And you're here to--

APHRODITE:

Do a little intervention. (sighs, puts her hands on her heart) It's so sweet that you've fallen in love with your own creation...such a beautiful piece of work.

PYGMALION (gasps):

Galatea! You know where she is, don't you? You can bring her back to me?

APHRODITE (beams, popping another grape in her mouth):

Think big, hon. I'm a goddess. I can do a lot more than that.

PYGMALION (stunned):

You mean--make her real?

APHRODITE:

You got it.

Pygmalion's face reflects a mix of joy, bewilderment, and apprehension.

CUT TO

The square where the guards are trying in vain to contain the rioters, some of them armed with torches. There are many men in the crowd as well as women. Some fights are already breaking out.

Xena's ululating battle cry cuts through the noise of the crowd and brings everything to a halt. Xena soars over the crowd, doing a spectacular flip in the air, lands on the shoulders of one of the guards (who groans and winces) and then jumps down on the ground, taking a fighting stance, a feral grin on her face.

XENA:

All right. Break it up.

WOMAN #1:

No! The king's got it coming!

CROWD (roars):

Yeah!

GABRIELLE (off-screen):

This isn't the way to make things better!

The camera pans over to show Gabrielle coming toward Xena. With her is Galatea.

WOMAN #2 (pointing to Galatea, puzzled):

Who's that?

XENA:

It's your king's bride. (smiles) And once she becomes his wife, I have a hunch that everything will be different.

CUT TO

Xena and Gabrielle walk into Pygmalion's chambers.

PYGMALION (looks at Xena):

Oh...it's you again. (looks to Gabrielle) And you--you're the one who was here two days ago pretending to be my servant, aren't you? (understanding dawns on him) You're working together.

GABRIELLE:

We just want to help.

The door opens, and Galatea walks in.

PYGMALION (looks at her, amazed):

Who's she?

APHRODITE (giggles):

Honey, you ought to recognize *her*. It's--

PYGMALION (gasps, his eyes widening with surprise and then joy):

Galatea!

He runs toward her to embrace her.

GALATEA:

Pygmalion. (smiles at him tenderly but sadly)

PYGMALION (to Aphrodite):

You--you gave her a soul!

GALATEA (shakes her head):

She only gave me life, Pygmalion. My soul was born the moment you first looked at me with love.

Every time you touched my face or held my hand or brought me flowers or kissed me, my soul became more real. By the time Aphrodite brought me to life, I already loved you back.

PYGMALION (joyfully):

Galatea! (he leans forward to kiss her but stops in his tracks when he sees the tears in her eyes) What's wrong, my darling?

GALATEA:

Pygmalion, I've spent this day in the city with my friends. (points to Xena and Gabrielle) And everywhere I went, I was told that I wasn't allowed to do this or that because I'm a woman. Because of laws that *you* passed. (she sighs) I had only just become a human being--and then suddenly, I was being treated...as if I was less than that.

PYGMALION (looks deeply disturbed):

I'm so sorry... I never thought that I-- (stumbles)

XENA:

That you would hurt someone you loved? That's the way it goes. It was my idea for your girlfriend to have a day on the town before you met her in the flesh--so to speak. I thought she should know how the man who says he loves her treats people like herself.

Pygmalion hangs his head in shame.

GABRIELLE:

Pygmalion, what made you feel that way about women? You seem to have a good heart...

PYGMALION:

Well, it started with my mother. Everyone says she was such a great queen, but trust me, you wouldn't want to have her for a mother. I never saw any kindness from her; all she cared about was preparing me for my job as the king. I could *never* do anything right as far as Mother was concerned. She even hated my passion for sculpture because she thought it wasn't a fit hobby for a king. The only one she cared about was my younger sister--she always got babied and coddled and got away with everything. Such a brat! I sent her into exile the moment I became king.

XENA:

So you got a beef with women because your mother and sister were mean to you. (teasing) Isn't that just like a man.

PYGMALION (looks down, embarrassed):

It wasn't just that... When I was eighteen years old, I fell in love with a beautiful girl named Hilara. She told me she loved me. And then one day, I came to see her when she wasn't expecting me, and I overheard her talking to her nanny. She said that... (he pauses, struggling to get out the words) She said that she actually loved somebody else, but she wanted to marry me because I was the prince. And once she married me, she was going to use my position and my riches to advance the career of the man she really loved.

GABRIELLE (sighs sympathetically):

That's terrible.

PYGMALION:

So I vowed that I would never marry and that I'd do whatever I could to punish women for their treachery.

XENA (shakes her head):

Pygmalion, Pygmalion. You can't blame all women just because a few of them have been rotten to you. (teasing) Otherwise, women would take one look at a guy like you and start hating all men, and then where would we be?

PYGMALION (nods):

Yes, I understand that now. (turns to Galatea) My love, I'm so sorry that I've wronged you. I promise--the first thing I'll do is repeal those stupid decrees.

XENA:

And you're going to start paying a little more attention to your job, right?

GABRIELLE (smiling):

At least once you're back from your honeymoon.

PYGMALION (his face lights up):

Honeymoon... (turns to Galatea, who is smiling at him) Are you ready to be my queen?

GALATEA:

I'm ready to be your wife.

They embrace and capture each other's lips in a longing, loving kiss. Xena and Gabrielle smile as they look on, while Aphrodite is sniffing and holding a handkerchief, dabbing at her eyes. After a few moments Pygmalion and Galatea break apart, still holding hands.

PYGMALION (to Aphrodite):

You saved my life. How can I ever repay you?

APHRODITE:

Oh, sweetie. Don't make it sound like a chore. (pause) Xena will let you know what you can do.

PYGMALION (to Xena and Gabrielle):

I'm indebted to you, too. Tell me, what can I--

XENA:

Just be a good king, Pygmalion. That should be enough.

CUT TO

The palace square, where the people are getting restless again. The noise of the crowd grows louder.

Pygmalion, holding Galatea's hand, comes out on the front steps of the palace. Xena and Gabrielle follow behind. The noise dies down.

VOICES IN THE CROWD:

- It's the king!
- Holding a woman's hand!
- It's a miracle!

PYGMALION:

Men... (pauses, then emphatically) *and women* of Cyprus! This woman, Galatea, is going to be my wife!

There is a long, stunned silence. Then, a few people in the crowd start to applaud and cheer. In a few moments the whole crowd is clapping and cheering. The camera pans back to the palace steps, where a guard standing behind the king sighs in obvious relief.

PYGMALION:

And I promise you that from now on, things will be different in this kingdom!

GUARD (muttering):

Thank the gods!

The camera pans to Aphrodite, who is perched on the ledge of a palace window, smiling.

APHRODITE (to herself):

Well, at least that expression actually fits the situation this time.

PYGMALION:

And one more thing. (looks at Galatea, then glances at Xena and Gabrielle) I want to apologize to all the women of this kingdom. From now on, I'll treat you with the respect you deserve.

The crowd bursts into even louder cheers. Pygmalion and Galatea kiss, then wave to the crowd. Xena and Gabrielle exchange pleased looks.

CUT TO

Xena and Gabrielle walking through a city street. It's evening.

GABRIELLE:

I hope Darion's going to be okay. That village girl we left him with was pretty young...

XENA:

She was doing a pretty good job with her younger brothers.

As they round a corner, Aphrodite appears next to them in a flash of golden light.

XENA:

Aphrodite. (smiles) I guess our work here is done.

APHRODITE (beaming):

Aren't they just the sweetest couple you've ever seen?

XENA (chuckles):

Don't you say that about every couple? Especially if you've had a hand in bringing them together?

APHRODITE (pouts):

Well, you've got a point. But Pygmalion and Galatea--they're *really* special. I'll be checking in on them once in a while.

GABRIELLE (puts a hand affectionately on her arm):

Thanks for your help, Aphrodite.

APHRODITE:

Well, I think I've done enough for today. Got places to be. (looks at Xena and Gabrielle) Toodles!
(she disappears)

GABRIELLE:

So, what now?

XENA (smiles):

Now, maybe we'll have that vacation.

GABRIELLE:

Yeah, we haven't had much time for that.

CUT TO

The next morning. Xena, Gabrielle and Darion are sitting on the porch eating apples.

DARION:

So the mean man is going to marry that beautiful lady.

GABRIELLE:

He really wasn't that mean, sweetie. Just misguided.

There is a flash of blue light and Ares appears in front of them.

ARES:

So, Sis tells me you two saved the day once again.

GABRIELLE:

We couldn't have done it without her.

Ares and Xena gaze tenderly at each other. Gabrielle catches their look, looks at them thoughtfully and then gets up.

GABRIELLE (to Darion):

Hey. Want to go pick some berries?

DARION:

No, I want to stay here! Maybe Ares and I can play with toy soldiers!

Ares and Xena give him an amused look.

GABRIELLE:

Not now, sweetie. Come on.

She takes Darion's hand and they walk away. Xena gets up and she and Ares continue to stare at each other.

ARES:

So. (grins) You wanna play?

XENA (very serious):

Ares...

ARES (obviously a little nervous):

Yeah?

XENA:

You know, over these past few days, I realized something. (sighs) I've probably known it for a while...but I can't deny it anymore. Not to you, not to anyone else...and not to myself.

ARES (anxiously):

What?

She reaches up and rests her hand on his cheek, stroking it gently.

XENA:

I love you.

Ares looks shocked. They stare into each other's eyes; Ares' eyes light up, and he takes Xena's face in his hands and kisses her with such passion that she is momentarily taken aback, but then responds to him with equal fervor. When he pulls back, he looks at her again.

ARES (deeply moved):

I wasn't sure I'd ever hear you say it. (Xena smiles at him tenderly; he lifts a hand and touches her face) I love you.

XENA (rests her hand on his):

I know. I've known it for a long time.

Xena leans toward him, kissing him again. They quickly melt into a deep, passionate kiss.

CUT TO

Xena and Ares sitting together under a tree, locked in another kiss. Tiny sparkling golden dust start to rain down on them, and the camera pans up the tree to see Aphrodite lounging on a branch, sprinkling the dust over Xena and Ares. The dust dissolves around them. Aphrodite is grinning happily.

The camera slowly moves away to get a wide shot of the whole scene. Gabrielle and Darion are coming back toward the house. They stop as they see Xena and Ares embracing under the tree and Gabrielle smiles as we:

FADE OUT

THE END

[Xena and Gabrielle struck a blow for women's rights during the production of this motion picture.]