

SHIPPER SEASON NINE



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Logline

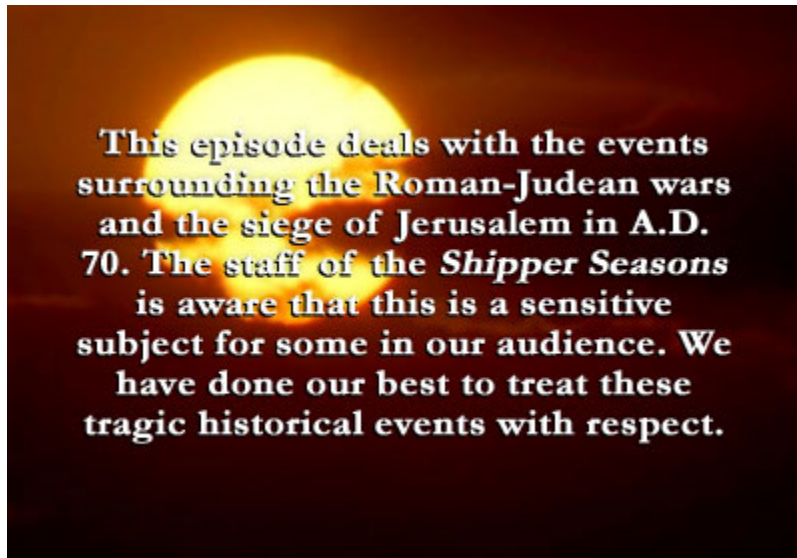
A message from an old friend brings Xena and Gabrielle to Jerusalem as the Israelites, bitterly divided, seek to recapture their land from Roman domination.

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TEASER

FADE IN



On a crowded street in a city that has a Middle Eastern look.

The atmosphere is busy and festive. Men and women in colorful clothes are going by, talking animatedly. Vendors are selling their wares on the side of the road--everything from caged doves to jars of oil and wine to jewelry and clothing. The camera glides past a pretty young woman trying on a beautifully embroidered wrap, a middle-aged woman picking out fruit, a young man looking over a jar.

CUT TO

A deserted, half, dark, narrow street. Footsteps can be heard, obviously of someone running, gradually getting closer.

A pair of male feet in richly decorated sandals comes in to view; the hem of a rich purple robe is visible as well, below the knee. The man is running; he is panting, clearly out of breath. Footsteps are heard behind him, catching up to him.

CUT TO

The crowded, bustling street we saw before.

Titles appear, superimposed on the screen:



The camera pans over a man pushing a cart filled with merchandise, then two women carrying bundles on their heads, then to a young couple haggling with a vendor over some ceramic pots.

FEMALE VOICE (off-camera, rising above the general din of the crowd):
Hey, watch it!

MALE VOICE (off-camera):
He's drunk!

There are shouts off-camera as a middle-aged man with a graying beard staggers into view. He is wearing a rich purple robe and a headdress. He is bleary-eyed and seems disoriented. He lurches and knocks over two of the vendor's ceramic pots, smashing them to pieces.

VENDOR:
Hey!

The man staggers by.

VENDOR (shakes a fist at him):
You gotta pay for those!

The young woman who has been haggling with the vendor shakes her head reproachfully.

YOUNG WOMAN:
Looks like someone's been hitting the sacramental wine too early for the holidays.

The camera follows the man as he continues to stagger down the street, bumping into people who shout in annoyance. Suddenly, he collapses; a young man catches him.

YOUNG MAN (alarmed):
Hey, I don't think he's drunk--he's sick!

The camera zooms in on the man's face. His eyes are half-closed. His breathing is shallow and blood bubbles on his lips.

The camera pulls back to show a crowd gathering around the man as he convulses and cries out hoarsely, then lies still.

YOUNG MAN (looks up):

He's dead.

The crowd erupts in alarmed murmurs.

OLD WOMAN (fearfully):

What happened to him?

YOUNG MAN:

Wait--

A look of realization comes over his face. He turns the man over. The hilt of a dagger, previously concealed by the folds of the robe, is sticking out of his back.

Gasps are heard off-camera.

DISSOLVE TO

A man's hands holding the dagger up for inspection.

The camera pulls back to show the man holding the dagger. This is John of Giscala. He is about 40, wearing dark leather armor, a sword at his side. The camera pulls out further to show the dead body on the ground and the crowd still gathered around the site, as well as several warriors. It is obviously a little after the previous scene.

JOHN:

This is no ordinary street murder. The man was Ezra Ben Adiel, a member of the high council of temple priests. And this (holds up the dagger) has the mark of the Sicarii.

Gasps are heard around them.

MAN (off-camera):

May every coward who preaches appeasement of the Romans meet such an end.

John turns toward the voice, a scowl coming over his face.

JOHN:

Simon Bar-Giora.

The camera pans over to the speaker. Simon Bar-Giora is a somewhat younger man than John, taller and darker. He wears a black robe with a silver belt, crisscross silver straps and a silver medallion on his chest. There is a sword at his side.

JOHN:

Bragging about your men's handiwork?



BAR-GIORA (sarcastic):

And if I am? Want to do something about it, John? Your men may hold the temple--but you are not the king of the city.

One of the warriors by John's side draws his sword.

WARRIOR:

It's about time someone put a stop to your thugs' reign of terror.

JOHN:

Eleazar--wait.

The man charges forward. Flashing a grin, Bar-Giora draws his sword. The camera pulls back to show several armed men behind him.

Eleazar and Bar-Giora clash swords; the other men follow suit and start sparring. The crowd begins to disperse and take cover, the people clearly panicked. The camera pulls back to show the fight. Bar-Giora jumps up on a vendor's wooden table, kicking away some pots and dishes as we pan quickly to the middle-aged female vendor clutching her head in dismay.

Bar-Giora and Eleazar continue to spar, Bar-Giora on the table, Eleazar on the ground, as the others fight around them. Eleazar steps back and swings his sword at the front feet of the table, chopping each in half with a single blow. The table collapses but Bar-Giora jumps off, landing on his feet. The sparring continues.

Close-up on a sword slicing through the air and interposing itself between Bar-Giora's and Eleazar's swords.

The camera pulls back to show that the sword belongs to John.

JOHN (forcefully):

Enough! Do you want to kill each other and do the Romans' work for them?

The two men hesitate, breathing heavily. The other men who are fighting pause as well.

A noise is heard off-camera. The camera pans to show more men, in armor similar to that of John's warriors, running toward the scene.

Bar-Giora looks at them, then lowers his sword and nods toward his men.

BAR-GIORA:

Retreat!

Bar-Giora and his men leave the scene. Eleazar re-sheathes his sword, staring after them with frank hostility. John re-sheathes his sword as well.

JOHN (to his men):

Take the body away.

As the body is removed in the background, John and Eleazar walk down the street together.

JOHN:

That was a rash thing to do. We cannot afford a war with Bar-Giora--not without backup. If we were to make an alliance with Josephus--

ELEAZAR (shocked):

The former governor of Galilee? The one who refused to give you supplies when you were up against the Romans in the North? He'll never agree. (thinks a moment) Unless...

JOHN:

Unless what?

ELEAZAR:

Unless there's someone who can help. Someone who owed Josephus' father a favor, many years ago.

JOHN:

Who is he?

ELEAZAR (smiles a little):

She. A woman warrior--from Greece.

JOHN (shocked):

Not the infamous Xena!

Eleazar nods in assent. John thinks a moment, contemplating him.



JOHN:

I know the stories. She was helped by our people once, and then helped us in return. (pensively) You know she was thought dead for years. You really believe those tales--that she came back, unchanged by age?

ELEAZAR:

Last year, when my army was defeated by the Romans, I fled to North Africa and took refuge with the nomad tribe led by the brave Kahina.

John nods in acknowledgment.

ELEAZAR:

She met Xena and her friend Gabrielle, a mere five years ago, when they were traveling through those lands. Back then, Kahina's people and a rival tribe, under threat of conquest by the Romans, were locked in bitter enmity with each other--

JOHN:

I heard. Then they joined forces and were able to repel the Romans.

ELEAZAR:

It was Xena who helped forge that alliance.

JOHN:

And you think she can do that here.

ELEAZAR:

It is said she's a woman of many skills.

CUT TO

Morning at a campsite. Xena crouches over a fire, clumsily turning a fish over in a frying pan. Gabrielle stirs in her bedroll and her eyes come suddenly open. She places a hand on her belly.

GABRIELLE:

Xena! Xena, come quick!

Xena drops the frying pan and moves to Gabrielle's side.

XENA:

What is it? What's wrong?

Gabrielle grabs her hand and places it on her belly.

GABRIELLE:

The baby! It's kicking!

Xena pauses a moment, rubbing her hand over Gabrielle's belly. She gasps when she feels a kick.

XENA:

Whoa! This one is going to take after Mom!

GABRIELLE (smiles):

But hopefully a little taller.

Xena continues to rub Gabrielle's belly a moment in order to entice movement from the baby and Gabrielle leans back contentedly.

GABRIELLE:

This is nice. Just you and me out on the road. One last time before everything changes.

XENA:

Just like old times, huh?



GABRIELLE:

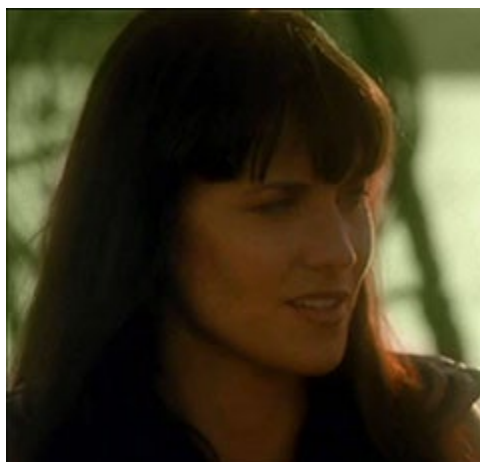
You know, with everything that's ever happened to us over the years I learned to fear change.

Xena eyes Gabrielle warily but Gabrielle smiles.

GABRIELLE:

But now I know, everything is going to be okay.

Xena smiles and nods.



XENA:

Everything is going to be okay.

Gabrielle places her hand over Xena's on her stomach.

GABRIELLE:

Here...he's kicking again. You know, it's much nicer sharing this moment with you than with Ares.

Xena rolls her eyes.

XENA:

Ares told me about your moment. I don't think he's recovered yet.

GABRIELLE:

Are you sure it was okay to leave Darion with him?

XENA:

Sure. We'll only be gone two days and Ares knows where to find us.

GABRIELLE:

That isn't what I meant, Xena.

XENA:

There's only so much damage Ares can do to the kid in two days.

Xena retrieves the frying pan, spooning some up onto a plate and handing it over to Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE:

I suppose you're right. (Gabrielle looks down at her plate in shock.) And speaking of changes! Since when do you cook?

XENA:

Since right now. You need taking care of.

GABRIELLE (smiles warmly):

You've always taken care of me, Xena.

XENA:

Well, right now you're getting a little extra care.

Gabrielle rubs her belly reflectively. After a moment, she picks her head up as if she's heard something.

GABRIELLE:

Xena...

XENA:

I hear it.

Faint footsteps can be heard out in the forest. Xena gains to her feet, her movements slow and deliberate. She steps between Gabrielle and the underbrush and draws her sword.

XENA:

I know you're out there. Show yourself.

Ares saunters into the clearing, his hands casually raised above his head.



ARES:

Time was, you could sense my animal magnetism from leagues away. You must be slowing down.

Xena re-sheathes her sword.

XENA:

I guess I'm still getting used to you being mortal.

ARES:

Don't rub it in.

GABRIELLE:

Ares, where's Darion?

ARES:

Keep your shirt on, Gabrielle. The kid's okay. He's guarding our rear.

GABRIELLE:

Guarding your--? (she sighs in exasperation.) You see, Xena?

Gabrielle goes to the edge of the clearing and calls out loudly.

GABRIELLE:

Darion?

Darion's voice comes back faintly from the forest.

DARION:

Coming!

A moment later Darion appears, carrying a small bundle in his hands.

GABRIELLE:

Darion, what were you doing out there?

He offers up his bundle.

DARION:

I found some berries. They're for you. Ares said they're good for the baby.

Gabrielle raises an eyebrow at Ares.

GABRIELLE:

Oh, Ares said that, did he?

Ares reddens and turns to Xena.

ARES:

Okay, back to business.

He produces a piece of parchment from his vest and hands it to Xena.

ARES:

This came for you yesterday. It seemed important.

Xena takes the letter and Ares crouches down by the fire, inspecting the contents of the frying pan.

ARES:

Look at this, kid. Always with the fish. Just once you'd think they would kill an elk or something and make a real man's meal.

Xena looks up from the letter and frowns.

XENA:

We need to get the camp packed up.

GABRIELLE:

Why? Where are we going?



XENA:

We've got a boat to catch.

FADE OUT

ACT ONE

FADE IN



Xena and Ares stand on a dock at the foot of a gangplank. The skies are gray and there is a slight drizzle. In the background Gabrielle can be seen with her arm around Darion. Ares reaches out and takes Xena's hand.

ARES:

Normally, of course, I'd jump at the chance to go running into the middle of a war with you.

XENA:

Aphrodite needs you right now. Being mortal can't be easy for her.

ARES:

Tell me about it. (with forced joviality) Besides, I don't think your friends would appreciate help from the go- (he pauses and corrects himself) ex-God of War. (shakes his head.) I just don't get these one-god types. These are some strange times we live in.

Xena squeezes his hand, smiling indulgently.



XENA (tenderly):
Take care of yourself.

ARES (barely able to contain his emotion):
You too.

XENA:
And thank you for taking care of Darion. He needs a male role model.

ARES (nods):
Right. Tavern wenches, kicking ass and belching contests.

Gabrielle approaches with Darion, who is pouting.

DARION:
But why can't I go?

GABRIELLE:
Darion, it's going to be a long trip and it might be dangerous.

DARION:
But what if something happens to you? You might need me.

GABRIELLE:
Sweetie, nothing is going to happen to me.

XENA:
I'll take care of her, Darion. I promise.

Gabrielle squeezes his shoulders.

GABRIELLE:
I'll be back before you know it. We'll only be gone the summer.

XENA (to Ares):
Gabrielle's baby will be just about due then so I want to get her back to Greece.

GABRIELLE (to Darion):

You see? You'll have a baby brother or sister to look forward to as soon as I come back.

Darion shrugs listlessly.

DARION:

Whatever.

He wanders off and Gabrielle starts after him.

GABRIELLE:

Darion--

XENA:

He'll be all right. He might not understand right now but he will.

Ares turns to Gabrielle.



ARES:

So if the father shows up you want me to kick the crap out of him for you?

GABRIELLE (frowns):

Thanks for the offer, but I'll pass.

XENA (smirks):

And you said chivalry was dead.

Xena turns to Ares, her expression suddenly soft and tender. She smiles and touches his cheek. Then, after a moment's hesitation, Xena leans in and they kiss tenderly.



They pull apart and stand still for a moment, their eyes locked.

XENA:

I'll see you in the fall.

Ares places his hand over hers.

ARES:

Right. The fall.

Xena turns around and begins to walk away with Gabrielle. Ares stands still, watching them walk away; the camera follows them, from Ares' point of view.

CUT TO

A montage of images aboard the ship. Xena helps Gabrielle onto the deck, a sailor releases a mooring line, another climbs the mast.

The ship sails farther out into the harbor. Xena turns to look back towards the dock and lifts her hand, waving to Ares.



GABRIELLE (smiling softly):

You'll miss him, won't you?

XENA:

Sure. An extra sword would have come in handy--especially now with you out of commission.

She pats Gabrielle's belly good naturedly and Gabrielle smiles indulgently but shakes her head.

GABRIELLE:

That isn't what I mean, Xena....you'll miss him. It's okay--you can admit it.

Xena says nothing for moment, gazing back towards the dock. Finally she smiles softly and gives a slight nod.



XENA:

Yes--I suppose I will.

CUT TO

Ares on the dock, waving back. He lingers a moment longer until the ship is little more than a dot on the horizon, then takes a deep breath.

ARES:

Okay, Darion--let's get moving. (he looks around.) Darion?

Almost panicked, he moves swiftly down the dock, calling for Darion. He spots a dockhand and runs over to him.

ARES:

You! Have you seen a kid--about ten years old--he's about so high (he holds his hand chest level.)

DOCKHAND:

Oh--the young fella that was hanging around you and the two women? He was first onboard.

ARES:

He got on the *boat*?

DOCKHAND:

'Course he did! Can't say I blame him either. If I didn't have a wife and four little ones at home I'd follow that tall one in all the leather to Hades and back.

ARES (frowns and sighs):

Great.

DISSOLVE TO

Fade to the ship. They are out in open waters and it is later. The sun is beginning to set and Gabrielle is laying on the bed in the cabin. Xena enters, offering a mug of tea.

XENA:

How are you feeling?

Gabrielle takes the mug and sips carefully.

GABRIELLE:

Fine. It's funny but I don't feel at all seasick. It must be the baby.

Xena sits beside Gabrielle on the edge of the bed, laying one hand on Gabrielle's stomach. She is obviously giving her friend a cursory physical examination. A small commotion is heard above them on deck.

GABRIELLE:

What do you suppose that's all about?

Xena presses her palm to Gabrielle's forehead, checking for fever.

XENA:

Couldn't say. I'll go check it out once I'm done here.

Gabrielle lays her hand over Xena's.

GABRIELLE:

You *are* done, Xena. (she smiles gently) I'm fine.

Xena looks a bit apprehensive.

XENA:

Well, if you're *sure*...

GABRIELLE:

I'm *fine*. (she pats Xena's hand tenderly) Please stop worrying.

A knock is heard on the cabin door and Xena gets up to open it to find the captain of the ship standing there.

XENA:

I didn't realize the captain personally greeted all his passengers. This must be a pretty swank ship.

CAPTAIN:

Unfortunately this isn't a social call, Xena. We've caught a stowaway.

Xena shakes her head, unsure what this has to do with her.

XENA:

I hope you're not thinking of giving us a roommate. This cabin isn't big enough for three.

CAPTAIN:

Actually, he says he knows you.

He pulls Darion into the doorway and Gabrielle leaps to her feet, surprisingly nimble for her size.

GABRIELLE:

Darion! What are you--?

CAPTAIN:

So you *do* know him. Caught the little beggar stealing food in the galley.

GABRIELLE:

Stealing?

DARION (muttering under his breath):

It's not like anyone else would want to eat that stuff.

Gabrielle glares.

CAPTAIN:

We're too far out to turn back at this point. He's going to have to make the voyage with us.

XENA:

Thanks. We'll make good on his passage.

The captain exits and Xena shuts the cabin door. She turns back to Gabrielle and Darion, her arms folded resolutely. She remains silent, waiting for Gabrielle to speak, who is still staring at Darion in both shock and anger.

GABRIELLE:

What are you doing here? You were supposed to stay with Ares.

He shrugs sullenly.

GABRIELLE:

Darion, I asked you a question. You sneak onboard, you were caught stealing--and now Xena and I are going to have to come up with your passage. You know better than this. What were you thinking?

Darion is silent a moment. Finally he speaks.

DARION:

Something bad could happen to you while you're gone and I would never know. But if I was there with you maybe I could... (he trails off, biting back tears.)

XENA (softly):

You thought if you were with us you could help if anything went wrong.

Darion nods and moves away from them towards the window, obviously in an attempt to hide his tears.

Gabrielle glances at Xena, clearly moved. She goes to Darion and lays her hands on his shoulders.

GABRIELLE:

All right. I understand, Sweetie. Don't cry.

DARION:

I'm not crying!

Gabrielle takes him in her arms and he buries his face in her side.

GABRIELLE:

I know you're not. Don't worry, we'll figure this out.

DARION:

You're not mad?

She strokes his hair soothingly.

GABRIELLE:

No, I'm not mad--anymore. (She pulls back and smiles) But since you're coming with us, you'd better do something useful with all the time you'll have aboard this ship.

DARION (looks at her, puzzled):

What do you mean?



GABRIELLE:

Your lessons, of course. I have some scrolls with me that I expect you to know by heart by the time we get to Jerusalem.

DARION:

But--

GABRIELLE (gently but firmly):

No buts, young man.

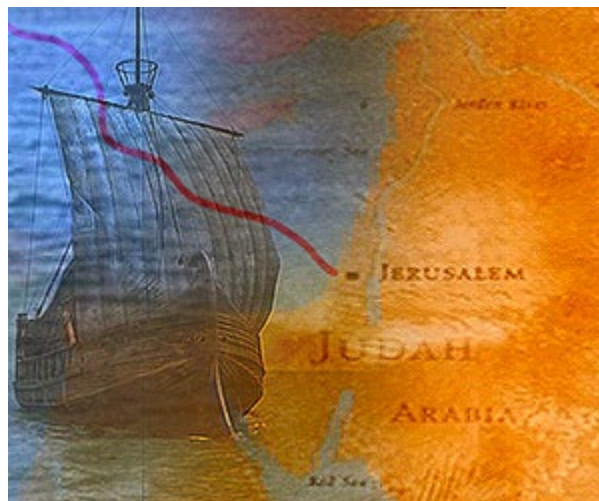
Darion looks helplessly to Xena, who shrugs a little and spreads her hands as if to say, *What can I do*.

XENA (chuckles a little):

Now, don't you wish you'd stayed with Ares?

She ruffles his hair, then sits down on the bunk between Gabrielle and Darion, putting her arms around their shoulders.

DISSOLVE TO



A montage of a ship sailing over the sea, an image of a map superimposed on top of it and a red line moving through the water, toward Jerusalem.

DISSOLVE TO

An overhead view of Jerusalem. The camera begins to zoom in on the majestic temple.



A view of the temple's imposing façade. The doors at the top of the stairs are guarded by four warriors, seen from a distance. Xena (seen from a distance) is talking to them.

The camera pulls back to show Gabrielle and Darion standing in front of the building, watching Xena. Gabrielle's hand is on Darion's shoulder.

Pan for a medium close-up on Gabrielle and Darion.

DARION (fascinated):

Wow. That must be the biggest temple I've ever seen.

GABRIELLE (awed):

It's amazing, isn't it? (Becoming the "bard") They say that all the people of Israel came together to build this temple to their God.

As she speaks, the camera pans to show Xena turn and walk down the stairs while one of the guards goes inside the temple.

GABRIELLE (continues, off-camera):

The princes of the land paid to build the Northern wall, and the pillars and the great stairs; the priests, the Southern wall and the altar...

Pan back to Gabrielle and Darion.

GABRIELLE (continues):

...the rich merchants, to build the Eastern wall and supply oil for the eternal light that burns inside.

Xena comes over to stand next to Gabrielle and Darion.

GABRIELLE (continues):

The rest of the people had no money to pay. But, with their own hard labor, they built the Western wall and wove the curtains inside the temple.

DARION:

Can we go inside?

XENA (glances at him with a smile):

No, we can't. Only those who belong to the faith of the Israelites are allowed in. (off Darion's crestfallen look) It's the house of their God.

DARION (thrilled):
He's actually *in* there?

GABRIELLE:
It's--hard to explain. Some believe he is.

Darion stares at the temple in awe.

DARION:
So how come it has guards?

Xena gives him a rather grim look and sighs.

XENA:
I don't think God is the one who needs *them*.

Pan to the temple entrance as the doors open and John of Giscala comes out, with Eleazar at his side. As they come down the steps, John pauses for a moment, looking at Xena and her two companions; he is clearly slightly taken aback by Gabrielle's obvious pregnancy and puzzled by Darion's presence. Eleazar glances back at him and John resumes his stride, smiling as the two men approach the visitors.

JOHN:
Xena.

He extends his hand; after a moment she responds with a firm handshake.

XENA:
So, you're John of Giscala. The one that wrote asking for my help.

JOHN:
On advice from my friend. (Motions toward Eleazar) Eleazar Ben Jair.

ELEAZAR (clasping hands with Xena):
It's an honor.

XENA:
This is my friend Gabrielle--

ELEAZAR:
The famous Battling Bard. (inclines his head) I've heard a great deal about you.

Gabrielle nods somewhat uncomfortably and lowers her head, her hand going toward her pregnant belly.

XENA:
And-- (she hesitates for an instant) her son, Darion.

Darion steps forward and extends his hand for a handshake; John chuckles indulgently and shakes his hand.

JOHN:

Come--we'll take you to your quarters. You must be famished from your journey.

CUT TO

Xena and John are walking down a crowded, bustling street, with Gabrielle and Eleazar behind them. Darion is running ahead, making his way through the crowd.

GABRIELLE (shouts out):

Darion! Be careful! Stay close to me! You don't want to get lost in this crowd!

DARION (shouts back):

That's okay, I can take care of myself!

GABRIELLE (shakes her head, growing more impatient):

Darion! Come here!

Darion returns, looking sulky. Gabrielle takes his hand.

DARION (mutters):

I'm not a baby.

Pan to Xena, talking to John.

XENA:

This sure doesn't look like a city on the brink of war.

JOHN:

It looks like a city on the brink of a big holiday. We're about to celebrate Passover. The city's filling up with pilgrims.

Xena gives him a thoughtful look.

XENA:

So, tell me more about this Bar-Giora. (Off John's grim look) Doesn't he want freedom from the Romans, just as you do?

JOHN (with sudden vehemence):

He doesn't want *freedom*! He wants to rid us of the Romans, yes--but only to put us under the tyranny of fanatics like himself. Men who would kill anyone that they believe has strayed from the true faith. And the lies they spread about me, saying that my men prowl the streets at night killing people for sport--(he shakes his head)

Xena gives him a long look, then nods.

XENA:

So--you want me to help you cement an alliance with the son of Matthias.

Before John can answer, screams and a commotion are heard off-camera.

TEENAGE BOY (off-camera):

Help! Somebody help! They're ransacking my parents' shop!

Pan to Gabrielle, who looks shocked.

GABRIELLE:

A robbery in broad daylight?

Pan to Xena, who looks at John's troubled expression and shakes her head.

XENA:

I don't think this is a robbery. Come on.

They speed up, with Eleazar, Gabrielle and Darion following behind them.

ELEAZAR (to Gabrielle):

Shouldn't you and your boy stay back? It may not be safe--

GABRIELLE:

I just want to see what's going on. (laughs self-consciously) I guess I'm not used to staying on the sidelines...

They approach a crowd gathering around the boy, about fourteen. He is clearly terrified and out of breath.

BOY (to John and Xena):

Please help! My parents' shop, down the street--(shaking with fear) It's the Sicarii!

John and Xena exchange a look, both drawing swords, and stride forward, pushing their way through the crowd.

CUT TO

The outside of a shop. A man and a woman, both middle-aged, their faces bloodied and bruised, their clothes torn and their hands tied behind their backs, are being restrained by two Sicarii warriors. Sounds of mayhem and destruction are coming from inside the shop, men shouting in glee as they smash things. Two Sicarii come out carrying heaps of scrolls, which they dump on the ground.

John and Xena approach. John motions to Xena to stay back and comes up to the men.

JOHN (holds out a hand to halt them):

What are you doing to these good people?

SICARII WARRIOR #1 (looks up at him):

These *good people*? You mean these infidels! Look at the heathen filth they're selling! (He kicks at the heap of scrolls on the ground, then picks up a few and looks them over fastidiously) Sophocles-- Homer and his fables about Greek gods--tales about that Greek harlot they call the Warrior Princess--

A hand taps him on the shoulder. He whips around to find himself facing Xena.

XENA:

Didn't your mother ever teach you not to gossip about a lady when she's standing right behind you?

The man stares at her in disbelief.

SICARII WARRIOR #1:

No--it can't be!

XENA (grins wickedly):

Oh yes, it can.

Before he can recover from shock, she punches him and sends him flying backwards.

Several Sicarii charge at Xena, drawing their swords. John rushes forward as well.

SICARII WARRIOR #2 (to John):

So the great defender of Israel has a pagan murderer on his side. Should've known!

JOHN:

You're the murderers.

John and Xena spar with the men. Eleazar joins them.



As Xena spars with two of the men and downs a third with a side-kick, she glances over to see Gabrielle and Darion in the front of the crowd of onlookers. Gabrielle looks as if she can barely hold back from joining the fray.

XENA (yells):

Gabrielle! Get away from here!

She is momentarily distracted and one of the Sicarii manages to slice at her shoulder. She kicks the sword out of his hand and catches it with her left hand, then uses both swords to run through a man who is attacking her from behind.

XENA (yells):

Darion--take her inside one of the shops!

Pan to Gabrielle, who opens her mouth in shock. Darion tugs at her arm.

DARION:

Come on. It isn't safe here.

He pulls at her arm and she reluctantly follows.

GABRIELLE (mutters):

You'd think I was a baby...

Gabrielle and Darion duck inside a shop.

The camera zooms out for a long shot of Xena, John and Eleazar fighting the Sicarii. The teenage boy who called for help runs up to his parents and unties them.

Zoom in on Xena fighting another Sicarii warrior. She spins around and kicks him in the chest, then knocks away his sword as he staggers back, and downs him with another kick. She points her sword at him. The camera pans from a shot of Xena holding the warrior at sword-point, from his point of view, to the warrior's face. He is both enraged and scared. Finally, he makes a decision and turns his head slightly toward his comrades.

SICARII WARRIOR #3:

Stop! Let's get out of here.

XENA (with a sneer):

Good boy.

She withdraws her sword, allowing him to get up.

XENA:

Tell your boss there's a new Greek harlot in town.

He glares at her hatefully as he scrambles to his feet.

The Sicarii retreat, helping along a couple of their injured comrades and leaving two dead bodies and three unconscious men on the ground.

John and Eleazar stand still for a moment, looking after them. Xena comes up to stand next to them.

XENA (to John, sheathing her sword):

You know--having me on your side might be a problem for you.

ELEAZAR (with a dry laugh):

I'm sure whoever you're against will have the bigger problem.

The shopkeepers and their son come up, still shaken.

SHOPKEEPER (HUSBAND):

How can we thank you?

SHOPKEEPER (WIFE):

Those thugs would have destroyed everything we have--probably killed us, too!

XENA:

Let's just hope they don't come back.

In the background, Gabrielle and Darion are seen coming out of the shop where they took refuge.

XENA (to John):

So. Where were we? Oh yeah. You want us to talk to the son of Matthias.

JOHN:

Josephus. His garrison is in Yodfat, in Galilee--a few hours' ride to the north.

XENA:

Then I ride out first thing tomorrow morning.

Pan to Gabrielle, who stands next to her, her hand on Darion's shoulder.

GABRIELLE:

We ride out first thing tomorrow. (off Xena's dubious look) Xena, we're not going into battle.

XENA (pats her shoulder, resigned):

Okay.

CROSS-FADE TO

Xena and Gabrielle are riding through a sparse, almost desert-like landscape with some palm trees in the background. Both are wearing the same robes they wore in *Legacy*.

DISSOLVE TO

A long shot of the fortress of the Yodfat garrison.

CUT TO

Xena and Gabrielle wait in the courtyard of the fortress. A man--Josephus--comes out of the building. He is in his thirties, of medium built, with light brown curly hair and a beard, with a fine, intelligent face. He approaches Xena and Gabrielle, smiling, and stops in front of them.

JOSEPHUS:

My men said you wanted to see me.

After a moment's delay, he extends his hand and he and Xena clasp forearms.

XENA:

So--you're Josephus, son of Matthias.

JOSEPHUS (inclines his head in agreement):

And you're the legendary Xena of Amphipolis. I have heard a great deal about you from my father--and others. (pauses) Good things, of course.

XENA (wryly):
Of course.

Josephus turns to Gabrielle, looking at her with visible fascination.

JOSEPHUS:
And your companion must be--Gabrielle.

Gabrielle nods with a small smile, and they shake hands.

JOSEPHUS (continues, to Gabrielle):
You know--I have always wanted to meet the Battling Bard. (Off Xena and Gabrielle's curious looks) Oh yes, I am a great fan--of your scrolls-- (he gives her hand a slight squeeze) and of you.

Xena and Gabrielle stare at him, Xena scowling a little, Gabrielle smiling warily as we:

FADE OUT

ACT TWO

FADE IN

Xena, Gabrielle and Josephus are walking through the inner yard of the fortress, talking.

JOSEPHUS:
I myself, you understand, consider both sword and quill to be tools of my trade.



GABRIELLE (with curiosity):
You're a bard?

JOSEPHUS:
More of a historian. Someday, after these wars are over, I hope to chronicle them for the future generations. And in writing about war, I can think of no better model--

XENA (cuts him short):

It's the war that we're here to talk about.

Josephus stops and turns to face Xena and Gabrielle; they stop as well.

JOSEPHUS:

So--you want to help us fight the Romans. That's why you're here.

XENA (emphatic):

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

JOSEPHUS:

And you--want to help us end our differences.

GABRIELLE:

It's the only way you stand a chance.

Josephus looks at them probingly.

JOSEPHUS:

I don't suppose you want me to ally myself with that madman Bar-Giora. So--you must be emissaries for John of Giscala.

XENA (impassive):

John is the one who sent for us.

GABRIELLE:

We have no allegiance to any faction. All we want--

JOSEPHUS (holds out a hand, interrupting her):

Wait. I'll be happy to talk to you. But you must do me the honor of joining me for a meal.

CUT TO

Xena, Gabrielle and Joseph sit at a table laden with fruit, meat, flatbread and other food.

JOSEPHUS (to Gabrielle):

Few have been able to capture the truth of war the way you have. In your scroll about your battle with the Horde--

GABRIELLE (interrupts, gently but firmly):

Josephus--as much as I'd love to discuss my work, we're here to talk about--

JOSEPHUS:

--an alliance with John of Giscala. (He picks up his goblet and sips from it, then sets it down with a thin smile) You're very single-minded.

XENA:

There's no reason the two of you should be enemies. If you were to work together--



JOSEPHUS (interrupts):

John can be a rash man. When he started these hostilities, he had no real plan--he gave very little thought to how ready we were for such a war. When he launched his attack on the Roman troops, he demanded that I give him supplies--

XENA (with some bitterness):

And you refused.

JOSEPHUS (with a sudden harshness):

Because I didn't think it was in our best interest. John and his men then raided my granaries and took what they wanted--by force.

Xena gives him a long, pensive look as she finishes a piece of meat. Then, she speaks.

XENA:

At the time, you were the governor of Galilee--under the Romans.

JOSEPHUS (defensively):

I served my people the best way I could--at the time. And that's what I'm trying to do today.

XENA (with a passionate note in her voice):

Then join forces with John of Giscala. He's willing to look beyond your past differences; why not you? You both want the same thing--freedom for your people.

JOSEPHUS:

John also thinks our people are ready to govern themselves.



XENA:

You disagree?

JOSEPHUS:

Look how many of them are willing to follow Bar-Giora and his zealots. What they need right now is wise leadership.

GABRIELLE:

And you and John could provide it--together. Make an agreement to govern jointly.

XENA:

You can trust him to keep his word. (She moves aside her plate and looks intently at Josephus) If not to you--then to me.

Josephus sips his wine, looking pensively from Xena to Gabrielle.

JOSEPHUS:

It looks like both of us will have to trust *you*. (pauses) I'll think it over.

XENA (somewhat brusquely):

Don't take too long.

CUT TO

Xena and Gabrielle ride across the harsh landscape, with the fortress visible behind them.



XENA (gives Gabrielle a slightly amused look):
Looks like you have a new fan.

GABRIELLE (chuckles):
I have a long way to go before I catch up with you in *that* department. (She pauses briefly, the smile giving way to a pensive look.) What do you make of him?

XENA (impassive):
He's--a clever man.

Gabrielle glances at her questioningly.

GABRIELLE:
You don't mean that in a good way.

XENA (sighs):
I know--you're going to tell me I don't see the good in people.



GABRIELLE (shakes her head):
No...no, I wasn't going to say that. (Off Xena's surprised look) I...I'm not sure what to make of Josephus myself.

Xena glances at her and frowns a little, as if unsure whether she likes this attitude coming from Gabrielle. Finally, she shrugs.

XENA:
We're not here to make friends with him. The question is--can we get him and John to work together as allies.

GABRIELLE:
You think he can be trusted.



XENA:

To do the smart thing--yes. The right thing... (she trails off)

GABRIELLE:

Hmm. (reflects a moments) Let's hope the smart thing and the right thing happen to be the same.

They ride on in silence, a montage of shots dissolving into each other indicating the passage of time as the Yodfat fortress behind them recedes farther and farther into the distance. Xena stares ahead of her, her face unreadable; Gabrielle looks down, lost in thought. Suddenly, Xena speaks up.

XENA:

I'll tell you one thing.

Gabrielle looks up at her sharply.

XENA:

Whichever side Josephus is on has good odds. He's a survivor.

CUT TO

Jerusalem, just outside the temple. The crowds are large and lively and the street is heavily congested. There is a loud din of merchants and customers haggling, baying sheep and bleating goats. Xena walks slightly ahead of Gabrielle, clearing a path for them through the crowd.

GABRIELLE:

I just don't get it, Xena. How can Josephus not jump at the chance to form an alliance with Giscala? One of the first things I remember you teaching me is that there's strength in numbers. Together they stand a real chance against the Romans--not to mention weakening the Sicarii.

Xena frowns and shakes her head.

XENA:

Josephus is tough to read. I haven't been able to get a fix on him yet. Maybe he's hoping Giscala's men and the Sicarii will kill each other off, clearing the way for him to seize power in Jerusalem. (she sighs.) I don't know...

GABRIELLE:

I can't believe he would betray his own people like that.

XENA:

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

The gates of the temple open and an ornate litter born by six slaves exits. A large, burly slave begins cutting a path through the crowds.

SLAVE:

Make way! Clear the streets for Simeon bar Naphtali!

The crowd slowly parts. Xena and Gabrielle are not intimidated by the large slave and don't move. Xena folds her arms across her chest and plants her feet wide apart, confronting the slave. He assesses both women, obviously notes Xena's size and intrepid stance and reaches for Gabrielle.

SLAVE:

Out of the way, woman!

Gabrielle shoots her hand up to shove his away.

GABRIELLE:

Who do you think you're grabbing?

The slave looks her up and down contemptuously.

SLAVE:

Greek pagans!

He tries shoving them aside but Xena grabs his wrist, roughly twisting it. The slave winces in pain.

XENA:

Greek pagans or not, someone needs to teach you some manners.

The slave and Xena stare at one another a moment, the contest broken by a cry from the crowd.

VOICE:

Fire! Oh, help! Fire!

A small fire can be seen erupting from a merchant's stall.

XENA:

Gabrielle, wait here!

Xena shoves the slave and pushes through the crowd. The owner of the burning stall looks on in shock.

MERCHANT:

They just torched it! I haven't done any--.

Xena grabs his shoulder and shakes him to jolt him out of his shock.

XENA:

Worry about that later. Get some water!

He runs off and she grabs a blanket from a neighboring stall, beating down the flames with the blanket. Just as the fire is almost out, a panicked cry erupts from the crowd.

VOICE:

Murder!

Cut to the litter, falling over on its side and the occupant, an expensively dressed man in his mid to late 50's tumbles out. He is bloodied and he is clutching at his slit throat, gasping for breath.

VOICE:

It's the Sicarii!

Chaos breaks out and people begin running in every direction. One woman is pushed to the ground by the crowd and Xena is able to pick her up moments before she is trampled.

XENA (to woman):

Are you all right?

WOMAN (nods, gasping for breath):

Yes--I--I think so!

Xena takes off running against the tide of the frightened crowd.

XENA:

Gabrielle! Gabrielle!

She looks to where she left Gabrielle but she is gone. Xena's voice is slightly more anxious now.

XENA:

Gabrielle!

Cut to the litter. The slaves have disappeared and Gabrielle crouches over the wounded man. Xena runs over, dropping to her knees beside Gabrielle.

XENA:

Are you all right?

GABRIELLE (nods):

I wish I could say the same for him. (she shakes her head sadly.) He's dead.

Gabrielle looks up and spots Darion in the crowd, crouching beside a merchant stall, witnessing the chaos.

GABRIELLE:

Darion!

Xena looks up and sees Darion. She grabs Gabrielle by the elbow and leads her through the crowd. Gabrielle is obviously upset at seeing Darion here.

GABRIELLE:

What are you doing here?

DARION:

I wanted to see the temple. I saw the whole thing happen. It was the Sicarii, Xena! I saw one man set fire to that booth while another one attacked the man in the litter. (Darion points to the litter.) That's Simeon bar Naphtali! I heard people say he was a rich merchant that wouldn't give any of his supplies to the Sicarii.

XENA:

So they killed him...

DARION:

I saw them run into the temple after the attack.

XENA (musingly to herself):

The temple...

GABRIELLE:

Darion, from now on I want you to stay away from here. It's too dangerous.

A man can be seen standing near the gates of the temple. In the midst of all the panic and chaos around him he is surprisingly still. He is in his late 50's, his beard and hair are long and unkempt and he has a wild eyed look as he preaches.



PREACHER:

...And I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and with a strong arm, even in anger, and in fury, and in great wrath! And I will smite the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast: they shall die of a great pestilence!

OLD WOMAN:

He's quoting the prophet Jeremiah!

Gabrielle looks troubled and glances at Darion. Some people pause to listen to the preacher, obviously disturbed by his words. A young woman bursts into tears while an older man buries his face in his hands in terror. Xena, calm but clearly ill at ease herself, approaches the preacher, clamping a hand on his shoulder.

XENA:

Look, that gloom and doom preaching isn't doing anyone any good. Why don't you just move along?

The preacher blinks wildly at Xena, almost as if coming out of a trance.

PREACHER:

I'm delivering a warning from above! Destruction awaits Jerusalem!

Xena moves ominously close. She is several inches taller than him and affects a menacing posture.

XENA:

Well, consider *this* a warning from above. Pain awaits *you* if you don't get out of here.

The preacher backs away, leaving. Once he is several paces away from Xena, he turns and spits at her over his shoulder.

PREACHER:

Heathen!

XENA:

I wish I had a dinar for every time I've been called that!

CUT TO

Night in Xena and Gabrielle's quarters. The two women are seated at the table. Darion is seated near the window, whittling. The mood is relaxed and the lantern light casts a soft glow over the room. Gabrielle takes a piece of bread, dips it in a bowl, chews it ponderously then sighs in contentment.

GABRIELLE:

This is nice.

XENA (smirks):

Oh sure. The Romans are about to come knocking on the gates of Jerusalem any day now, there are murders in the streets daily and on top of all that the city is about to erupt in a civil war. But aside from all that, this is a real paradise.

Gabrielle nudges Xena's foot playfully.

GABRIELLE:

That isn't what I meant and you know it. I just meant that this feels like family...

Xena smiles tenderly at Gabrielle. After a moment Gabrielle turns to Darion, sitting by the window.

XENA:

What are you working on, Darion?

Darion holds it up.

DARION:

I'm carving a goat.

Xena goes over to Darion, inspecting his work. She is clearly impressed.

XENA:

That's some very impressive carving, Darion. You're going to make a fine craftsman one day.

Darion smiles shyly and shrugs.

DARION:

Well, it was supposed to be Argo but it came out looking more like a goat. But you always say that a warrior should be flexible.

XENA (smiles indulgently):

A warrior, huh.

Gabrielle comes over to Darion.

GABRIELLE :

Well, it's beautiful no matter what it is.

Darion watches Gabrielle a moment. He contemplates something a moment, then speaks.

DARION:

Gabrielle...

He seems to be working up the courage to say something.

GABRIELLE (a little concerned):

Yes?

DARION:

Are we ever going to see Haimon again?

Gabrielle glances at Xena, shocked and at a loss. Xena shrugs slightly and Gabrielle turns back to Darion.

GABRIELLE:

I don't know, sweetie.

Darion frowns and nods.

DARION:

Why did he leave?

Gabrielle strokes his hair lovingly.

GABRIELLE:

It's complicated. People walk paths together--but sometimes those paths split and...they need to go their separate ways.

There is a short silence.

DARION (with a worried note in his voice):

That won't ever happen to you and Xena, will it?

GABRIELLE (fervently):

No, *never!* (then, more calmly) No--that won't ever happen to Xena and me.

Darion nods and looks out the window. He is obviously struggling with something.

DARION:

Do you miss him?

Gabrielle stares a moment.



GABRIELLE:

Do you?

DARION (shrugs, still staring into the window):

I used to... (he pauses a moment) But not so much anymore.

He turns and looks at Xena and Gabrielle. Pan for a medium close-up on the faces of the two women standing side by side, looking troubled, as we:

FADE OUT

ACT THREE

FADE IN

On a medium exterior shot of the Yodfat garrison. Early afternoon. We push in until we...

FADE TO

A lavish room with mosaic covered walls. One of them depicts David's defeat of Goliath. There's an impressive weapons rack off to the side.

On one side of a large table are a few rolled-up maps. On the other side sits Josephus, intently reading a scroll.

[FLASHBACK]

From *The Price*:

Xena and Gabrielle in a room, both looking ready for a confrontation.

GABRIELLE:

What is going on with you?

XENA (spitting out the words with fury and hate):

I'm trying to save our skins. Those things outside will kill us all.

GABRIELLE:

This is insane! You are letting these men die! You axed that man in the back!

XENA:

He was inside our battlements. He saw our defenses! I couldn't risk it.

GABRIELLE:

I can't believe this, Xena. You're scaring me.

XENA (grabs her by the shoulders):

This is war! What did you expect--glamour?! There are no good choices--only lesser degrees of evil.

Gabrielle releases herself from Xena's grip.

GABRIELLE (close to tears):

There is a choice--to stop fighting!

XENA:

They aren't like us. There is nothing about them that we can or should understand.

GABRIELLE:

But have you even tried?

[END OF FLASHBACK]

A frantic knock on the door. Josephus looks up. A soldier, obviously agitated, runs in.

SOLDIER:

My lord-- (panting) the Romans are coming!

Josephus rises to his feet abruptly. He is clearly terrified but manages to stay in control.

JOSEPHUS:

All right. Tell the men to set up the triple-line defense I've taught them. (He pauses and adds, with a bitter grin) I didn't want this. But if the Romans want a fight, we'll give them one.

SOLDIER:

Yes, my lord.

The soldier walks out. Jospheus stashes "The Price" scroll into a pouch at his side, then picks up his sword, looking grimly resolute.

CUT TO

An exterior overhead shot of the Roman cavalry and infantrymen approaching the Yodfat garrison. Zoom in on the cavalry, to show two warriors in rich armor riding at the head of it.

Close-up on the face of one of the warriors. He is a handsome blond-haired man in his late twenties with a sense of pedigree about him and a touch of arrogance. This is Titus.

The camera pulls back to show Titus and the other warrior at his side--whom we recognize as Valeria Sabina, wearing Roman armor.

TITUS (to Sabina):

What do you think?

Sabina gives him a coolly ironic glance.

SABINA:

You really want to know what I think?

TITUS:

Of course. My father believes you're a very valuable asset.



SABINA:

If Emperor Vespasian believes that, maybe he should have allowed me to lead this expedition on my own. I've led an army before--quite successfully, I might add.

TITUS:

That's right--you defeated Nero...

Sabina looks pleased.

TITUS (continues):

...with Xena's help, from what I've heard.

Sabina bristles visibly but nods, swallowing her pride.

SABINA:

Xena--was there.

TITUS:

I don't say this to slight you, Sabina. Your accomplishments are impressive. And you're my second-in-command, only a few months after becoming an officer in the Roman army. (He gives her a probing look) Though I will say that I sometimes wonder about your--rather flexible loyalties.

SABINA (with a somewhat chilly smile):

I can assure you, Titus, my loyalties are exactly where they should be.

TITUS (smiles at her, rather coldly as well):

Good. I hope we understand each other, then. (after a brief pause) So. I think we should take the Yodfat garrison before we march on Jerusalem--and I do believe I asked you, my second-in-command (quick pan to Sabina who flinches slightly at the word), what you thought about that.

SABINA:

I think it's a good idea. Certainly don't want to leave Josephus at our backs.

TITUS:

Indeed. Josephus is a smart man. (sighs) Of course, we wouldn't have to worry about any of this if the Israelites knew what was good for them.

SABINA (with a slight touch of sarcasm):

Some people are just too crazy and barbaric to appreciate how lucky they are when a foreign power takes their land and forces them into its empire.

TITUS (sighs in disgust):

Please. We respected their so-called culture--didn't interfere in their strange ways. All we asked of them was to obey our authority. They chose rebellion. (The camera closes in on his face as he continues, his expression hard) Now they'll get what's coming to them.

CUT TO

A montage of Romans marching toward the garrison, cross-cut with Josephus' men preparing for battle: grabbing weapons, armor, and helmets, and getting into line.

CUT TO

Inside the Yodfat garrison gates. Josephus has his men in Roman the triple line system: the younger fighters, mostly spearmen, form the first line; the sword-wielding, more mature warriors in the second; and the most heavily armed, armored fighters in the back, in a checkered formation.

Josephus stands at the head of his army, helmet and armor on.

JOSEPHUS:

All right. The Romans are marching on us. It's very likely they outnumber us. But I have studied their tactics--I know their every move, and I know a few things they don't. Follow my commands--and I promise I will do my very best to get you through the day alive.

He steps back behind the formation,

JOSEPHUS:

Open the gate.

One of the men on the first line goes to open the gates.

From Josephus' point of view, we see the Roman infantry in the same position as his men, with the cavalry (including Titus and Sabina) bringing up the rear. It is obvious, even to the naked eye, that the Romans' army is much bigger than Josephus' defense.

Pan to Josephus, the same soldier we saw before standing next to him.

SOLDIER #1:

My lord, they outnumber us at least three to one.

JOSEPHUS:

You heard what I said. (He raises his voice) First line--attack!

On the last line, the camera pans to Titus, who is speaking simultaneously so that his voice is superimposed on Josephus'.

TITUS:

First line--attack!

The first lines of both armies hurl spears at each other, then quickly bring up their shields. The Romans suffer more losses. Both sets of warriors run out onto the battlefield and clash.



There is a quick montage of shots as the battle rages; many Romans fall, but their first line is still much larger than the Israelites'. Soon it is clear that the Romans are getting the upper hand and pushing the Israelites back.

Titus smiles gleefully.

Soldier #1 goes up to Josephus, worried.

SOLDIER:

My lord, shall we have the second line attack now?

JOSEPHUS:

No, not yet. (raises his voice) Archers--fire!

The warriors in the third line raise their bow and shoot arrows at both the first and second lines of the Romans.

A quick pan to Titus and Sabina. They are shocked, but Sabina's expression seems almost gleeful.

TITUS:

Principes--attack!

The Romans' second line joins the fray, tipping the odds in their favor once more; there is a montage of scenes of wounded and dead Israelites as well as some Romans falling to the ground. Josephus' men are performing impressively against the insurmountable odds.

Zoom in on Josephus, who purses his lips in frustration.

JOSEPHUS (signals with his hand):

Catapults!

Pan to the top of the fortress, where several Israelite warriors use catapults to hurl several large round rocks at the Romans.

A montage of shots of Romans falling, mowed down by the rocks from the catapults.

Pan to Titus, who clenches his fists in fury; then to Sabina, smiling.

SABINA (to Titus):

You're right, he *is* smart. (off Titus' frown at her expression, coolly) I appreciate a challenge.

Pan back to Josephus.

JOSEPHUS:

Archers--fire!

A second round of arrows from the third line cuts more of the Romans' numbers, but they're still in the lead.

JOSEPHUS (to the soldier standing next to him):

Second line--*now*!

Josephus' second line moves out, led by the soldier. The camera tracks them as they clash with the Romans, chopping at each other with swords. A montage of close-ups:

* an Israelite soldier slashes at a Roman with his sword

* a Roman raises his shield, defending against an attack, only to be struck from behind

* two Romans attack an Israelite, one stabbing him with a sword, the other bashing his head with his shield

* a wide shot of Israelites and Romans battling

Pan to Titus and Sabina.

TITUS:

Triarii, attack! Archers!

Pan to Josephus, then (from his point of view) to the Roman archers readying their bows.

JOSEPHUS (shouts):

Shields!

But it does no good as his men on the field are far too engaged with the Romans to be able to raise their shields (except the one in the third line).

A quick montage of shots of five Israelite soldiers falling, struck down by arrows.

The camera pulls back to show dead and dying Israelites on the ground. The Roman redouble their attack, pushing the surviving Israelites soldiers back toward the gates of the garrison.

Pan to Josephus, who looks worried.

JOSEPHUS (shouts):

Catapults!

More rocks are launched at the Romans, but this slows them down only briefly.

JOSEPHUS:

Archers--double attack!

A captain of the archers runs up to him, anxious and harried.

CAPTAIN:

We only have enough arrows for one, my lord.

JOSEPHUS (impatient):

Then do one.

The archers fire; this time, however, most of the Romans manage to raise their shields in time to meet the attack.

Pan over to Titus and Sabina.

TITUS (to himself):

Come on, send out your third line.

SABINA:

He won't--not unless he has to. They're his last line of defense.

TITUS (smiles):

You're right. (beat) Cavalry, charge!

The cavalry moves in with Titus and Sabina leading the way.

Pan to Josephus, visibly shocked; he clearly didn't expect the cavalry to come in so quickly.

JOSEPHUS (to men up above):

Do we have any more rocks?

SOLDIER #3:

No, my lord!

JOSEPHUS:

Then get down here and fight. Triarii, charge!

Josephus leads his remaining men into battle against the Romans. The clashing of armor and blades sounds like thunder.

Three quick flashes of silver precipitate Josephus killing three men.

Sabina works her blade through her enemies, cutting down several of them. In a move worthy of Xena, she leaps off her horse, still holding onto the pommel, and swings in an arc in front of her horse, she slashes with her sword at three warriors, killing them, and kicking another in the face, knocking him down, before reseating herself on her horse.

Five more of Josephus' men, the one who had been working the catapults, join the battle.

Titus moves forward, hacking away with his sword, using brute strength more than actual skill. He kills some, disarms others.

Josephus knocks out a warrior with the pommel of his sword. He kicks and slashes another warrior coming at him. He turns and smashes his shield into a warrior's face, then sweeps his legs out from underneath him before running him through.

He spins and slits the throat of an approaching warrior, then runs through another. He looks around to take an assessment of the battle as he spars with another warrior. To his dismay, Titus and Sabina's forces have cut through most of his.

JOSEPHUS:

Fall back, get back inside the garrison!

He kills the man he was fighting. His men follow his orders while doing their best to keep the Romans at bay. In the process, more are killed before they and Josephus can finally barricade themselves inside the garrison.

Josephus takes a look around and realizes that he only has about three dozen men left. The predicament he's in hits him hard as he hears someone from the outside banging on the door.

TITUS (off-camera):

I want that door down, now!

A beat. Then ramming against the door.

JOSEPHUS:

Everyone, downstairs!

SOLDIER #2:

What does it matter, they've got us cornered.

JOSEPHUS:

It matters because I say it does. Now move, or stay here and die at the hands of the Romans.

Josephus leads the rest of the men further inside the garrison. Soldier #2 follows suit after he hears more ramming.

CUT TO

Josephus and about thirty of his men running through an underground tunnel.

CUT TO

A large, circular crypt with several exits. Josephus and his men come out into the crypt and look around.

SOLDIER #2 (jubilant):

I'd forgotten all about these tunnels. (to Josephus) You're brilliant.

JOSEPHUS:

Move on--save the flattery for later. (to the men) Check the exits.

The men disperse, following different tunnels out of the crypt.

CUT TO

Titus and Sabina, watching their men breaking down the door.

TITUS:

What are they hoping for? They can't hold us off forever.

Sabina gives him a thoughtful look, then her expression changes as something occurs to her.

SABINA:

There must be another way out here. (brusquely) Tell the men to form a perimeter around the garrison walls.

TITUS (annoyed):

Are you telling me what to do?

SABINA (impatient):

I'm telling you how to keep them from getting away.

Titus thinks a moment, then nods.

TITUS:

Give the order.

Sabina smiles and turns.

CUT TO

Josephus and his men file back inside the crypt, looking dejected as they stare at each other. Finally Josephus speaks.

JOSEPHUS (a statement more than a question):

All the other exits are blocked too.

The men murmur in assent.

SOLDIER #2 (panics):

We're going to die! (his voice rises to a scream) We're all going to--

Josephus elbows him in the face and he falls silent, clutching at his face.

Josephus looks up as he starts to recite.



JOSEPHUS:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside still waters...

The men exchange worried looks; then, other voices begin to join in a disjointed chorus.

JOSEPHUS (and others):

He restoreth my soul; He leadeth me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Even when I walk in the valley of Darkness, I will fear no evil for You are with me...

The voices start to fade as the shot of the crypt begins to fade.

JOSEPHUS AND HIS MEN (voices fading):

May only goodness and kindness pursue me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for the length of days...

FADE TO BLACK, THEN DISSOLVE TO

A long shot of the temple. It's near sunset.

CUT TO

Xena and John are in front of the temple in mid-conversation.

XENA:

He's playing it safe and he hasn't forgotten the bad blood between you two. But he does trust me. If we can use that to get him to trust *you*--

JOHN (snorts with contempt):

As long as it's in his best interest.

XENA:

Give him a chance. He might just surprise you.

Several pilgrims make their way up the stairs and inside the temple. Xena casts an inquisitive glance on them.

[FLASHBACK]

From *Eve*. The temple of Eli. Robed and hooded figures are praying as Livia and her soldiers enter the temple.

LIVIA:

Good, the sheep are all here. Aren't you afraid of me? You think Eli's gonna save you?!

One figure stands and removes the cloak to reveal that it's Xena. The soldiers draw their weapons.

LIVIA (sneers):

Glad you could make it, Xena.

CUT TO

A few minutes later.

LIVIA:

Attack!

Everyone in the robes stands and takes them off. It's Virgil, Gabrielle and Roman soldiers. Virgil yells.

LIVIA (shocked):
What is this?

XENA:

You didn't think Augustus was just going to sit back and let you take his throne did you? He was more than happy to lend me a few reinforcements, and Eli's followers had to take a little holiday.

Livia's face is distorted in a grimace of rage.

[END OF FLASHBACK]

John notices Xena lost in thought.

JOHN:

Something troubles you.

XENA:

This temple should be closed off--or at the very least, better guarded.

JOHN:

Why, what's wrong?

XENA:

Bar-Giora's men could easily sneak in pretending to be simple worshipers, and you'd be none the wiser. I've done the same thing myself a couple of times. You could lose the temple to your worst enemy.

John stares at her, clearly impressed.

JOHN:

You're a great strategist, Xena, I mean that. But there's a flaw in your thinking.

XENA (puzzled):

What's that?

JOHN:

You think that all people are the same.

XENA (with bitter irony):

You mean, they're not.



JOHN:

No. Israelites, even those like Bar-Giora and his lot, would never desecrate their temple like that. Only an outsider would think such a thing.

Xena's face darkens as she turns around and comes closer to John, standing face to face with him.



XENA:

An outsider *you* asked for help.

Not wanting to incur the wrath of the warrior princess, John quickly backs down and puts his hands up as a symbolic white flag.

JOHN:

I meant no offense, Xena. I know you're a great friend to the Israelites. But--you may not always understand our ways as we do. My people would never disrespect their God and His temple. Trust me--I know what I'm saying.

Xena nods, cooling off but still a little skeptical.

JOHN:

I do want you to know how much we appreciate your being here. With your help, Josephus and I may still work things out.

XENA (with a touch of bitterness):

If you'll listen to an outsider.

John is about to say something, but Xena shakes her head and continues in a normal tone.

XENA:

That's all right--I understand.

She turns around and walks away.

John starts to go after her, but stops, deciding it's best to let her be.

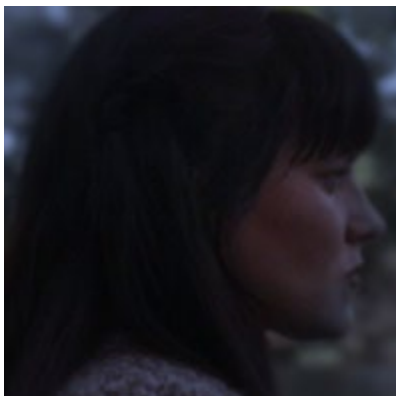
CUT TO



The moon high in the sky.

CUT TO

Xena and Gabrielle in their quarters. Evening.



Xena stares out of the window and into the night. Her look is pensive. Footsteps can be heard in the background. Xena doesn't stir.

XENA:

Finally got Darion to go to bed?

Gabrielle steps into view and up to Xena:

GABRIELLE:

Yeah. Ever since that fight in the marketplace, he's been thinking of himself as my warrior prince.

They both chuckle at that before Xena goes back to her brooding gaze. Gabrielle takes note of it.

GABRIELLE:

Something the matter?

XENA:

I just don't know if we can do much good here.

GABRIELLE:

Why do you say that?

XENA:

A little chat I had earlier today with John.

GABRIELLE:

What did he say?



XENA:

The condensed version? I'm an outsider.

GABRIELLE:

An outsider that he called on for help.

Xena smiles a little, obviously recalling that she said the exact same thing.



GABRIELLE:

Don't let him get to you, Xena. We came here to do good and that's what we're going to do. We can't let the Romans take Jerusalem and just roll over these people. Look at everything they've built: this city, the temple--it's...magnificent. We can't let them lose it.

XENA:

I know.



Gabrielle wraps her hand around Xena's. They stare out at the starry night sky as we...

FADE TO

The sun rising. A rooster crowing.

CUT TO

Outside Xena and Gabrielle's quarters. A big hand bangs on the door.

CUT TO

Inside the quarters. The knock is heard. Xena comes out of the bedroom, not in the highest of spirits after being so rudely awakened. She answers the door in her tunic.

On the other side of the door is John. Xena scowls a little; he enters, a look of urgency and alarm on his face.

XENA (brusquely):

What do you want?

JOHN (looks at her, solemn):

The Romans have taken the Yodfat garrison.

Xena's anger gives way to shock.

XENA:

And Josephus?

JOHN:

He's dead.

Off Xena's dismayed look as we...

FADE OUT

ACT FOUR

FADE IN

Inside Xena and Gabrielle's quarter's. Morning. Gabrielle comes into the room, groggy.

GABRIELLE:

Xena, who was-- (sees John) What's going on?

XENA:

The Romans have taken the Yodfat garrison. Josephus is dead.

GABRIELLE (shakes her head):

Josephus killed in battle. I would have bet against that.

JOHN:

Actually, he had about thirty men left when he decided they should conceal themselves in an underground crypt. When they realized there was no escape Josephus decided they would commit suicide rather than submit to the Romans.

For a second, it looks like John is quite proud of what Josephus did.

GABRIELLE:

Then there's nothing left between the Romans and Jerusalem.

JOHN:

The Romans haven't won yet. They'll still have to take Jerusalem if they want to claim victory.

XENA:

Which will be a lot easier with Josephus out of the way.

JOHN:

You've got a point. It's too bad Bar-Giora and his lot are such madmen. We could have used their help right about now.

FADE TO

Overhead shot of the sun beaming down on the temple. As two dozen white robed pilgrims enter.

CUT TO

Interior of the temple. A panoramic shot lets us see that it's floored and wainscoted with Cedar of Lebanon and its walls and floor are overlaid with gold. There's an ornate door between it and the spacious altar that's overlaid with gold; A veil of blue purple and crimson and fine linen also drapes the altar. It has no windows.



The pilgrims go up to the altar. They kneel in two rows to pray.

About a dozen men of John are spread around the temple. They watch the pilgrims, absent-mindedly. Some are engaged in conversation.

One of the pilgrims glances up sideways at John's men.. He then leans over to a another pilgrim and whispers something to him. This train keeps going until the last pilgrim receives the message.

A warrior goes up to the pilgrim who started the train.

WARRIOR:

What's going on over here?

The Pilgrim stands. He holds his head down, demurely.

PILGRIM:

We were just having a discussion.

WARRIOR #2:

About what?

PILGRIM:

The best way to kill you.

Warrior barely registers the Pilgrim's words before the Pilgrim pulls a dagger from underneath his robe and plunges it deep into his abdomen. The warrior drops to the floor, dead.

The rest of John's men draw their weapons as the pilgrims disrobe. They're Bar-Giora and the Sicarii.

John's men realize they're outnumbered two to one, but they charge in to fight, determined to defend the temple.

A warrior charges Bar-Giora, swinging his sword. Bar Giora ducks, then swipes across the warrior's neck with his dagger, slitting his throat. Another warrior with a sword advances on Bar-Giora and manages to drive him back against the wall.

Bar-Giora looks around . He sees that his Sicarii are defeating John's men.

CUT TO

Outside of the temple. Several worshippers are at the top of the stairs, wondering what the commotion inside is all about.

A few moments later Bar-Giora comes out, his face and his hands spattered with blood. The pilgrims look at him, concerned. A woman steps forward .

FEMALE PILGRIM:

Everything all right in there?



BAR-GIORA:

It is now.

The pilgrims try to go in, but Bar-Giora blocks their path.

BAR-GIORA:

Not yet.

FEMALE PILGRIM:

Who are you to tell us we can't go in our own temple?

BAR-GIORA (smug smile):

My lady, this temple is mine.

Off the pilgrims' disconcerted looks as we...

DISSOLVE TO

Xena and Gabrielle's quarters. John is still there with them. Gabrielle has taken a seat while Xena and John remain standing.

XENA:

John, you have to close the temple.

JOHN:

Xena, I've told you already: It's impossible.

XENA:

Don't you see? Nothing stands between the Romans and Jerusalem now. They have every reason to attack immediately and if they do, innocent people will be trapped inside the city.

JOHN:

Yes--I can't argue with that. (he pauses) But this is Passover. It's not just another holiday. It's the day we commemorate our liberation from bondage to the pharaohs--the freedom given to us by God and by our forefathers. (passionately) Then how would it look if we closed the temple right now, when we have another enemy at our gates trying to put us back into bondage?

Xena nods grimly but with some sympathy, acknowledging his point.

XENA:

All right. If you won't close the temple--

ELEAZAR (off-camera):

John!

Eleazar rushes in.

JOHN:

Eleazer?

ELEAZAR:

Bar-Giora and the Sicarii have taken the temple.

John is taken aback. Xena grimaces.

ELEAZAR:

They've killed two of our men inside and taken the rest as prisoners.

John pauses a moment, trying to decide what to do. Finally:

JOHN:

Eleazar, come with me.

They exit. Xena watches them as they go, a grim expression on her face.

XENA:

Gabrielle, get your things ready. We're leaving.

GABRIELLE:

We're *not* leaving.

Darion comes out of the bedroom, just now waking up.

DARION:

We're leaving?

XENA:

Yes, we are.

GABRIELLE:

Xena, these people need our help.

XENA:

We can't help here anymore. Josephus is dead and Rome is on the way. I've got to get you out while I can.

Gabrielle looks skeptical. The two women stare at one another a moment in a test of wills.



XENA:

Think about Darion and your baby. Do you really want to put them both in danger? We need to get out. You know I wouldn't run from a fight unless I had to.

Gabrielle's conflicted. She thinks a moment.

GABRIELLE:

Fine. I'll go pack.

CUT TO

One of the city gates. Twilight. Xena, carrying their things. Gabrielle and Darion follow behind. There is pandemonium. People are in a panic, running in every direction, shouting:

PEOPLE:

The Romans are coming, the Romans are coming! Run for your lives!

Xena and Gabrielle share a look of dread.

XENA:

There's another gate. Come on.

Xena leads the way, shoving people aside in order to clear a path.

CUT TO

The western gate. Xena, Gabrielle, and Darion arrive in time to see the Roman infantry fighting their way through the open gates. Xena hands Gabrielle their things.

XENA:

Get somewhere safe. I'll find you later.

Gabrielle swallows and nods wordlessly, grabbing Darion by the hand.

XENA (somersaulting through the air):

Alalalasheeeyah!

Three soldiers fall under Xena's blade after sparring with her briefly. She spin kicks and palm heels another.

Gabrielle and Darion watch Xena fight from behind a building.

Xena runs a soldier through with her blade, then kicks him off. A soldier disarms her from behind. Without looking she kicks behind her, hitting him in the groin. Gasping for breath, he drops his sword.

Xena kicks her sword up and continues to battle. Some of the citizens attempt to fight as well, but it's obvious they're no match for the Romans.

Somehow, a Roman soldier manages to get past Xena. He's coming straight for Gabrielle and Darion, his sword raised high.

Gabrielle sees him coming. She looks to Xena who is busy fighting. She turns toward Darion.

GABRIELLE:

Stay behind me.

DARION:

But--

GABRIELLE:

Do it.

He grudgingly nods his consent.

Gabrielle meets the soldier head on. With amazing alacrity for a pregnant woman, she blocks and grabs the wrist of his sword arm with one hand, and pulls him to her, using his forward momentum. As she pulls, she steps into him, delivering a hard punch to his nose. She then brings said hand up to his shoulder and knees him in the groin. He drops to his knees, gasping in pain. Gabrielle wrests the sword from his hand and brings the hilt down on his temple, he crumples to the ground, unconscious.

Gabrielle goes back to Darion, who has been watching, his eyes wide.

DARION:

That was amazing.

GABRIELLE:

Just promise me you won't tell Xena.

DARION:

I won't. Promise.

John and Eleazar have finally arrived with reinforcements. Xena sees them, but a group of soldiers block her path.

Xena begins swinging wildly with her sword, felling every man that comes within reach of her. She is finally able to fight her way through to John, who is also in the thick of fighting. She grabs his shoulder.

Thinking someone's coming at him from behind, John swings on Xena. She catches his wrist. It takes John a moment to register that it is her.

XENA:

Tell your archers to fire, now!

JOHN (nods breathlessly):

Archers, fire.

Two lines of archers fire from Jerusalem's towers, decimating a large portion of Roman infantrymen.

Xena lets her chakram fly. It splits in half, each piece cutting or killing about a dozen men before returning to Xena.

In all the mayhem, John's men push forward, forcing the Romans outside the gates.

JOHN:

Lock the gates! Quickly.

John walks up to Xena.

JOHN:

You were right about everything.

XENA (sheathes sword):

Don't thank me yet. We're still in this mess. Post four archers on the wall and two in each tower.

JOHN (nods):

Right.

He goes off. We can hear him giving Xena's orders in the background. Gabrielle and Darion come to Xena.

XENA:

Let's get you somewhere safe.

DISSOLVE TO

Evening. Thousands of Roman infantry and cavalry surrounding the city. Pull back to reveal Xena and Gabrielle looking out of the window.



GABRIELLE:

I'll say one thing for the Romans: they really know how to go all out. We'll never be able to--

XENA:

Never say never. Look!

Xena points to a man, wearing a hooded brown robe, on horseback, waving a white flag. Four Roman soldiers follow behind him on horseback.

GABRIELLE:

I guess it's too much to hope that the Romans are surrendering--especially when we're the ones that are under siege.

XENA:

Let's get down there in case John does something stupid.

CUT TO

Western gate. Xena and Gabrielle walk up to John, who is standing next to Eleazar.

XENA:

What's happening?

JOHN:

The Romans have sent someone to negotiate the surrender of the city. They must be stupid if they think we're going down without a fight.

XENA:

Open the gates.

JOHN:

Xena--

XENA:

Trust me. Open the gates, but only the emissary gets in.

JOHN:

Open the gates!

The men closet to the gates open it slightly. The man on horseback enters. John's men lock the gate after he does so.

Xena, Gabrielle, John, and Eleazar keep their eyes on the brown robed man as he removes his hood, curiosity in all of their eye which quickly turns to shock when they realize who it is.



XENA (grimly):
Josephus...

FADE OUT

TO BE CONTINUED...

[The reputation of Ares' babysitting service was severely harmed during the production of this motion picture.]