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XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

"Perilous Musing"

TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. HILLY COUNTRYSIDE - SPRING MORNING.

The countryside is pleasant, peaceful, and full of springtime life. Early morning sunshine breaks through the trees to shine down on a campsite beside a crossroads. The road sign POINTS off in four directions. The destinations read ATHENS to the south, ROME to the west, CHIN to the east, and VILAVON to the north.

The fire has been put out, provisions stowed away, ARGO packed up, but we see XENA and GABRIELLE waiting for something. Gabrielle is sitting under the tree resting contently. Xena is pacing back and forth in a restless fashion.

XENA

Your friend is late.

Gabrielle opens one eye,
glancing at Xena. Closing it
she settles back into a restful
repose.

GABRIELLE

He'll be along. He told us he
would meet us here this morning.

XENA

He didn't give you a specific
time, did he?

GABRIELLE

Morning. That's all he said.

Xena snorts in impatience.
Gabrielle opens her eyes and
props up on her elbows looking
at Xena with slight irritation.

GABRIELLE

Xena. We have plenty of time.

We don't have to be at
Amphipolis for a week.

XENA

I just like to keep moving. I've never
been through this northern province
before. Unfamiliar territory makes me...
...well...nervous.

Gabrielle settles down again against the tree, refusing
to allow her friend's restiveness spoil her calm
morning.

GABRIELLE

Relax. From what I've heard,
Vilavon is one of the most
restful and peaceful provinces
in the land.

EXT. HILLY COUNTRYSIDE - SPRING MORNING. NEW ANGLE.

A young, handsome man leading a well packed horse comes
over the hill from the direction of Athens, just in
time to hear Gabrielle's last comment. He smiles
warmly at the sight of her. Call him HOMER.

HOMER

Well, we like to think so.

GABRIELLE

Orion!

Gabrielle jumps up and runs to her friend. She runs up
to him, hugging him fiercely. Homer is a little taken
aback by her strength. Xena smiles warmly at
Gabrielle's glee and also is relieved that they can get
moving now.

CLOSE ON GABRIELLE AND HOMER.

Both look at each other, taking in the differences
since they last met over two years ago.

Homer is noticeably more handsome and has filled out
more from a boy to a man since Gabrielle last saw him.
She is suddenly a little uncomfortable.

Xena approaches the two friends as they part from their
embrace. They still hold both of their hands together
while looking at each other over.

CONTINUED:

GABRIELLE
(blushing)
You're taller.

HOMER
(grins)
You're stronger.

Homer grimaces a little from the intensity of her hug.

GABRIELLE
Oh...sorry. Guess I don't know my own strength.

HOMER
I'm glad you got my message. When I heard you were traveling this way, I hoped to catch up with you.

Xena gets close enough to where the other two notice her presence.

GABRIELLE
Orion. This is Xena.

HOMER
(slight awe)
Please to finally meet you. Gabrielle's told me much about you. And please, call me Homer.

Homer give Gabrielle a humorous LOOK and a wry smile. She returns the smile, similar to a mischievous sister.

GABRIELLE
(to Xena)
Orion was my nickname for him at the Bard Academy. I was kinda on a roll with stories and just rolled right over his attempts at introduction.

HOMER
You where a nervous wreck.

GABRIELLE
(sarcastic)
And you were the model of composure.

CONTINUED:

Xena shakes her head and walks abruptly BETWEEN the two of them, leading Argo by the reins.

XENA
C'mon you two. You can discuss it on the road. (beat)
Nice to meet you Homer.

Off Gabrielle and Homer's reactions we...

CUT TO:

EXT. HILLY COUNTRYSIDE - DAY.

There are merchants and farmers travelling along the road as well. These other travelers seem happy, content, and clean.

Gabrielle, Homer, and Xena with Argo are walking up the pleasant roadway. Homer is openly friendly to their fellow travelers. Some even wave and converse with him.

XENA

Do you know everyone around here?

HOMER

Well, I grew up here. I travelled throughout the province before I left to audition for the Bard Academy.

GABRIELLE

(to Xena)

The entire province is made up of over ten communities, all working together...for a common wealth you might say.

HOMER

I worked on many of the estates when I was younger. Since I only come home during the Academy's summer break, I usually do extra work at Lady Lavinica's estate. Her castle is at the center of the province.

XENA

Lavinica? Her hospitality is almost legendary.

CONTINUED:

GABRIELLE

How did you hear about that? I didn't tell you...

Xena glances uncomfortably at Homer. She looks to Gabrielle as she states matter of factly:

XENA

I almost invaded this province five years ago.

GABRIELLE

Oh.

Gabrielle and Homer STOP.

HOMER

I didn't know that.

Homer and Gabrielle are staring after Xena. She stops and looks back at them.

XENA

Well...you weren't supposed to...and I didn't. But I still remember the reports my scouts gave me.

Slightly uncomfortable, and wanting to change the subject, Xena continues on.

XENA

How much further to your village? From what Gabrielle's told me, your father sets a superb table.

Gabrielle glances at Homer. They both continue on.

EXT. HILLY COUNTRYSIDE - DAY.

Homer is leading the way. Xena and Gabrielle walk side by side. Homer is smiling as he begins to see the familiar markers of home. There are only a few other travellers on the road now. Gabrielle and Xena are talking to themselves.

GABRIELLE

(to Xena)

This province has existed in peace for over two generations.

CONTINUED:

XENA

(nods)

Lord Lavinic had a very strong army that kept the peace. In the end, my decision was only based on that pickings were much more profitable to the south.

Gabrielle looks at her friend with concern.

GABRIELLE

But you would have attacked them other wise.

XENA

Yes. I would have. Do we have to talk about this? You know I've changed. It's old news.

GABRIELLE

I'm sorry. It just got a little personal...makes the possibility more real to me.

Gabrielle glances to Homer who is off the road a bit,

looking a large tree in fondness.

HOMER

My village is just around the next bend. If we hurry we can make the mid day meal.

Xena looks to the sky.

XENA

We've time yet.

GABRIELLE

Orion.

(pause)

Homer. Doesn't academy training involve an apprenticeship during the third year?

Homer looks as if he wanted to avoid talking about this.

HOMER

I didn't get a sponsor this year. My father isn't going to be too happy about that.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

HOMER

(continues)

There seems to be a lack of hero's willing to have young, inexperienced bards hanging about. Even Ulysses refused all petitions this year.

Xena and Gabrielle exchange an amused glance at the mention of their friend's name.

GABRIELLE

We might be able to...

XENA

...offer a reference to make him pay more attention to you.

The three of them are rounding the last bend. The road ascends up a hill in front of them. Xena TENSES up, looking ahead.

A sudden loud BOOM is heard and felt, as a huge pillar of black smoke is seen rising up into the air. Xena runs up the short hill, with Gabrielle and Homer behind.

EXT. HILLSIDE- DAY.

XENA:WP "Perilous Musing" 12/15/97 TEASER 7.

Xena, Gabrielle, and Homer crest the hill and look down in disbelief.

EXT. VALLEY FLOOR. VILAVON.

The village is under attack and in flames.

EXT. HILLSIDE- DAY.

Xena, Gabrielle, and Homer look on in shock as we...

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. VILLAGE OF VILAVON.

CLOSE ON STATUE OF APOLLO.

Scene opens on a stone statue decorated with finely crafted jewelry and silks. POINT OF VIEW pulls back to show entire statue as a SOLDIER comes up and quickly takes all the finery off it, putting them into a bag.

EXT. VILAVON. WIDE SHOT.

The village is quite beautiful and decorative in many different art forms. Statues, paintings, sculpture, metal works, etc.

There is a great deal of chaotic activity as a number of similarly dressed SOLDIERS ransack the village. They are not killing anyone. They only seem interested in stealing the art in the village. That which they cannot steal, they destroy. There is FIRE in the central building of the village.

The villagers are fighting back, but the SOLDIERS are deliberately NOT hurting them. One soldier seems to be in charge and is directing the loading of a WAGON on the far end of town. This is JAMON.

A villager is running towards him holding a staff as a weapon. He shouts a challenge. This is POLONIUS, Homer's father.

POLONIUS
Jamon!

Jamon turns and drawing his sword, he approaches Polonius with a wicked smile on his lips.

CLOSE ON JAMON AND POLONIUS.

Polonius stops a few paces from Jamon in a defensive posture.

POLONIUS
What madness is this? Why have you attacked us?

CONTINUED:

JAMON

My Lady has ordered it, that is all you need know.
Stand clear and let us do our work.

Polonius takes a few aggressive steps forward. Jamon
raises his sword.

POLONIUS

You have destroyed our town and stolen our tribute to
Apollo. This will not go unpunished. Surely Lavinica
is not blind to the consequences!

JAMON

(wickedly)
You'd be surprised.

Jamon attacks. Polonius deftly parries the blow and a
equal fight ensues.

Suddenly from the far side of the town we hear the XENA
YELL. Jamon looks over the other side of the town.

EXT. VILAVON GATE.

Ten soldiers are struggling/fighting with villagers to
rob them as Xena RIDES into town on Argo. She LEAPS
from the saddle into three of the soldiers. Argo
CRASHES into two others, knocking them down.

Xena rolls and gets up, drawing her sword. The
soldiers attack her. She front KICKS one back while
blocking a BLOW from another. She swings at the third
with a hard backhand and quickly has all three on the
ropes.

Another soldier grabs a woman as a hostage and begins
backing up. From behind, Gabrielle and Homer are
RIDING in on his horse. Gabrielle uses her staff to
VAULT off the horse and KICKS into the back of the
soldier, knocking the hostage free. Gabrielle ROLLS
and stands up with her staff. She moves to help in the
fight.

JAMON

That's Xena!

Jamon backs up and raises his voice to his men.

CONTINUED:

JAMON

Withdraw! Get out!

The wagon to move off with the stolen goods. Jamon turns and reaches into the wagon as Polonius advances on him.

POLONIUS
Stop!

Jamon turns from the wagon holding a bow. He draws an arrow and aims at Polonius. He draws back on the string as we hear:

HOMER
NO!

Homer throws a fighting staff that flies through the air, and hits Jamon's arm knocking the arrow harmlessly off course. Homer reaches his father's side and GLARES at Jamon. Jamon looks beyond them and sees Xena and Gabrielle have already taken out over six of his men.

Jamon and his men MOUNT their horses and quickly EXIT.

JAMON
WITHDRAW!

Jamon turns and rides out of town. The other remaining soldiers all RUN out with the villagers chasing them.

The villagers do not pursue them, though. They turn to attend to the damage of the town. Many of the buildings are still burning. The central building is the most damaged.

Xena moves to the fallen guards. Gabrielle moves over to Polonius and Homer.

GABRIELLE
Are you two all right?

Polonius looks at his son with admiration.

POLONIUS
Yes. Thank you.
(to Homer)
Did you learn that at the Academy?

CONTINUED:

HOMER
(nods)

Basic self defense in the first year. A bard's work in not just about writing, father.

Polonius embraces his son strongly. Homer is a little surprised by the show of emotion, as if he has not seen this side of his father.

HOMER

Father, you remember Gabrielle? From the Academy tryouts?

Polonius looks at Gabrielle in recognition.

POLONIUS

Yes, hello! I didn't recognize you. You've changed.

XENA

(from behind)

A little help over here!

The cry from behind them bring the struggle of the villagers with the fire to their full attention. Xena has tied up the soldiers and is helping the villagers. The three move to help Xena and the villagers fight the fires.

EXT. HILLSIDE ON THE WAY TOWARDS LAVINICA'S CASTLE.

The view shows the smoking and burning town below the road as Jamon's men ride hard up the hill with the wagon. Jamon stops and motions one of his men over. Call him DULAN.

JAMON

Xena! Of all the luck.

DULAN

This will put a snag in your plans.

JAMON

(nods)

Take the men back to the castle. Report to our "Queen".

(beat)

I'll take care of Xena.

CONTINUED:

Dulan looks a little uneasy about Jamon's intentions, but does not openly challenge him.

DULAN

Yes, sir.

Dulan turns and urges the men on. Jamon turns and rides back down the trail.

EXT. VILAVON.

The fires are out and the villagers are moving about assessing the damage. The central building is lost. Everyone is covered with soot and grime. Apollo's central statue is dirty and chipped.

Xena and Gabrielle are moving to the bound soldiers as Polonius and Homer approach them. Polonius moves towards Xena.

POLONIUS

I wanted to thank you for your help. My son tells me you're Xena? The same Xena of Corinth?

XENA

Yes. But that was several lifetimes ago.

POLONIUS

Well, your reputation proceeds you. And it's not a pleasant one. What's your business here?

Gabrielle steps forward.

GABRIELLE

She's with me. We met up with Homer to escort him home...and it's a good thing we did.

Xena ignores Polonius's hostile stance.

XENA

Who were those men? Why did they attack you?

CONTINUED:

HOMER

They're Lady Lavinica's personal guard. I recognized Jamon.

(to Polonius)

Why did he attack you?

POLONIUS

I have no idea. He and his men didn't hurt anyone...at least not critically. They only seemed interested in stealing all of our artwork...or destroying what they couldn't take.

XENA
What was the central building?

HOMER
Apollo's shrine. I can't believe this has happened.

POLONIUS
(nods)
...or that Lavinica is somehow involved. We're old friends. I just spoke to her last week. She was preparing to complete her mourning ritual for her husband's death.

GABRIELLE
How did he die?

From behind, one of the guards groans as he wakes. Xena notices and moves towards him while listening.

POLONIUS
Lord Lavinic was a old, wise, and well loved man. He died peacefully in his sleep last year. Lavinica is just as loved by her people even though she was younger than him but...
(shakes his head)
None of this makes sense.

XENA
Well, someone just might be able to tell us what is going on.

CONTINUED:

Xena motions Gabrielle to follow her. They approach the bound soldier with Polonius and Homer following behind.

XENA
Ok, Gabrielle. This one's all yours. You ask the questions.

Gabrielle gets a impish look in her eyes as Xena reaches down to grab the one soldier that is waking up.

The soldier OPENS his eyes and RECOGNIZES Xena as she leans in to put her PINCH on him.

SOLDIER
Wait! Wait! You don't have to do that! I'll tell you anything you want to know!

Seeing the fear and truth in his eyes, Xena shrugs and lets him fall back. She backs up and gestures for Gabrielle to move in.

With animated pretense, Gabrielle moves closer, trying to look tough by rubbing her hands together threateningly. The soldier offers information before Gabrielle even speaks.

SOLDIER

It's the Queen...er...Lady Lavinica. She's gone mad.

Polonius moves in.

POLONIUS

What do you mean? What's wrong with her?

Gabrielle pushes Polonius back.

GABRIELLE

Hey, I'm asking the questions here.

(beat)

What's wrong with her?

The Soldier looks back and forth at all of them. His voice is very apologetic to Polonius and Homer.

CONTINUED:

SOLDIER

Two nights ago, on the anniversary of Lord Lavinic's death, she started behaving...strangely.

Polonius leans in. Gabrielle holds her hand up to stop him and gives him a warning look. She grabs the soldier's collar and pulls him close.

GABRIELLE

How strange? Exactly?

SOLDIER

She collected all of the treasury trinkets into her chambers. Not the entire treasury, just the unique items. After a day of this, she ordered her court to hand over their unique items.

Gabrielle lets him fall back. Xena glances over at the statue of Apollo. She notices that it is cleaner than before.

GABRIELLE
Why the attack?

SOLDIER
We rode out with orders to collect everything we could find that was 'unique'. If we couldn't take it, we were to destroy it.

Homer leans in.

HOMER
Why? Is she jealous of our work?

Gabrielle gives him a LOOK. Homer shrugs at her and then she calms down.

GABRIELLE
(to soldier)
What he said.

Soldier looks at them all as if extremely sorry for his actions.

CONTINUED:

SOLDIER
I really don't understand it...
...I was just following orders.

GABRIELLE
Even if your orders are insane? You should show better judgement.

Gabrielle seems satisfied that they are done. Already making that call, Xena approaches.

XENA
Polonius, I think you should keep these men under guard until we sort this out.

POLONIUS
Agreed. This is unheard of. Lavinica must be afflicted with some ailment.

Polonius seems very sad. The villagers are now just taking in just how bad the damage is to their village and artworks. Some begin to cry, others just fall into despair.

Looking over to the statue, which is even cleaner now, Xena wonders out loud.

XENA

Your village pays tribute to Apollo?

POLONIUS

(nods)

We are artists and craftsmen. Our art and wares are made in homage and worship to Apollo.

I cannot believe that he has abandoned us like this.

Xena looks around and notices that the villagers seem to be under the same funk as Polonius. She looks to the statue again and it is now completely clean. She begins to hear a distant, clear ringing.

XENA

Polonius. Your people are falling into despair. That will not be easily healed unless you do something.

CONTINUED:

POLONIUS

What can I do?

Homer is beginning to fall into the same despair trap, looking at his childhood home in ruins.

XENA

You are the town leader, aren't you? You can't let despair take hold of their hearts. Once its there, it has a tendency to stay. Trust me.

Polonius gets up wearily and motions to others to come over and help him move the captured soldiers inside a building. Xena moves away with Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE

Xena, your right. We have to do something.

Xena is half listening to Gabrielle and seems to be straining to hear something else.

XENA

I can't inspire these people to take back what's their's.

GABRIELLE

But we can help them see what they have.

Looking at her friend's strange behavior, Gabrielle starts to pick up the debris from the attack, trying to straighten up the courtyard. Half heartedly, Homer works with her and gets the other villagers to join in. After a moment, Xena joins them, still looking out into the fields beyond the village.

CUT TO:

EXT. TREE LINE AT EDGE OF VILLAGE.

Jamon is HIDDEN in the brush. He spies Xena and she turns away from him, searching the landscape as if looking for something. Jamon draws his LARGE hunting bow and notches a NASTY arrow. He DRAWS it back with Xena in his sights.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

EXT. TREE LINE AT EDGE OF VILLAGE.

OPEN ON the same shot of Jamon with his bow DRAWN, aiming at Xena.

Suddenly, he sees Xena SMILE while looking in his direction. He hesitates and lowers the bow, thinking he has been seen. While he is looking at Xena, he HEARS a ringing that turns into a deep, low humming. He looks around for the source.

Right in front of him BURSTS a shower of lights and a beautiful young, blonde woman appears in sparkling white robes. This is CALLIOPE, Muse of Heroic Poetry. As the amazed Jamon watches, her clothing turns into regular peasant garb as she walks towards the village.

Looking beyond her, he sees EIGHT other young maidens approaching the village from different directions. The low hum slowly turns into a softly hummed melody. Jamon watches mesmerized as the nine MUSES enter the town.

EXT. VILAVON.

Xena turns to help in the clean up of the village with a knowing SMILE on her face. She BUMPS into Gabrielle, getting her attention. Xena is humming the melodic tune that is only now become clear to everyone else. She nods towards the new women mixing with the crowd and Gabrielle notices them.

The mood of the villagers slowly SHIFTS towards a more optimistic air as the whole town starts to hum along with the Muses as they work. Gabrielle senses that something is going on.

GABRIELLE

Xena. What's happening?

Xena is still humming and is beginning to sway to the music. From somewhere a light DRUM starts beating a low rhythmic beat. Only Gabrielle and Xena seem to notice that this is out of place.

CONTINUED:

XENA

The villagers think that Apollo has forsaken them...hardly. Gabrielle, I think we are about to see something very unique...

A lovely female voice is then heard over the clamor of the clean up. She starts a musical ROUND that another female voice starts in on, and another, then another as the complex song is built up. The villagers begin to join in the music, the song giving them strength and hope.

Gabrielle smiles as she SEES the individual women singing among the crowd. She leans close to Xena realizing that the villagers don't see the women.

GABRIELLE

The Muses! Apollo must have sent them...

XENA

...to inspire his followers, so they don't lose hope.
(smiles)
Enjoy it! We may never see this again.

Xena moves off, half walking, half dancing to the song.

The song raises in intensity as Xena adds her voice to the Round of the Muses. The entire village is partaking, mostly unconsciously, with the music as they work to clean and repair their village.

(NOTE: the music style/type envisioned/inspired for this scene is from the group VIDA's CD entitled IN BLOOM. Song #10: Awe Soma Gwaza/A Hey Dama. Joseph LoDuca should have the CD sent to Renaissance Pictures last spring.)

Despite the entrancing music, Homer notices Gabrielle looking in astonishment at something and approaches her.
He is smiling despite his work.

HOMER

Gabrielle. What are you looking at?

Gabrielle turns and draws him close.

CONTINUED:

GABRIELLE

You don't see them? No I guess you're not supposed to.
(whispers)
The Muses are here.

Homer looks around, not seeing them.

HOMER

Where? Which ones?

Gabrielle looks at the Muses as they gather in the center of town, still singing. Xena is cautiously approaching them while still singing.

GABRIELLE

(awed)
All of them, I think.

Gabrielle takes hold of Homer's head and points him towards where the Muses are gathering.

GABRIELLE

Close your eyes. Listen to the music around you.

Homer closes his eyes and then hears the music consciously for the first time.

GABRIELLE

Breathe calmly and allow yourself to feel the music.

Homer nods and smiles as the music flows through him. As his eyes open, it is obvious that he sees them and has become entranced by their song.

HOMER

(distantly)
They're glorious.

Gabrielle nods, watching in a mixture of admiration and deep affection as Xena's voice mixes with the Muses.

One of the Muses notices Xena. She is dark haired and very sultry in her demeanor. She looks at Xena and they lock eyes for a moment. This is ERATO, Muse of Amorous Poetry. She nods and smiles in recognition of Xena.

Erato looks to the others and then around them to the villagers.

CONTINUED:

Any trace of depression and despair has been removed. Erato looks to the others and nods. Slowly they begin

to withdraw from the village, their song diminishing as they go.

Xena follows suit and lowers her voice. She stands in the center of town with her eyes closed, allowing the experience to sink in as the DRUM beat diminishes and stops. Xena breathes in quiet reverence as she recognizes that she was allowed to partake in the honored gift the town has received. There are tears in her eyes.

Gabrielle slowly approaches Xena in awe, leaving the entranced Homer to himself. She does not notice him wander off, out of the village.

GABRIELLE
(whispers)
Xena?

XENA
(quietly)
Did you see them, Gabrielle? Did you see?

GABRIELLE
Yes. Now I understand their power. (beat) How was it we could see them?

Xena opens her eyes and looks at her friend.

XENA
Well, we've done quite a lot of work around the Gods. I guess after a while you get used to seeing them.

GABRIELLE
They were so...enthralling.

XENA
Most mortals can't deal with "Divine Inspiration" all the time. Remember the Sirens?

Gabrielle nods while Xena moves off towards Polonius. Gabrielle starts to follow and then gets a concerned look on her face. She looks back where Homer was and sees he is gone. She EXITS and goes to look for him.

EXT. FIELD OUTSIDE THE VILLAGE - DAY.

Homer is following the Muse Calliope at a distance. She is heading for the other eight, who are gathering at the tree line. As he approaches, FIVE of them disappear in showers of light as they leave to other "inspiring" assignments. The remaining four are talking to themselves and Homer moves closer.

EXT. VILAVON. ENTRY GATE - DAY.

Xena is getting Argo ready for travel as a smiling Polonius approaches her.

POLONIUS

Xena. You were right. Thank you for your words.

XENA

Your people seem to have recovered their hope, but your main problem still exists.

POLONIUS

Lavinica. Yes.

XENA

I'll drop in on her and see if I can find out why she's doing this.

POLONIUS

It could be dangerous. Let me come with you. I...

Xena turns and looks at him with a slight, but friendly, smirk. Polonius nods, smiling to himself as he remembers who he is talking to.

XENA

Watch after your people.

(beat)

I'm expecting danger and I may have to leave in a hurry.

(looks to the north)

As I recall, the castle is only a few leagues up the road. With luck, I'll be back before dark.

Xena mounts Argo and MOVES out of the village gates. Polonius follows after her.

CONTINUED:

POLONIUS

Be careful. If she is mad, there is not telling what she will do.

XENA

I've dealt with my share of mad women. Tell Gabrielle not to worry. Be back soon.

Polonius waves as Xena rides off up the road.

EXT. TREE LINE AT EDGE OF VILLAGE.

Calliope, Erato, POLYHYMNIA, and THALIA are talking together. Homer is hidden not far from them in the grass, watching them. Gabrielle is sneaking up behind him.

(NOTE: Polyhymnia- Muse of Eloquence and Imitation.
Thalia - Muse of Comic and Lyric Poetry.)

The Muses are dressed in their traditional white, greek style tunics and sandals. Each of them have a scroll that is secured to their waist.

They are oblivious to Homer and Gabrielle since they are talking between themselves in a heated, sisterly manner.

THALIA

Come on, Cali. You can't take the others too seriously.

POLYHYMNIA

True. Our fellow siblings may have a tendency to tease, but they do not mean any harm by it.

ERATO

Easy for you two to say. Cali is the youngest and she talks funny. She's the perfect one to pick on.

Calliope speaks with an incredibly formal medieval accent.

CALLIOPE

Mine own speech should not be an object of ridicule. 'Tis part of my role. You all have your own unique qualities as well.

CONTINUED:

Erato looks up and down her own form.

ERATO

(smiling)

You better believe it.

(beat)

Look, I'm running late already. Cali, be good and try to stay out of trouble.

(bowing eloquently)

Pol. Thalia.

The other two bow as Erato disappears. They turn to Calliope. Smiling, they bow as well, disappearing. Alone, Calliope sighs and walks into the woods.

EXT. GRASSY FIELD

Homer moves to follow Calliope and is STOPPED by Gabrielle grabbing his shoulder.

GABRIELLE

Homer. Stop. You have to leave them alone.

Homer is in a daze and still slightly entranced.

HOMER

I must follow her...I must... possess her...

Gabrielle is concerned for her friend and quickly makes a decision as she SLAPS him across the FACE.

GABRIELLE

Snap out of it!

Homer wakes up from his trance.

HOMER

What. Where. Huh?, Gabrielle?

Gabrielle is very relieved seeing his eyes become unglazed. Homer seems to forget about the Muses.

GABRIELLE

Come on back to the village. I'll explain.

They move off back to the village.

EXT. LAVINICA'S CASTLE.

Xena rides up to the moderately guarded gates. There is a good deal of commerce and trade going on. She can see nothing suspicious. As she enters she leaves Argo with a stable hand and approaches the main building. We see Dulan at the gate.

Dulan sees Xena becomes worried. Jamon has not yet returned, so Dulan doesn't know how to react to the Warrior Princess's presence. Xena stops in front of him.

DULAN

Can I help you?

XENA

I need to see the Lady of the house.

DULAN

Uhm...do you have an appointment?

XENA
What? No.

Not knowing what to do, Dulan delegates.

DULAN
Then you'll have to talk to Jlarbuck, my Lady's
Minister.

Dulan opens the door and Xena follows him in.

INT. LAVINICA'S CASTLE.

The entryway is elaborately decorated as if for some
celebration. Strangely, Dulan does not disarm her. He
moves instead to a rope pull and yanks twice on it.

DULAN
Please wait here. Jlarbuck will join you momentarily.

Dulan closes the door and Xena finds herself in a
comfortable waiting area with many fine, but simple,
decorations. After a moment, footsteps approach.

Xena turns to regard a young, slight man who is no
older than Gabrielle. His name is JLARBUCK and he
seems quite flustered. He holds a rolled parchment in
his hand.

CONTINUED:

JLARBUCK
Hello, hello. We weren't expecting guests this early.
Your name?

XENA
My name is Xena.

Jlarbuck begins to look hurriedly through the
parchment, searching for her name.

JLARBUCK
I don't see your name on the guest list. Are you
arriving with someone else?

XENA
I'm not here as a guest. I want to talk to Lavinica
and find out why she is suddenly sacking her neighbors
out of house and home.

Jlarbuck looks at her with alarmed nervousness. He
quickly comes to her side and talks in whispered tones.

He is very scattered and nervously looks around.

JLARBUCK

I don't know why. She was fine until two days ago. She suddenly came out of her chambers ranting nonsense and started collecting...

(beat)

Xena? The Xena?

(gasps)

Please don't kill her! She's harmless, really! Just a little crazed...

Xena rolls here eyes and grabs him by the collar.

XENA

I'm not here to hurt anyone...if I can help it. I just want some answers. Take me to see her.

They start moving up the hallway.

INT. LAVINICA'S CASTLE. HALLWAY.

Xena lets Jlarbuck lead the way. She keeps a wary eye on the shadows.

JLARBUCK

This may not be wise. Captain Jamon will not like it.

XENA

Jamon? Tall, dark, and greedy? Likes to sack helpless villagers?

JLARBUCK

That's him.

(beat)

But I never said that.

XENA

Well, he seems to enjoy his work.

JLARBUCK

A little too much for my taste. He was very eager to follow my lady's insane orders than to find out what was wrong with her.

They reach a stairway and ascend.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE LAVINICA'S CHAMBER.

At the top of the stairs, the two of them turn to the right down a hallway until they reach a large set of guarded double doors. Within a loud voice can be heard, carrying a senseless tune. The minister stops short for a moment and confides in Xena.

JLARBUCK

Please, if you can do anything to help her...

Xena nods. Jlarbuck turns to the guards.

JLARBUCK

A guest for our Queen.

The two guards open the doors and Xena walks in leaving Jlarbuck behind.

INT. LAVINICA'S CHAMBER.

The chamber is filled to the brim with objects, both valuable and commonplace. Gold and gems are mixed in with clay pots and rough, wool garments are mixed with silk. Statues, stuffed animals, a whole assortment of unique items are carefully placed throughout the room. Somewhere in the large assortment, a female voice can be heard singing a non-sensible tune.

Xena enters, and is taken aback at the enormity and absurdity of the collection. She moves to the central table, where some interesting weapons are stacked.

INT. LAVINICA'S CHAMBER. BACK CORNER.

A shadowy male form is seen looking at Xena. The figure moves back further into the shadows.

INT. LAVINICA'S CHAMBER. CENTER.

From the opposite side of the room behind Xena, enters LAVINICA. She is a little older than Xena and is dressed in a wide variety of clothing styles and colors. All elaborate but when all put together, they are incredibly gaudy. Her hair is matted and wild in a way as if it was deliberately set this way.

She approaches Xena with a gleeful glint in her eyes.

LAVINICA

Hello. Hello. Welcome. Please sit...no stand. I must get a look at you.

Lavinica moves AROUND Xena, looking her up and down as if appraising her value.

LAVINICA

Hmmm...hmmm. Yes. Fine armor and sword. Yes, leather. Very nice...got all these already though. Do you have anything new and unique for me?

XENA

I'm not here to offer you tribute.

CONTINUED:

Lavinica sees Xena's CHAKRAM on her hip and takes immediate notice. She moves close to look at it. Xena becomes uncomfortable as Lavinica peers at her waist with intense interest.

LAVINICA

Really? Too bad, cause I want that.

She points at the Chakram.

XENA

It's not for sale, either.

Lavinica straightens up and strolls nonchalant around the table so she is standing in front of an iron box marked with Chinese markings. She toys with the lid.

XENA

I came to see why you are raiding your neighbors and destroying their artworks.

LAVINICA

Wouldn't know anything about the details. I instructed my lovely Jamon to bring me everything pretty and unique he can find.

XENA

And he keeps the leftovers for himself I'll bet.

Lavinica shrugs.

LAVINICA

I leave the details to him.

Lavinica opens the box and lifts out a oval, egg shaped

object the size of her hand. She tosses it up in the air once or twice, testing its weight.

LAVINICA

And I'll ask you only once to leave that round thingee here and leave in peace.

XENA

Sorry.

Lavinica smiles and then yells.

CONTINUED:

LAVINICA

Guards!

The door opens and the two guards rush in, weapons drawn. Xena turns to look at them and then BACKFLIPS behind them. Caught by surprise, the two are quickly taken down with a swift kick or two. Xena EXITS.

Lavinica screams in childlike outrage and moves to a candle to light the FUSE on the oval object. She runs out to the hallway. She sees Xena is going down the stairway, moving back to the courtyard.

INT. LAVINICA'S CASTLE. STAIRWAY.

Xena is halfway down the stairway when more guards gather at the bottom. Lavinica reaches the top and WAVES the object in the air.

LAVINICA

Oh my dear, I wish you would have cooperated.

Lavinica TOSSES the object at Xena. The guards scramble and Xena instinctively JUMPS from the stairway, grabbing a banner hanging from the entrance hall. The object lands where she was and EXPLODES in a flash of gunpowder.

Xena FLIPS down from the banners and rushes out the doors. The guards gather their wits and give chase.

EXT. LAVINICA'S CASTLE. COURTYARD.

Xena WHISTLES and Argo comes running. Xena mounts her as she runs by and rides out of the castle at full gallop.

EXT. WOODS NEAR VILAVON - AFTERNOON/TWILIGHT.

Calliope is walking in a sulking manner through the woods. She comes upon a calm pond. Looking about at the beauty around her, she smiles. She takes off her sandals, places her scroll on them, and enters the water to enjoy a leisurely swim.

While she swims out, a shadow falls over the scroll and sandals.

CONTINUED:

CLOSE ON CALLIOPE

as she looks to shore. She gasps.

CLOSE ON JAMON

holding her scroll. He has the same enthralled, crazed look that Homer wore earlier, but Jamon has a evil, POSSESSIVE grin on his face.

EXT. GRASSY FIELD - AFTERNOON/TWILIGHT.

Gabrielle and Homer are sitting and talking near where the Muses were.

GABRIELLE

I'm sorry I made it so you could see them. Mortals aren't supposed to gaze upon such creatures. Most go mad.

HOMER

No. Thank you, Gabrielle. It literally inspires me more. But I think I will keep it to myself.

Gabrielle nods, smiling at the inner wisdom and strength in her friend. She looks up at the sky and notices that its getting on towards evening.

GABRIELLE

We should get back.

HOMER

I hadn't noticed how long we've been talking.

They both get up and turn to walk back to the village when an UNEARTHLY cry of sorrow and pain screams from the woods. The both turn and run towards the woods.

EXT. WOODS NEAR VILAVON - AFTERNOON/TWILIGHT.

Gabrielle and Homer run into the clearing where Calliope was swimming and find her sandals.

CONTINUED:

Looking around, they see Jamon on the other side of the pond. He is on his horse and has Calliope bound and gagged. Seeing them both, he rides off back towards Lavinica's castle.

OFF GABRIELLE and HOMER's reaction.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

EXT. VILAVON - LATE AFTERNOON.

Xena rides back into the village and sees Polonius. Dismounting Argo, she moves towards him. Polonius is talking earnestly with his neighbor DESMONDO as he sees Xena. They both walk her way with in a determined way.

XENA

You got problems. Lavinica is loopy as they go and I think her man Jamon is taking advantage of the situation for his own gain.

POLONIUS

And its worse. This is my neighbor, Desmondo. He's reminded me that tonight is the annual spring festival...to be hosted at Lavinica's home.

XENA

With all this going on, won't people just not go?

DESMONDO

With all what? I had no idea that Lavinica had attacked anyone. I don't think the rest of the province knows about her madness.

POLONIUS

I still have my invitation, I just forgot about it with everything that's happened.

XENA

She could be planning to use the festival to her advantage. She became violent with me and tried to take my Chakram.

Desmondo and Polonius look at her quizzically. She holds the chakram up. They both look at it in interest and Desmondo holds out his hand to touch it. Xena jerks it back and returns it to her hip.

CONTINUED:

XENA

No time for that. We need to warn everyone not to attend the festival.

Behind them, two sculptors get on ladders to repair another statue in the square.

DESMONDO

We could await on the road and tell the guests as they arrive.

POLONIUS

Won't work. With all the villages spread out in all directions?...and we would undoubtedly be detained or harassed by Jamon's men.

XENA

After she attacked me, I think I made her angry. She will probably rob them all blind.

Behind them, one of the stone cutters holds a delicate tool for a precise cut. He STRIKES his own thumb, drops his tools, and cries out. The other stone cutter moves to help the fallen one. They both look perplexed.

Xena hears a high ringing in her ear. Unpleasant, it is opposite of the Muse sound she heard earlier. Xena notices that other people start stumbling about as if they are disoriented. She feels a bit strange too, slightly queasy. Polonius and Desmondo feel it too.

XENA

What's happening? I feel dizzy.

DESMONDO

I've forgotten how to mix paint!

XENA

What?

DESMONDO

I'm an artisan. A painter...and I was looking at the damage to this wall...when I tried to think about how to mix the paint properly...and I can't.

CONTINUED:

Xena looks at him as if he's crazy, but then realizes that she has forgotten how to sing. She tries and the sound that comes from her mouth is closer to a strangled cat. She closes her mouth with horror. Her voice squeaks a bit as she speaks.

XENA

I've forgotten how to sing...

EXT. VILAVON. GATE.

Gabrielle and Homer are running into the village.

GABRIELLE
Xena!

Xena turns and moves towards them. They both are catching their breath and look very worried.

XENA
What is it?

Xena awaits expectantly for Gabrielle's account of what's happened. Gabrielle opens her mouth and gibberish comes out.

GABRIELLE
Wurrrblleee.

Gabrielle is shocked and disoriented by the sound of her voice. She looks to Homer. He turns to the others and speaks in gibberish as well when he tries to TELL a story.

HOMER
Pingwallado.

GABRIELLE
What's happening? Xena? I can...talk to you...but when I koo koo badda bing.

She slaps her mouth shut, looking very surprised. She looks at the equally appalled Homer.

HOMER
Gabrielle? How are we going to beel labba boing did?

CONTINUED:

Homer stops talking. Both he and Gabrielle look to Xena. Other villagers are looking equally lost all around them.

XENA
Something has happened to erase or damage our creativity. I can't sing, he can't paint, and you can't tell stories.

While Xena is pacing and thinking Gabrielle grabs paper and a quill. She scribbles something on it and hands it to Xena. Xena looks at it and sighs.

XENA
That won't work either. Nice drawing of Joxer though.

(beat)

You can't tell me what happened that way either. But we need to know.

Gabrielle and Homer are looking at each other. They stand up, with a similar thought. Gabrielle looks to Xena and talks slowly, concentrating on not telling anything, but just talking.

GABRIELLE

Watch Homer and I closely.

Gabrielle and Homer start a mock fist fight. Homer intentionally loses and Gabrielle keeps hitting him. Seeing that no one gets the idea they both stop and say:

GABRIELLE and HOMER
What are we doing?

They resume.

POLONIUS
Fighting?

DESMONDO
Bickering?

XENA
Abusing each other?

Gabrielle points to Xena and motions for her to say it again.

CONTINUED:

To the side, Erato APPEARS. She stops and looks on during the exchange with a smile on her face.

XENA
Abusing?

Gabrielle motions for the word to be smaller.

XENA
Abuse?

Homer chimes in, pointing to his ear. Polonius picks up on this.

POLONIUS
Sounds like abuse.

Gabrielle motions for a even smaller word.

XENA
Muse!

Erato SNAPS her fingers and steps forward.

ERATO
That would be the secret word.

The amorous Muse struts forward and everyone can see her. She stands in front of Xena.

ERATO
We have a problem. Looks like my little sister went and got herself captured. Throws all of us out of wack.

Xena moves closer.

XENA
Can you tell us what happened? I can't keep doing this with them. It's driving me crazy.

Erato nods with a smirk.

ERATO
Calliope has been bound to a mortal. He must have captured her scroll.

CONTINUED:

Erato shows them her scroll. She notices Homer has Calliope's sandals.

ERATO
Problem is, all her creative force is now directed at him. Mortals can't handle that for very long before the go mad.

Xena turns to Gabrielle who is looking at her helplessly, quite frustrated that she can't talk.

XENA
Was it one of Lavinica's men?

Gabrielle and Homer nod vigorously.

XENA
Jamon?

Gabrielle and Homer nod vigorously again.

Xena turns to Polonius and Desmondo.

XENA

We have to get into that celebration tonight. You still have your invitations?

POLONIUS

But how will we get in? The guards will recognize us for sure.

Xena looks at Gabrielle and Homer. She smiles as they absurdly try to communicate with each other.

XENA

(grins)

I have an idea about that.

EXT. LAVINICA'S CASTLE - NIGHT.

The castle courtyard is well lit and many guests are arriving. There is a genuine air of pleasantry and the guards are only halfway paying attention to their duties. They have all participated in this festival before.

INT. LAVINICA'S CASTLE. TOWER.

The room is dusty and looks to not to have been in use for some time.

Calliope is bound to a chair and gagged. Jamon is securing her tightly. He has her scroll in his belt. There is no one else about.

Jamon's eyes are very wild and obsessed. He rants as he binds Calliope. She looks to him with genuine fear.

JAMON

There you go. Nice and comfy. This is your new home. Like it?

Calliope's eyes tell him what she thinks of him.

JAMON

No matter. You know, I was going to present you to my "Queen", as another unique possession to satisfy her madness.

He moves closer. In his eyes we can see that he is going bye bye.

JAMON

But I've decided to keep you for myself. I like the way you make me...feel.

He moves to the window and looks down to the courtyard. An entertainment company is at the gates. Looks to be quite a party. Jamon becomes slightly disoriented and holds his head as if remembering his duty.

JAMON

I must see to the preparations. You see we have a lot of...collecting to do tonight.

He moves to the door.

JAMON

Be good and I'll bring you back some treats from the table.

Calliope looks helplessly after him as he EXITS. She tries to free herself to no avail.

EXT. LAVINICA CASTLE. COURTYARD ENTRANCE.

At the gate are a group of wild and gaudily dressed entertainers. As we look closer, we see Gabrielle and Homer dresses as FOOLS and are taking advantage of their weird state to amuse onlookers with an outrageous pantomimes and silly gibberish. Polonius is off to the side juggling, disguised with a fake mustache and beard. Erato is dressed as a scantily clad dancing girl and is working the crowd. Much of the guards attention focus on her.

Xena is dressed in an elaborate fashion and has a large, colorful headdress on. She is presenting the invitation to the guards. She is talking with a overdone Russian accent.

XENA

I am the Lady Babushka and these are the players from the famous Babush Circus. We have travelled all the way from...Babush...to be here at your Lady's invitation.

Xena hands the invitation to the guard who is busy watching Erato dance. He quickly lets them pass.

INT. LAVINICA'S CASTLE.

The five of them enter into the festivities. There is pleasant music being performed by an ensemble of musicians across the room. Guests are milling about and enjoying themselves. Jlarbuck is seen with his guest list and he is a bit flustered as he tries to keep track of everyone.

The five of them move to the side of the room and get out of sight. Xena draws them in close.

XENA

All right. You know the plan. Polonius and I will try to reach Lavinica.

(to Gabrielle and Homer)

You two search the castle and find out where Jamon has Calliope.

(to Erato)

You're certain that she is being held within these walls?

CONTINUED:

ERATO

Yes. Cali is here. Her close proximity is the reason everyone here can still creatively express themselves. I wish I could help more directly, but I am already bending the rules by being here.

XENA

Do what you can.

ERATO

(grinning)

My pleasure.

Erato moves off into the crowd, swaying and attracting attention to herself. She moves towards the musicians playing in the corner.

Xena motions for Homer and Gabrielle to move out and then she and Polonius make for the stairs.

INT. LAVINICA'S CASTLE. STAIRWAY.

Xena and Polonius ascend the stairway. Xena glances down to see Erato engaging in a seductive style, belly dance to the music. The musicians soon fall in with her performance and the crowd is focusing on her. Homer and Gabrielle are searching across the room, unnoticed.

Xena motions for Polonius to follow and they proceed the stairs and down the hallway towards Lavinica's chambers.

INT. LAVINICA'S CASTLE. PARTY.

Erato's dance keeps the crowd transfixed as Gabrielle and Homer move along the walls looking into side rooms for Calliope. Homer seems to know the layout of the place, so he leads the way. He keeps getting distracted by Erato's dance. Gabrielle has to slap him up side the head once or twice to get his attention focused.

As they close the last door on this floor and look at each other in hopeless exasperation, they both see Jamon enter the room on the far side. He IGNORES Erato's dance and quickly heads up the stairs. On his belt they see the Muse's Scroll. They move to follow.

INT. LAVINICA'S CASTLE. OUTSIDE LAVINICA'S CHAMBER.

Xena and Polonius come up to the two guard's at the chamber door. Dulan is one of them.

DULAN
Halt.

Xena recognizes him and covers up with her accent.

XENA
Please inform your Queen that the Lady Babushka has arrived and wishes an audience.

This ploy does not work as Dulan recognizes her. He starts to draw his sword, but Xena and Polonius quickly knock both guards out.

(NOTE: Could this be played out in similar style to the infamous Hope & Crosby "Paddycake" shtick?)

INT. LAVINICA'S CASTLE. STAIRWAY TOP.

At the top of the stairway, Gabrielle and Jamon turn to the left, opposite way from Lavinica's chambers. An open doorway leads up a tower turret. They enter.

INT. LAVINICA'S CASTLE. LAVINICA'S CHAMBER.

Xena and Polonius enter the room quietly. Xena takes off the headdress and takes her chakram out of it. She loses the bulky top layer of her costume that was hiding her sword.

Across the room the two of them can hear voices. Upon sneaking up to the voices, they hear the conversation.

LAVINICA

(dreamy, off camera)

I can have all the pretty things
I want?

We hear a squeaking irritating male voice that Xena recognizes.

CONTINUED:

STRIFE

(off camera)

Everything you deserve and more.

Xena draws her sword and turns the corner.

INT. LAVINICA'S CASTLE. LAVINICA'S CHAMBER. NEW
ANGLE.

We see the discordian spirit STRIFE standing over the demented Lavinica.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. LAVINICA'S CASTLE. LAVINICA'S CHAMBER. NEW ANGLE.

Same shot of STRIFE standing over the demented Lavinica.

XENA
Hello Strife.

He reacts nonchalantly.

STRIFE
Xena.
(then panics)
XENA!

Strife stays behind Lavinica in a protective manner and starts ranting with a little fear in his voice. He giggles in that annoying way of his.

STRIFE
Hey now. You can't interfere with this. This is a legal, bonafide, sanctioned taunting. With Discord's seal of approval to boot.

A scroll appears in his hand. He tosses it to Xena. Strife continues as Xena looks over the scroll.

STRIFE
Seems dear Lavinica here forgot to pay tribute to Discord in her little Ritual of Mourning. Minor offense, standard week long dementia causing a little shame. Kinda lame as punishments go.

Xena hands the scroll to Polonius and approaches in a threatening manner.

XENA
Last time we met, you got away from Hercules...after killing his wife.

CONTINUED:

STRIFE

(angry)

The Gods ruled on that already and I got to spend a year in Tartarus. Hey, as I told them. I was only following Ares's orders. But I took the fall...literally. Last time I work for that blowhard.

XENA

(sarcasm)

He's great at making friends.

(to Polonius)

What ritual is he talking about?

Polonius is looking at his demented friend as she plays, stacking gold pieces in a unstable pile.

POLONIUS

It is customary to give thanks to the Gods in a ritual one year after the mourning of a loved one. You acknowledge all the Gods, good and bad, to recognize the need for all of them.

STRIFE

Lavinica forgot about Discord. Bad idea. So here I am.

Lavinica's pile falls down and she sits back dejected. Looking up she is mesmerized by the candlelight.

XENA

How does that give her the right to sanction the binding of a Muse?

STRIFE

What?

POLONIUS

One of the Muses has been bound by a mortal. Jamon, to be precise.

Strife looks very worried and concerned. He starts ranting.

CONTINUED:

STRIFE

Oh. That's bad. Definitely bad.

OFF Xena and Polonius.

INT. LAVINICA'S CASTLE. STAIRWAY TO TOWER.

Gabrielle and Homer start up the stairway and are immediately confronted by a CRAZED looking Jamon.

Drawing his sword he runs down at them and they retreat back down stairs.

INT. LAVINICA'S CASTLE. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY.

Gabrielle and Homer grab the poles being used as torch holders and use these to defend themselves as they back further down the hallway towards Lavinica's chamber. Jamon stops and looks downstairs. Seeing some of his men at the base of the stairs, he calls to them.

JAMON
Guards! Intruders!

INT. LAVINICA'S CASTLE. PARTY.

Only a few of the guards hear him as the festivities are louder than he. Erato is still dancing and captivating the crowd. Jlarbuck is enjoying the dance but notices the guards moving up the stairs. He moves to follow.

INT. LAVINICA'S CASTLE. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY.

Jamon is attacking Homer and Gabrielle when the four guards approach. Jamon is pushed back by a blow from Gabrielle.

JAMON
(to guards)
Take them!

The guards attack with their swords. Jamon works around the fight to get to Lavinica's Chamber.

INT. LAVINICA'S CASTLE. LAVINICA'S CHAMBER

Strife is pacing back and forth. Xena is losing all patience.

XENA
Strife. This has gotten out of hand. Release Lavinica from her dementia. People are going to get killed.

Polonius holds up the Strife's scroll.

POLONIUS

I don't think that this follows within the bounds of your charter, either.

Strife looks at them in a worried, schoolboy way.

STRIFE

You're right. Yes.

Waving his hand, the scroll POOFS out existence, releasing Lavinica. As her eyes light up with sanity, she looks around in a very confused manner. Polonius goes to her side.

STRIFE

(to Xena)

Which muse?

XENA

Calliope.

STRIFE

(softly)

Cali?

Strife suddenly LOOKS around as if searching the castle for the Muse. He suddenly disappears in his godlike POOF of smoke. Xena turns to Polonius.

Xena

Is she all right?

Lavinica looks up to Polonius. She is a still a bit dreamy.

LAVINICA

What happened? What day is it? Polonius, my dear friend...

CONTINUED:

Polonius looks to Xena and nods his head in affirmation. Xena relaxes.

INT. LAVINICA'S CASTLE. LAVINICA'S CHAMBER. NEW ANGLE.

Just then Jamon KICKS the doors OPEN to the chamber. He enters with his sword drawn.

JAMON
Xena!

Xena SPINS to confront Jamon, drawing her sword. His eyes are wild and he is sweating heavily like he has a fever. Xena tries to talk him down from his obsessive state.

XENA
Calm down now. Lavinica is all right. It's over.

JAMON
No. You want to take her away from me. You can't have her. She's mine!

Jamon screams and leaps at Xena. Xena parries his blow and a tremendous fight ensues. Jamon's crazed strength pushes Xena back and she starts to lose ground.

INT. LAVINICA'S CASTLE. OUTSIDE LAVINICA'S CHAMBER

Gabrielle and Homer are winning against the guards as Jlarbuck runs into the scene.

JLARBUCK
(to guards)
Stop! Stop your fighting! Don't you fools recognize young master Homer?

Homer and Gabrielle are still dressed as Fools and look silly standing there in fighting stance. They look at each other, back to the guards, and then to Jlarbuck.

JLARBUCK
Nevermind. I recognize you. What's happening?

CONTINUED:

Gabrielle opens her mouth to speak but stops herself, realizing that she will speak gibberish. She motions for the guards and Jlarbuck to follow her and Homer to Lavinica's chamber. As they approach, Xena flies out and HITS against the wall. She gets up and LAUNCHES herself back into the room.

INT. LAVINICA'S CASTLE. LAVINICA'S CHAMBER.

Gabrielle, Homer, Jlarbuck, and the guards enter through the doorway. The room is in shambles with Polonius and Lavinica cowering in a corner as Xena and

Jamon continue their fight. The crazed Jamon is beginning to wear Xena down.

INT. LAVINICA'S CASTLE. LAVINICA'S CHAMBER. NEW ANGLE.

STRIFE AND CALLIOPE

appear. Strife is supporting Calliope. She is very weak.

STRIFE

Get the scroll from him!

Jamon sees Strife with his prize and goes ballistic. He backhands Xena strongly and moves to the table with the box of GRENADES from CHIN. He picks one up and LIGHTS the fuse. He tosses it at Strife and Calliope.

Xena THROWS her chakram and it deflects the grenade towards the side of the room.

It EXPLODES in a large flash of light, knocking everyone off their feet.

Homer is up on his feet first and charges Jamon, who is lighting ANOTHER grenade.

XENA

Homer! No!

Homer quickly ducks under a blow from Jamon and grabs the scroll from his belt. Xena moves to grab Jamon from behind as Homer quickly backs away.

In the struggle, Jamon tosses the grenade at Homer's feet and it EXPLODES in a huge and blinding FLASH! and he is knocked against the wall HARD!

CONTINUED:

Gabrielle and Polonius rush to Homer's side.

GABRIELLE

Homer!

Freed from the madness, Jamon looks around in a daze for a moment then FAINTS dead away from exhaustion.

Lavinica is being helped up by Jlarbuck. She is recovered from her dementia and is fixing her hair and sheading some of the outlandish garments.

Xena moves to Homer's side as Strife and Calliope

approach. Homer looks up at the face of the Muse that so entranced him earlier. With monumental effort, he holds up the Scroll in his hands and GIVES it to her. She seems empowered by its return. Homer's eyes close.

Quietly, without words Calliope bends beside him and lays a hand on the stricken bard's forehead. A small glow surrounds his body for a moment as his eyes open.

Polonius and Gabrielle show relief.

CALLIOPE

(to Homer)

You have my most profound thanks, brave young sir. Rest now for a little, and let your family tend your wounds.

Calliope withdraws and stands beside Strife. She looks to him with genuine affection and takes his hand. Xena approaches them.

With the battle over, the sounds of the party from below reaches everyone's ears.

Strife is looking around at the ruined chamber with a smile on his face.

XENA

Will this be enough 'penance' for Discord?

STRIFE

With a bonus or two. Yep. I'm outta here. Cali?

Calliope looks to her friend and then to Homer, surrounded by his family.

CONTINUED:

CALLIOPE

Nay, my dear friend. I must abide and tend to the young master a while.

(smiling)

I shall find you upon my return to Olympus.

Strife smiles. Bowing in an annoyingly mocking way to Xena, he POOFS out, giggling all the way.

Xena looks to Calliope as Gabrielle approaches them both. She speaks to them both directly.

CALLIOPE

(sadly)

His wounds are healed, but in time the damage to his eyes will blind him.

(to Gabrielle)

Thou art his friend and fellow bard. Please do not tell him of this...but be comforted that in his hour of need, I will return to his side to work with him on his greatest stories.

(beat)

I own him as much for his sacrifice.

GABRIELLE

Thank you.

Calliope cranes her head and listens to the music from the party. She smiles.

CALLIOPE

Yonder music leads me to believe that we all are missing, how would you say?...a real party.

Calliope moves to help Homer to his feet. He hands her her sandals. She takes him by the arm and leads him out the door with Polonius and Lavinica following, also arm in arm.

GABRIELLE

(to Xena)

She talks funny.

CONTINUED:

XENA

Shh. Be nice.

Xena GRANDLY offers her arm to Gabrielle. Smiling the two exit to join the party, leaving Jlarbuck and the guards pick up the unconscious Jamon.

FADE OUT.

THE END