

THE SHIPPER SEASONS

XENA WARRIOR PRINCESS VIRTUAL SEASON NINE



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Logline

When a hospice run by the young Elijan Siran is threatened by a new Roman civil war, Xena and Gabrielle agree to help--only to find themselves facing some hard decisions involving their old enemy Sabina. Meanwhile, Gabrielle and Haimon's relationship reaches a turning point.

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TEASER

FADE IN

On a burning house in a village. As the thick clouds of black smoke clear, we see panicked villagers running for their lives. A group of warriors on horseback gallop through the village.

A woman runs, looking around in fright, carrying a piglet. A soldier on foot catches up with her and grabs her shoulder. He's in a Roman uniform.

SOLDIER #1:

Hand that over!

WOMAN:

No, please! It's the only thing I've got left!

SOLDIER #1 (grabs the piglet from her hands):

Move it! Soldiers got to eat!

He shoves her away and she runs off, crying.

The camera pans over the village, which is in a state of pandemonium. People are running for their lives, trying to carry away whatever they have.

The camera comes to rest on a house as one of the soldiers kicks down the door. An elderly man and woman and three children are huddled inside.

SOLDIER #2:

Get out!

The children start crying.

OLD MAN (in a trembling voice):

Why are you doing this? To your fellow Romans!

SOLDIER #2:

You peasants had your chance--to support Civilis against that usurper Vespasian. You made your choice. Now you face the consequences! Get moving!

The old couple and the children walk out of the house, the children crying and clinging to their grandparents.

CUT TO

Early morning in an open serene field. Darion's laugh breaks the silence and Haimon runs into frame. Darion is close on Haimon's heels, chasing him in a game of tag. The chase continues for a few moments until Darion is able to close the gap between them and tackles Haimon to the ground.

DARION:

Ha! Caught you!

Haimon rolls onto his back and sits up on his elbows.

HAIMON:

You sure did. (he is breathing heavily and shakes his head) I'm getting too old for this and you're getting too big. (he rumples Darion's hair playfully) You've really shot up since the last time I saw you.

DARION:

I'm almost as tall as Gabrielle now.

HAIMON (smirks):

Well, that's not so hard to do. Before long you'll be as tall as Xena.

Gabrielle waves to them from across the field.

HAIMON:

I think breakfast is ready.

CUT TO

The camp. Gabrielle lifts the frying pan off of the fire.

GABRIELLE:

Darion, go wash your hands before you eat.

Darion frowns, ready to argue and Haimon holds up a hand.

HAIMON:

Hey, we talked about this, remember? Now go.

DARION:

I'm just going to get dirty again when we play after breakfast.

GABRIELLE:

Sorry, sweetheart but you've got studying to do. The rest of Aesop's Fables, remember?

DARION:

It's so boring.

GABRIELLE:

Darion, we agreed that if you were going to go out on the road with us that you would finish your studies.

DARION:

Xena says the road is a school in itself.

GABRIELLE:

And that's why Xena isn't in charge of your education. Now go wash up.

DARION (muttering under his breath):

I should have gone fishing with Xena. She wouldn't make me wash my hands.

GABRIELLE:

Well, Xena won't be back until tonight. So until then we do things my way.

Darion pouts and walks off slowly and reluctantly. Gabrielle sighs and shakes her head.



GABRIELLE:

I don't know what's gotten into him lately. He's been so...headstrong. Doesn't listen to a word I say.

HAIMON (smiles gently):

He's growing up. He's feeling out his own independence. I'll have a talk with him.

Gabrielle touches his arm affectionately.

GABRIELLE:

Thank you. (she sighs) I worry about him so much. Life on the road is hard enough for a child. But sometimes I wonder if I'm enough...

HAIMON:

He's got Xena too.

GABRIELLE (nods):

True. But a boy needs something more...

HAIMON:

Well, you know I spend as much time as I can with him.

GABRIELLE:

I know. And you're wonderful with him. But...

Haimon reaches out and kisses her hand.

HAIMON:

I think you're doing fine with him. We both are. (he reaches for the frying pan.) I'm starved. Let's eat.

GABRIELLE:

You go ahead. I'm not very hungry.

HAIMON:

Are you feeling all right?

GABRIELLE :

I'm just a little under the weather this morning. I'll be fine.

Haimon spoons the fish onto two plates. Gabrielle watches him pensively.

GABRIELLE:

You know, Haimon, there's something I've been wanting to talk to you about--

Darion's voice can be heard from a distance.

DARION:

Gabrielle, Haimon! Come quick!

Gabrielle and Haimon jump up, exchanging a worried, look and run off.

CUT TO

Darion stands on the side of the road, Gabrielle and Haimon on either side of him, watching as dozens of people trudge down the road. They appear tired and beaten.

DARION:

Where are they going?

A graying, frail looking man with a thick beard carries a heavy bundle in his arms. He hears this and pauses a moment, dropping his bundle and catching his breath.

REFUGEE:

We're headed to the hospice at Jeronim. Word is that they're offering refuge to anyone that needs it. Our village was caught between the forces of Vespasian and Civilis--who looted our village then entrenched himself there. We had no choice but to move on.

HAIMON:

So Rome is in the middle of another civil war...

GABRIELLE:

And something tells me these people won't be the last refugees we see. There are probably more just like them that have heard about the hospice at Jeronim.

HAIMON (uneasily):

That's where Sabina is, isn't it?

GABRIELLE:

Siran too. And with this civil war and all those refugees--she's going to need help.

HAIMON (nods):

You and Darion get the camp packed up. I'll get Xena.

Gabrielle stares at him, troubled, as we:

FADE OUT

ACT ONE

FADE IN

A large grey stone building. Writing appears across the screen:

JERONIM

A large crowd of people are gathered outside the building. Some are milling about aimlessly, others are on a long line for food. There is a sense of unrest in the crowd. A young, slight man of twenty or so ladles a gruel-like substance from a pot into the bowl of a large, older man, then makes to move on to the next in line. The older man looks at the small portion in his bowl, then grabs the younger man's wrist.

MAN:

I think you've forgotten something, Alban.

ALBAN:

We have to make it last. More people are coming in every day and there's not enough to go around.

The old man grabs the ladle and dips it into the pot.

MAN:

Well I say first come, first served!

The tip of a sword appears at his throat.

SABINA:

And the first to die.

The man's eyes widen as he shakily hands the ladle back to Alban and takes a half step back, holding up his free hand.

MAN:

Sorry! No harm done!

Sabina glares hard, as if deciding how to handle this. Finally, she lowers her weapon.

SABINA:

Get out of here.

He turns to leave.

SABINA:

Leave the food.

He hesitates a moment, then cautiously hands the bowl back to Alban and backs away quickly, never taking his eyes off Sabina.

ALBAN:

Siran wouldn't approve of what you just did.

SABINA (grimly):

I know.

Alban stares nervously over her shoulder, his eyes widening. Sabina turns.

Pan to Xena, who is coming toward her.

XENA:

Hello, Sabina.

Close-up on Sabina, a flash of joy in her face.

SABINA:

Xena! I knew you'd turn up sooner or later. You never could resist a good war, could you?

XENA:

We thought you could use some help. (nods toward the swords in her hand) Trouble?

SABINA (frowns as she slips the sword back into the scabbard):

Every day more refugees are showing up--and Siran won't turn anyone away. Problem is, we don't have the food to feed all these people. (She sighs and gestures at the food line) So I have to make sure the children behave themselves. (she smiles dryly) Actually, this job is more suited to your little friend than to me. She was always the more maternal type.

Xena frowns and moves away from the line. Sabina follows.



XENA:

You've got a bad situation here. You don't need me to tell you that. These people are scared and they feel helpless. Won't take much to push them over the edge. (she shakes her head) Reminds me of Corinth.

SABINA (clucks her tongue):

Ah, the *good* old days. (after a brief pause) Well, plenty of time for us to chat about that later. Business before pleasure. (She looks around) Speaking of your little friend, where *is* she? Don't tell me she ran off with that goody-two-shoes and finally made an honest man of him?

Xena presses her lips together tightly. Her tone is even and her expression inscrutable.

XENA:

We were able to scrounge up a few sacks of flour and grain on our way in. Gabrielle and Haimon are making sure they get to the kitchens.

SABINA:

Young love. How precious.

Siran comes out of the building with Gabrielle, Haimon and Darion.

SIRAN:

Xena! I'm so happy you're here! (She hugs Xena and Xena returns the embrace a bit awkwardly) Eli knows we need every pair of hands we can find. Gabrielle and Darion have already volunteered to help in the kitchens.

DARION (muttering):

I didn't volunteer.

Haimon gives him a light swat on his back and Darion looks away.

XENA:

Unless we find some more food soon, I'm afraid your kitchen will be closed.

Two men appear at the gates of the hospice. One is dressed as a Roman soldier. He is obviously badly wounded in the chest and is being supported by an older man in peasant garb who half drags him.

PEASANT:

Siran! I found him just down the road, barely conscious.

Siran kneels to inspect his wounds and Sabina inspects his uniform.

SABINA:

He's one of Civilis's men.

SIRAN:

He's lost a lot of blood. His wound should be treated and cauterized immediately. Someone help me get him inside.

No one moves for a moment. Then a middle-aged woman in fine, though worn Roman clothing steps forward.

ROMAN WOMAN:

No! You can't treat his kind here! Sabina said it herself. He's one of Civilis's men!

A crowd has started to form around the soldier and there is a loud buzz of agreement from the crowd and it begins to swell forward.

YOUNG MAN:

Civilis is the one that drove us from our homes in the first place. I say let him rot!

Siran leaps to her feet.

SIRAN:

No! I've told you before that politics and armies mean nothing here. You were all welcome here--no matter what your allegiance--or your faith. Why shouldn't he be entitled to the same kindness?

ROMAN WOMAN:

And how much *kindness* do you think Civilis and his army would show you?

Siran looks desperately to Gabrielle.

SIRAN:

Gabrielle--I know you understand.

GABRIELLE (frowns):

Siran is right. If we give in to vengeance we become just like them. Is that worth the price of losing our souls?

YOUNG MAN:

We'll worry about our ruined souls later. Right now I'm more concerned with my farm that Civilis and his army burned to the ground two mornings ago.

The crowd shouts angrily in agreement.

ANGRY VOICE #1:

Hang him!

ANGRY VOICE #2:

Burn him at the stake. Give him a dose of Nero's medicine!

ANGRY VOICE #3:

Leave him for the vultures!

They lurch forward again, obviously prepared to go through Siran. Sabina steps up, drawing her sword and putting herself between Siran and the crowd. Xena, Gabrielle and Haimon stand beside Sabina.

SIRAN:

Violence will only bring more violence! Eli told us--

GABRIELLE:

Sometimes actions speak louder than words. (to Xena) Let's take them.

XENA (softly to Gabrielle):
Gabrielle, get back with Darion.

Gabrielle thinks a moment then nods, stepping back and moving Darion protectively behind her.



SABINA:
Take one more step and you won't live to take another.

The crowd stops, looking from Sabina to Xena, Haimon and back at Sabina. They seem to move back a step en masse. Xena, Gabrielle and Haimon watch them carefully. Sabina still has her sword trained on the crowd. Siran steps up beside her, closing her fingers around Sabina's wrist.

SIRAN:
Please put that away.

Sabina doesn't move.

SIRAN:
Sabina--*please!*

Sabina sighs and slips the sword back in the scabbard.

SIRAN:
Haimon, would you help me bring him inside?

HAIMON:
Yeah, sure.

He and Siran pick the soldier up and carry him into the hospice. Sabina watches them in inscrutable silence a moment then turns and storms off, pushing her way through the crowd.

Xena stares after her. Gabrielle seems lost in thought, then shakes her head as if shaking herself out of a stupor.

GABRIELLE (almost guilty):
I--I should go help Haimon and Siran.

XENA (still staring after Sabina):
You do that.

She walks off in the direction where Sabina went.

CUT TO

A stable. Sabina is brushing down her horse, obviously wound up and trying to calm herself down.

Xena comes in and stops, eyeing her pensively.

SABINA (brusquely, without turning around):
What do you want?

XENA:
I don't think I've ever seen you lose your cool before. Not like this.

SABINA:
I've never been stuck babysitting a bunch of destitute, hungry peasants before. It's not a fun job.

XENA:
It's not always easy to do the right thing.

SABINA (chuckles):
Why don't you leave the platitudes to Gabrielle. Besides, I've just about had it with--

She shakes her head and trails off, going back to brushing the horse.

XENA (after contemplating her another moment):
Let's go for a ride.

Sabina stops brushing and looks back at her, surprised.

SABINA:
What are you talking about?

XENA:
I'm going out to do some scouting. If that villager found one of Civilis' men just down the road from here, that means Civilis' army is nearby. We need to find out what's going on.

SABINA (mockingly):
Good thinking.

CUT TO

Xena and Sabina riding through the woods. Xena gives Sabina a thoughtful, wondering look which Sabina intercepts.

SABINA:
What?

XENA:
Just--wondering.

SABINA (with an edgy chuckle):
Oh, still trying to figure me out?

After a moment's silence Xena speaks up again.

XENA:
You know, once, when Gabrielle and I were in Rome, we saw a lioness in a cage--pacing back and forth...

SABINA (sarcastic):
Speaking in metaphors? You really *are* taking tips from--

Xena suddenly holds out a hand, silencing her.

SABINA (whispers):
You hear something?

Xena nods and directs Argo off the path, into the trees on the roadside. Sabina follows.

Male voices are heard in the distance.

The camera pans to Xena and Sabina, listening, then back to the path. A group of six or seven riders are coming toward them.

SABINA (whispers, pointing to their insignia):
Civilis' men.

RIDER #1:
Come on, hurry up. We want to get to Jeronim, then report back to Civilis before sundown.

RIDER #2:
Looks pretty good. Vespasian's troops are nowhere near, not a single militia around--nothing but peasants.

RIDER #1:
Easy pickings.

The rest of the riders laugh.

Suddenly, Sabina charges forward before a shocked Xena has a chance to stop her.

SABINA:
Or maybe not so easy.

She draws her sword, facing the men in the middle of the path.

RIDER #3 (laughs):
Looky here, boys. She's going to stop the army of Civilis all by herself.

Pan to Xena, her mouth tight in an obvious expression of displeasure. With visible reluctance, Xena rides out onto the path to stand next to Sabina.

XENA:
Look. We don't want any trouble.

SABINA:
As long as you stay out of Jeronim.

RIDER #2:
Says who? (guffaws suggestively) You and your *girlfriend*?

RIDER #3:
Ready to take on some real men?

SABINA (scornfully):
Just tell me where to find them.

RIDER #3 (outraged):
Why, you--

He charges at Sabina, his sword at the ready. She ducks his blow, grabs him and throws him off his horse, then dismounts herself.

XENA:

Sabina!

Two of the riders charge her. Xena lifts herself up in the saddle, then launches herself up with a battle cry--"A-yi-yi-yi-yi!"--and somersaults in the air, knocking two of the Romans off their horses. They scramble to their feet and charge at Xena, who briefly spars with them and then knocks them down.

Three other Romans charge toward her on horseback. Xena draws her chakram and throws it. It slices through the air and bounces off the Romans' helmets, knocking them off their horses, then flies back to Xena who catches it.

Pan to Sabina, who kicks the sword out of the Roman's hand, making it fly up, and then catches it in her other hand. Two other Romans run up behind her. With a ferocious snarl, she whips around and, with a simultaneous thrust, drives both swords into their chests. As they collapse, she turns to see the stunned Roman she disarmed. She raises the swords as he stares in terror. Then she lowers the swords, spins around and kicks him in the midsection with a harsh yell, knocking him down.

Pan to Xena knocking down another Roman.

Pan to another Roman soldier, still on horseback.

RIDER #4:

Retreat!

The Romans scramble away, some mounting their horses in a hurry, others running off on foot. In a moment the field is clear, except for several dead or unconscious Romans lying on the ground.

Xena looks after them as she pushes her sword back into the scabbard on her back with a brusque gesture. Sabina turns around to look at her. There is a slightly bleeding scratch on her face and a cut on her shoulder. She has a slight grin and a glint in her eye, which quickly fades as Xena stares at her heavily.

XENA:

What was *that* all about?

SABINA:

Come on, Xena. They were asking for it.

XENA:

Really. And what were you asking for?

Sabina shrugs.

SABINA:

What's your problem?

XENA:

They'll be back with an army and they'll be ready for a fight. And that's going to be Siran's problem as well, isn't it?

There is a flicker of emotion in Sabina's face as she slips her sword back in the scabbard.

SABINA:

We'll be ready for them. (She whistles for her horse, then mounts it in one swift motion and looks down at Xena with a forced smile) They needed a lesson. I needed the exercise. Mission accomplished.

She rides off at a trot. Xena shakes her head, then goes to mount Argo.

CUT TO

An angry, noisy crowd gathered before the hospice. Siran is facing them, obviously distraught. Alban stands next to her.

The camera pulls in on Siran and Alban while the crowd remains off-camera.

SIRAN (pleading):

Look, I know you're hungry. But I told you we cannot give out any more food tonight--otherwise we'll have nothing left for tomorrow or the day after!

The crowd erupts in shouts.

VOICE #1 (female):

We need food--*now*!

VOICE #2 (male):

If you don't have enough food, get more!

SIRAN (raises her voice to shout above the noise):

We're doing all we can--

VOICE #3 (female):

Well, it's not enough!

The crowd erupts in shouts.

VOICE #4 (male):

Now, wait a minute--you know how much she's done to help us--

VOICE #2:

And now we're all going to starve here with her help!

Siran looks pained and near tears as she listens. Alban puts a protective arm around her shoulder.

ALBAN:

Listen--

VOICE #5 (male):

No, you listen!

The camera pans to the speaker. It's the middle-aged man who had the confrontation with Alban earlier.

MAN (steps forward):

We've had it with the way you run the place. It's time for someone else to take charge!

The camera pulls back to show the angry crowd, many of the people armed with sticks.

GABRIELLE (off-camera):

And who would that be?

Pan to Gabrielle and Haimon, who come up to Siran and Alban.

MAN:

Someone who knows what they're doing!

The crowd erupts in murmurs; several people look like they're mustering the courage to charge forward.



GABRIELLE (assumes a threatening stance, fists at the ready):
Stand back!

Haimon puts his hand on the hilt of his sword.

SIRAN (pleadingly):
Gabrielle, Haimon--no!

GABRIELLE (turns to her):
Siran, I know how you feel--believe me I do. But there's a time to back down and there's a time to push back.

HAIMON:
I don't know how long we can hold them back without things getting ugly.

GABRIELLE:
I think they're about to get ugly right now.

Haimon follows her stare and sees Xena and Sabina ride up. Seeing Siran being crowded by the refugees, Sabina jumps off her horse.

SABINA:
What's going on?

She pushes her way through the crowd, which instinctively parts to let her through. Many in the crowd look visibly nervous.

SABINA:
Siran! (She reaches out to make sure Siran isn't hurt.)

SIRAN:
Sabina! I'm fine, there's no need to--

GABRIELLE (interrupts):
There's a riot about to break out.

Xena pushes her way through the crowd and stands next to Siran and Sabina.

XENA (calmly but menacingly):
All right--what seems to be the problem?

ROMAN WOMAN (the one seen in the earlier scene):
Seems to be! You try living on the rations we've been getting. We're tired of going hungry while she (nods toward Siran) feeds the same men that drove us from our homes in the first place!

MIDDLE-AGED MAN:

We want food and we want some say in how this place is run!

SABINA:

Got anything else on that wish list?



XENA (raises her voice):

Listen. We know you've lost everything. We know you're tired and hungry and we'll do whatever we can to get you food. If you tear the place down trying to get to the food supplies, it will only--

YOUNG WOMAN:

Enough with the talk! Let's take the kitchen!

The crowd charges forward.

SABINA:

That's right. Enough with the talk.

As Haimon starts to draw his sword, a man tries to hit him in the head with a stick.

GABRIELLE:

Haimon!

Haimon ducks the blow and it lands on his shoulder; he repels his attacker with a punch to the face. Two other men tackle him, trying to wrestle him down to the ground. While he rallies and throws them off, Gabrielle spins around and kicks down two men who run up to attack her.

As the crowd charges forward, Xena, Sabina, Gabrielle and Haimon start fighting them, spinning around, kicking and punching. Gabrielle is pushed up against the wall.

XENA (worried):

Gabrielle--

GABRIELLE (fighting her way out):

I'm fine!

SIRAN:

No! Stop!

One of the women swings a stick, its sharp end nicking Siran's cheek. Siran gasps and clutches at her face.

Xena wrests the stick from the woman and shoves her away, then grabs the stick with both hands and uses it to put one of the rioters in a chokehold.

SIRAN (pleading):
Xena--

XENA (through clenched teeth):
This really isn't the time to turn the other cheek.

At the same time, Sabina throws the middle-aged man from the first scene to the ground, then draws her sword and points it at his chest.

SIRAN:
What are you doing!

SABINA (to the crowd):
Stop, or he dies--and he won't be the last!

A frightened hush falls over the crowd as we:

FADE OUT

ACT TWO

FADE IN

The same scene. Sabina stands over the man pointing her sword at his chest.

SIRAN:
Sabina, stop!

SABINA (ignoring her, to the crowd):
Everyone back!

The crowd slowly begins to retreat.

Finally Sabina moves her sword and steps back. The man gets to his feet, looking at her fearfully.

SABINA:
You're leaving--*now*.

MAN:
Wh-what do you mean?

SABINA:
I mean, you've outworn your welcome! You've been nothing but trouble since you got here.

SIRAN:
Sabina! He has nowhere else to go.

SABINA:
That's his problem.

SIRAN (firmly):
He's not going anywhere except back to his quarters. (to the man) Go on.

The man nods nervously and walks off. The courtyard is now empty except for Xena, Gabrielle, Haimon, Sabina, Siran, and Alban. Sabina slips her sword back in the scabbard and approaches Siran.

SABINA (frowns):
You're hurt. (She reaches out to touch the cut on Siran's face)

SIRAN (a little brusquely):

I'll be fine, it's just a scratch.

There is a tense silence. Finally, Siran speaks again.

SIRAN (bitterly):

These people came here to be sheltered and fed and cared for--not beaten, kicked and threatened with swords!

XENA:

Siran, this was a mob--ready to tear this place down. If they had--how were you going to take care of *anyone*?

SIRAN:

They weren't bad people. They were desperate.

XENA:

And sometimes, desperate people do desperate things.

SIRAN (looks from Xena to Sabina and the others):

So you believe that words of love and compassion are powerless in the face of--desperation and anger.

Gabrielle approaches her and takes her hands.

GABRIELLE (gently):

Siran...of course Xena and I don't believe that. But you have to understand that there are times when-- (she pauses for a moment, then continues, pained) there is simply no other choice than to fight back.

SIRAN:

And how do you know when it's that time? How do you know there's really no other choice?

Gabrielle looks at her uneasily.

XENA (snaps):

Maybe when you're facing a mob that's about to burn down your hospice and loot your food supplies.

SIRAN (continues):

Have you really tried--

XENA (cuts in):

We have something else to worry about right now. Civilis' army is headed this way.

SIRAN (gasps):

How do you know this?

XENA:

We had a--run-in with an advance party of his troops. (She gives Sabina a meaningful look)

GABRIELLE:

Then we have to organize a defense.

HAIMON:

Against an army?

SABINA (brusquely):

What do *you* suggest? Sitting here waiting to be slaughtered like sheep?



GABRIELLE:

We can fortify the walls, dig trenches--at least we'll have a chance to hold them off until Vespasian's army gets here.

SIRAN:

And that's supposed to be any better? I don't want anyone fighting here. We could talk to them--persuade them to leave us alone.

GABRIELLE (uncertainly):

You're right...we should at least *try* to talk to them.

SABINA:

I don't think they'll be in a mood to talk.

XENA (harshly):

Well, not after your little workout back there.

Sabina gives her a sharp look and Siran turns to her, surprised.

SIRAN:

What?

XENA:

Never mind. (She turns to the others) All right. Siran is right--we *should* try to resolve this without violence. But we also need to be prepared to defend ourselves if we have to. And we need more food, or the Romans aren't the only ones we'll have to worry about.

HAIMON:

I'll get to work on the fortifications and the trenches. (to Gabrielle) Come on, let's get Darion. He's old enough to pitch in with the digging.

GABRIELLE (looks at Xena, then back at Haimon):

All right. (looks back to Xena) Uh--you don't need me back here, do you?

XENA:

No, it's all right. (looks at Sabina) Sabina and I are going to take charge of the food.

SABINA (shoots her a surprised look):

We are?

CUT TO

A close-up of Xena's face, impassive but obviously anguished.

MAN'S VOICE (off-camera):

No offense, ladies, but you must be out of your mind! Donate food, now?

The camera pulls back to show Xena and Sabina standing next to their horses in a village square, facing a group of villagers.

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN:

There's a war going on--we've got our own families to worry about!

XENA:

So do the refugees at the hospice. They lost everything in this war. You were lucky.

OLD MAN:

And we want to keep it that way. There's nothing for you here.

Sabina looks at Xena, her upper lip curling slightly in a sneer.

CUT TO

Xena and Sabina riding away from the village.

SABINA (sarcastic):

I can see that our mission is going to be a smashing success.

CUT TO

Long shot of Xena and Sabina riding downhill toward another village at the bottom of the hill.

CUT TO

A village market. Xena and Sabina, their horses behind them, stand at a stall while two middle-aged female vendors fill a medium-sized sack with vegetables. One of the vendors hands the sack to Xena, who is already holding another similar sack.

VENDOR:

There you go.

XENA (grim):

That's all?

VENDOR:

That's what ten dinars'll get ya. I trade fair, ask anyone in the village.

XENA (brusquely):

Thanks.

She turns abruptly, walks over to Argo and starts tying the sacks to her saddle. Sabina follows her and stands next to her horse, which also has two small bags tied to its saddle.

SABINA:

So much for charity. Well, at least it's cheaper than buying food in town.

XENA (turns to her with a grim look):

It's still barely enough to keep the people at the hospice fed for another day.

SABINA (impassive):

Then I guess we'll just have to take it one day at a time.

CUT TO

Xena and Sabina riding onto the hospice grounds, where refugees have already begun to assemble in the courtyard. Their hopeful looks turn to visible disappointment as they eye the bags at Xena and Sabina's saddles. More refugees come up and an angry murmur rolls through the crowd as Xena and Sabina exchange nervous glances.

Siran pushes her way through the crowd. As Sabina dismounts, Siran runs up to hug her. Sabina pats her rather stiffly on the back.

SIRAN (trying to sound cheerful):
You've brought back food!

The murmurs in the crowd grow louder.

CUT TO

Close-up on a man's face. His features are fine and aristocratic but with a striking look of arrogance and cruelty.

MAN:
The hospice at Jeronim.

The camera pulls back and we see the speaker. He is dressed in a Roman military outfit with golden armor. He is reclining on a couch inside a richly decorated tent, a helmet with white plumes lying by his side.

The camera pulls further back to show a Roman officer standing in front of him.

OFFICER (somewhat nervously):
What about it, my lord Civilis?

CIVILIS:
It's the perfect shield, Quintinus. If we camp out in town, Vespasian can't attack us without mowing down a bunch of refugees. His hands will be tied. (contemptuously) I know Vespasian. He's not as tough as he thinks.

QUINTINUS:
What about those two women who attacked our troops? Sir, from the description the men gave, it sounded like--

CIVILIS (interrupts scornfully):
Xena, the Warrior Princess, and wannabe Roman empress Valeria Sabina. Yes, I heard Sabina was in Jeronim. So? I'm supposed to be afraid of them?

QUINTINUS:
We don't want to take on them *and* Vespasian, sir--

CIVILIS:
I've made my decision. We stay here for another day so the men can get some rest. Then we move on Jeronim.

CUT TO

A montage of the night sky turning to sunrise.

DISSOLVE TO

A long shot of the hospice in the morning.

PAN TO

Refugees lined up with bowls in their hands. Siran and Alban are pouring thin gruel out of a large pot. The refugees look grimly at the small portion of gruel in their bowls. They now look more resigned than angry or restless as they shuffle off to consume their meager breakfast.

Pan to Xena as she approaches briskly.

XENA (comes up to Siran):
Hey. How's it going?

SIRAN (turns):
Oh--Xena. (She smiles but her smile is somewhat forced.) Good morning. We're almost done here. I wanted to talk to you.

She beckons Xena aside, then gives Alban a questioning look.

ALBAN:
I'll handle the rest of it, don't worry.

As Xena and Siran step aside, Siran's smile fades and she looks anxiously at Xena.

XENA:
Is everything all right?

SIRAN (sighs):
I don't know what to do. Even with what you and Sabina brought yesterday, we're only going to last one more day. And then what's going to happen? These people are my responsibility. (She looks away, almost tearful) As followers of Eli, we're taught to believe that faith and love will provide. But--



XENA (bitterly):
Faith and love have never fed or clothed anyone yet.

She looks away and the camera follows her gaze, panning to the last of the refugees receiving food. Xena turns back to Siran.

XENA (continues):
Siran, we almost had another food riot last night. What's going to happen when these people haven't eaten for a day? For two days? You can't just sit here and pray and expect a miracle--

A rising murmur draws her attention. She stops and turns, as does Siran.

The refugees are all looking in the same direction, toward the entrance to the courtyard. They are talking in low, animated voices, the expression on their faces one of relief and incredulous joy.

Xena and Siran look in the same direction.

WOMAN'S VOICE (in the crowd of refugees):

It's a miracle!

Pan over to Sabina, riding into the courtyard. She sits on the trestle of a horse-drawn wagon laden with sacks of food, vegetables spilling out of some of them.

Sabina rides into the courtyard. Her expression turns almost triumphant as the joyful exclamations from the refugees grow louder and the crowd breaks into applause.

Xena and Siran come slowly toward her and stop. The camera pulls around to face them. Medium close-up on Xena and Siran. Siran looks overjoyed while Xena looks skeptical.

Pan to Sabina as she smirks, looking down at the two women.

SABINA:

Come and get it.

The camera zooms out for an overhead shot of the courtyard as we:

FADE OUT

ACT THREE

FADE IN

A room inside the hospice with some benches and tables. Sabina is sitting on a bench mending a boot. Xena comes in. Sabina looks up.

SABINA:

Want something?

XENA (comes closer and stands over Sabina):

Lucky thing, you showing up when you did with that wagon load of food.

SABINA (steadily, meeting her gaze):

Very lucky.

XENA:

Another day, and this hospice would have torn itself apart if Siran had to ration any more. That is, if she had anything left to ration.

SABINA:

I know.

XENA:

I was all set to send Haimon to ride out to some of the other villages around here and see if he had better luck.

SABINA (scornfully):

Haimon? Find food? It's a wonder how he manages to find his own pants in the morning. (chuckles) Of course, we could ask your little friend--

XENA (interrupts):

Then you come in with all those supplies, and--problem solved.

SABINA (looks up at her mockingly):

Xena, if this is your way of thanking me I think you need some lessons in manners.

XENA:

I want to know where you got the food.

SABINA:

I bet you do. (She shakes her head with a short laugh.) Well, maybe I don't want to tell you. A girl needs to keep some sense of mystery, you know.



XENA (impatiently):

Come on, Sabina. Where did you get it?

SABINA:

Don't tell me you don't believe that charity is still alive and well in the hearts of people...once they're properly motivated.

XENA (suspiciously):

Properly motivated. And what exactly would that motivation be?

SABINA (shrugs):

Who knows. Maybe it's one of those miracles of Eli Siran is always talking about.

Xena glares at her. Sabina finishes mending her boot, looks it over critically, then puts it on and gets up, facing Xena.

SABINA:

Xena, your lack of faith is--disappointing!

Xena continues to glare at her; this staring contest is broken when Gabrielle enters.

GABRIELLE:

Xena, there you are! We've almost got the earthworks fortified and--.

SABINA:

Enter the sidekick.

Gabrielle looks from Sabina to Xena, realizing she has stepped into the middle of something. Neither Xena nor Sabina say anything, so Gabrielle continues.

GABRIELLE:

...we've got the earthworks just about finished. Haimon thinks we should clear some of the treeline for observation.

XENA (nods):

Good idea.

SABINA:

And hardly a job I would entrust to the second string (glances at Gabrielle), let alone to the *third* string. I should keep an eye on him.

XENA:

Sabina--

Sabina ignores Xena and walks out. Xena shakes her head.

GABRIELLE:

What was that all about?

XENA (sighs):

Sabina brought in a wagon load of supplies earlier.

GABRIELLE:

Yes, I know. How did she get it?

XENA:

That's what I'd like to know.

GABRIELLE:

You don't think she did anything--bad, do you?

XENA (sarcastic):

No, of course Sabina would *never* do anything bad.

GABRIELLE:

Xena, I've seen--we've both seen Sabina do things we never would have thought she was capable of.

XENA:

And you think we can trust her to do the right thing? You know the only reason she's done any good at all is because of her--devotion to Siran.



GABRIELLE:

Does it really matter why she's doing good as long as she's doing it?



XENA:

Gabrielle, when you love someone so much that you're willing to do anything for them...the line between right and wrong can get very blurry.

GABRIELLE (after a brief pause):

I know what you mean.

Gabrielle reaches out to squeeze Xena's hand and the two women share a tender look. Haimon enters and stops short.

HAIMON:

Oh...I didn't realize you two were-- (he backs away) Sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt--

Gabrielle breaks away from Xena and goes to Haimon, taking his hand.

GABRIELLE:

What is it?

He fidgets uncomfortably a moment.

HAIMON:

I've uh... (he looks from Xena to Gabrielle) I've got the refugees organized. If necessary we'll be able to defend the hospice. Though I'm not sure how much good it's going to do. (he shakes his head) A bunch of refugees going up against the legions of Civilis...

GABRIELLE:

And if he gets past Jeronim, he'll be able to make a move for Rome.

HAIMON:

What if we went to Vespasian and tried to forge some kind of alliance--

XENA:

I'm not interested in taking sides in any Roman Civil War! For all I know Vespasian and Civilis deserve one another.

GABRIELLE (softly):

Haimon, I have to agree with Xena on this one.

HAIMON:

Well, if nothing else I can at least go to Civilis and try to convince him to pass the hospice by.

XENA:

I won't try to stop you, Haimon. Just remember, no Roman ever came to power because of his reputation as a nice guy.

Haimon looks at Xena solemnly.

HAIMON:

I'll go.

CUT TO

Haimon leads his horse from the stables. Gabrielle comes up, brandishing a sack.

GABRIELLE:

I made you some food for the road.

HAIMON:

Thanks. (he takes the food and turns to pack it in his saddlebag)

GABRIELLE:

Before you go--there was something else--I wanted to talk to you about--

HAIMON:

Can it wait? I really should be getting on the road before I lose much more of the light.

Gabrielle blinks, then smiles quickly and nods.

GABRIELLE:

Oh, of course. I'll talk to you when you get back. (she reaches up to kiss his cheek) Be careful.

Haimon swings up into the saddle.

HAIMON:

I will.

He flicks the reins and gallops off. Gabrielle stands still, watching him disappear down the road. She sighs and shakes her head, then turns around and starts to walk toward the hospice building.

MAN (off-camera):

Excuse me, miss?

Gabrielle turns around to see a middle-aged man in colorful garb.

GABRIELLE:

Yes? Are you looking for refuge here?

MAN (shakes his head):

No, miss. I'm looking for Xena. I've heard she was here and, well--I've heard she helps people with--my kind of problem.

GABRIELLE:

What kind of problem?

The camera pulls back to see Xena approaching behind Gabrielle's back.

MAN:

Are you Xena?

XENA:

That's right. Who wants to know?

MAN:

Pleased to meet you. (He removes his cap and bows slightly) I'm a merchant. Our caravan was taking goods to the market in Terracina. This morning--about ten leagues west of here--we were attacked and robbed of a wagonload of food.

Xena and Gabrielle exchange an alarmed look.

CUT TO

Civilis is sitting at a table at his tent, leaning back. The camera pulls back to show Haimon standing before him.

CIVILIS:

So. The good people of Jeronim chose you as their ambassador.

HAIMON:

I came here on my own. The young woman who runs the hospice in Jeronim is--a friend of mine.

CIVILIS (grins suggestively):

Oh, I see--your girl, eh?

HAIMON (straightens up indignantly):

Certainly not.

CIVILIS (contemptuously):

Lighten up, my friend. (eyes him curiously) Are you with Xena and Sabina? Those two attacked my soldiers on the road to Jeronim the other day.

HAIMON (with forced politeness):

It was a misunderstanding. Sir--we have no quarrel with you. My friends and I, we're trying to protect some people who have lost everything in this war.

CIVILIS (sarcastic):

My heart bleeds for them. Supporters of Vespasian, no doubt.

HAIMON:

You'll win their hearts if you leave them in peace. They'll support you if you become emperor.

CIVILIS:

No one gets to be emperor by being a nice guy. (he yawns conspicuously) The bottom line is, I need Jeronim for strategic value. My army is moving in tomorrow. If you and your *friends* think you can stop me, you're welcome to try.

CUT TO

The kitchen at the hospice. Siran, Alban and a few other volunteers are busy chopping vegetables. Some women are baking bread. The kitchen is bustling with activity.

Sabina comes in and strolls toward Siran.

SABINA:

So. Things going well, I see?

SIRAN (turns around, smiling):

Yes, thanks to you. A lot of the people here think of you as their savior.

SABINA (dryly):
Nice to be appreciated.

SIRAN (uncertainly):
Sabina... (she steps aside, pulling Sabina with her; her smile fades a little) How did you get that food?



SABINA (stiffly):
Charitable donation.

SIRAN:
From whom?

SABINA (brusquely):
What does it matter? You needed food and I got you food. Let's leave it at that.

SIRAN (gently):
Sabina--

The kitchen doors swing open and Xena and Gabrielle come in. Sabina whips her head around.

XENA (curtly):
Sabina.

SABINA:
What is it now?

XENA:
I need a word with you. Care to step outside?

Some of the volunteers drop what they're doing to stare at her. Sabina glares back at Xena, then looks around, obviously realizing that she doesn't want a public scene, nods curtly and walks toward the door.

CUT TO

A back yard of the hospice. Xena, Gabrielle and Sabina come out of the building. Xena comes to an abrupt halt and turns around to face Sabina.

XENA:
Want to tell me more about the spirit of charity and miracles of Eli?

SABINA:
I don't know what you're talking about.

XENA:

The food, Sabina. Want to tell me one more time where you got the supplies? Because Gabrielle and I just talked to a merchant whose caravan got robbed this morning by a woman whose description happens to be--

SABINA (defiantly):

--an exact match for me.

Xena and Gabrielle stare at her silently.

SABINA:

What do you want me to say? I did it. Congratulations on solving the crime.

SIRAN (off-camera):

No!

Sabina whips around to see a distraught-looking Siran standing behind her.

SABINA:

Siran, look--

SIRAN:

How could you throw away everything--

SABINA:

We needed food. How else do you expect to survive?

SIRAN:

If we can just throw aside everything we believe about right and wrong in times of crisis do we really deserve to survive?

Gabrielle comes up to her and puts a hand on her arm.

GABRIELLE:

Siran, there's something you should know. The merchant said that Sabina fought the armed guards who accompanied the caravan. She could have killed them--but she didn't.

SABINA (shoots her a sharp look):

Well, look who decided to be a witness for the defense.

GABRIELLE (glances at her with exasperation, then speaks to Siran again):

Look--I'm sure Sabina is sorry that there was no other way to--



SABINA (interrupts):

Sorry? I'm not apologizing for anything. I did what I had to do. So I put a little dent in their wartime profits. They've still got plenty left. (gestures toward the hospice) Did you want all those people to starve? I don't see anyone in a hurry to return the loot. (to Xena) Just out of curiosity, what *did* you tell that merchant?

XENA (in a neutral tone):

That I'd help find whoever did it and get the goods back.

SABINA:

And will you? (off Xena's silent stare) You're the Greater Good expert, Xena. What *is* the right thing to do in this tricky little situation, hmm?

Siran sighs and come up to hug Sabina a little awkwardly.

SIRAN:

Sabina...what you did wasn't right, but God will forgive you. He can see into your heart, and he knows that in your heart, you wanted what was best.

SABINA (rolls her eyes):

Great.

SIRAN (sighs):

I think I'll...go back inside and help with the cooking.

She walks away.

Sabina looks after her, then looks silently at Xena and Gabrielle and walks off.

Xena and Gabrielle stand still looking after her.

GABRIELLE (sighs):

You know, there was a time when I thought I knew what the Greater Good was.

XENA (looks at her uncomfortably):

Yeah.

CUT TO

The sun is setting. A group of children, Darion among them, are playing ball in the hospice yard, shouting and laughing happily.

A horse's hoofbeat is heard. One of the children, a blonde girl of about eight, turns toward the sound.

GIRL:

Someone's coming!

The children stop playing and look somewhat nervously in the rider's direction as the rider comes into view.

DARION (excited):

It's Haimon!

He runs toward Haimon, who brings his horse to a halt and dismounts. He looks grim.

HAIMON:

Hey, kiddo. (He ruffles Darion's hair almost absently.) Where are Gabrielle and Xena?

Darion looks at him apprehensively, obviously realizing that there is bad news.

DARION:

I'll go find them.

CUT TO

A room at the hospice, the same one as at the start of Act 3. Xena and Gabrielle are sitting at a table, the remnants of a meal before them. Sabina slouches by the wall. Haimon stands in front of them.

HAIMON:

You were right--it was hopeless. It's not as if we had anything to negotiate with. I should have known better.

XENA:

Better than to expect humanity from a Roman with imperial ambitions.

SABINA (chuckles):

Like me, you mean.

Haimon gives her a sharp look while Xena pointedly ignores her comment.

GABRIELLE (pensively):

So...it's a battle, then. (She shakes her head and sighs) Siran didn't want that...

SABINA (abruptly):

Well, then--we can't all have everything we want, can we? (To Xena) It'll be great fighting at your side. (She pauses briefly; then, sarcastically) Unless, of course, you want to turn me over to the to the proper authorities--*again*. Whoever they may be right now.

Xena flinches and says nothing; Gabrielle lowers her head. Haimon, in obvious puzzlement, looks from Sabina to Xena and Gabrielle.

HAIMON:

Anyone care to tell me what *that* was about?

Xena looks up at him, steadily holding his gaze.

XENA:

A bad joke--that's all.

She rises from the table.

XENA:

Come on. We've got work to do.

Gabrielle rises as well. Xena and Sabina walk toward the door. Gabrielle stops for a moment and takes Haimon's hand, then impulsively throws her arms around him and rests her head on his chest. He puts his arms around her. Xena looks back at them uneasily as we:

FADE OUT

ACT FOUR

FADE IN

A clear night. The courtyard outside the hospice. Haimon sits on a bench, looking up at the sky. He inhales deeply and slowly lets out his breath. Gabrielle comes out of the building, looking slightly tousled. She sees him and smiles sleepily.

GABRIELLE:

I woke up and you were gone.

HAIMON:

Sorry. I thought I'd take over the guard duty and it looked like you were asleep for the night.

Gabrielle takes a seat beside him, her shoulder brushing his.

GABRIELLE:

I just needed a quick nap. (she pauses) How are you?

Haimon slips an arm around her shoulders.

HAIMON:

Fine. Are you okay?

She leans against him.

GABRIELLE:

Yeah.

They sit in comfortable silence a moment.

GABRIELLE:

It seems like forever since we've had any time together. Just the two of us. Peace and quiet...

HAIMON (chuckles):

Kind of ironic, isn't it? We'll most likely be going into battle tomorrow.

GABRIELLE (nods):

The calm before the storm.

HAIMON (smiles at her):

Right. (he looks back up at the sky) But still...it's a nice night. I've never seen so many stars.

GABRIELLE (looks up and smiles dreamily):

This is just like the old days... Xena and I would sit out and look at the stars.

HAIMON (glances at her thoughtfully):

Xena and you...

He fidgets a little. Gabrielle sighs and leans her head on his shoulder. He tightens his arm around her, staring ahead.

DISSOLVE TO

Morning. The courtyard. Gabrielle and Haimon are sitting on the bench, asleep. Some distance from them, Sabina is pacing around, her hand resting on the handle of her sword.

Pan up to a third-floor window. Siran sits in the window, looking out thoughtfully. The expression on her face is sad.

Sabina looks up and catches Siran's anguished stare. They look at each other for a moment; then Sabina's mouth hardens and she turns away.

The camera pans over to Xena, who is perched near the top of a tree a few feet away from the hospice building, looking out into the valley outside the town.

A long shot of the valley. Troops are visible in the distance, marching toward the town.

Pan back to Xena as she leans down from the tree.

XENA (shouts):

They're coming!

Pan down to the courtyard. Sabina stands up very straight. Gabrielle and Haimon stir slowly, Gabrielle rubbing her eyes.

Xena slides down from the tree and turns to Gabrielle and Haimon.

XENA (to Haimon):

Time to get those volunteers. (To Gabrielle) Gabrielle, I want you to stay here and--keep an eye on things.

GABRIELLE (frowns):

Are you sure--?

XENA (nods, putting a hand on her shoulder):

I'm sure. Who knows what trouble could break out when there's a battle nearby--people might panic. I'm not sure Siran will be able to keep things in order.

GABRIELLE (sighs):

All right. (hugs Xena) Be careful.

XENA:

You too.

Gabrielle goes over to Haimon and takes his hands. They stare at each other quietly for a moment.

GABRIELLE (in a near-whisper):

See you soon.

CUT TO

A squad of Roman soldiers marching on foot.

CUT TO

Inside a trench. Haimon with some of the refugees from the hospice, mostly men but some women as well, are crouched in the ground, lying in wait.

Haimon lifts himself out a little, looking out, then bends down again.

HAIMON:

Now!

The refugees start lighting incendiary devices.

CUT TO

The Romans advancing. A hail of incendiary devices flies out of the trench, hitting some of the soldiers in the front ranks. They back away, taken by surprise; some fall; the grass in front of them is set on fire, with thick smoke starting to rise. More incendiary devices fly at the soldiers.

ROMAN OFFICER:

Shields!

The soldiers regroup and raise their shields, only to be bombarded with more fire from behind a hillock on their left. Some of them try to stamp out the fire.

OFFICER:

Counterattack! Charge!

The Romans draw their swords and spears. Just then, the "whoosh!" of a chakram is heard.

The chakram hurtles toward the camera.

The camera pulls back to show the chakram slicing off the tops of several spears and swords while knocking others out of the soldiers' hands. The soldiers look around in shock.

Xena's ululating battle cry pierces the air. The soldiers turn their heads, startled. Medium close-up on Xena as she catches the chakram.

The camera pulls back to show Xena in the saddle. She comes galloping toward the Romans. Without slowing down, she dismounts in a leap, somersaulting in the air, and lands before them, her sword drawn, her expression a wild grin.

Another battle cry, reminiscent of Livia's, is heard from the opposite direction. The camera pans to show Sabina galloping toward the soldiers. Like Xena, Sabina dismounts in a leap, slamming her boots into the officer as she lands and knocking him down.

SABINA (with a cold smile):

You should have stayed away from this town.

She is about to run him through but a soldier blocks the thrust of her sword and she begins to spar with him.

Pan to Xena sparring with another officer; for a moment he seems to get the better of her but then she spins around, kicks him in the wrist, making him drop his sword, and kicks up the sword, which flies up and then falls, embedding itself in the ground at Xena's side. Xena yanks the sword out of the ground and twirls the two swords simultaneously, forcing the officer to retreat. Three soldiers begin to spar with her but she manages to hold them at bay. When two soldiers try to run up behind her she spins around with a yell and kicks them down.

The camera pulls back to show Sabina fighting and holding her own against the Romans.

The fight is seen through some haze and clouds of smoke from the still-smoldering grass.

Just as the Roman soldiers are starting to regroup, a chorus of yells rises up behind them. The camera pulls around to show the refugees pouring out of the trenches, some armed with sticks or rocks, others with pitchforks and axes. Haimon runs ahead of them, his sword held at the ready.

HAIMON:

Attack!

The armed refugees clash with the troops and the fight begins to rage. A quick montage of scenes:

- * Xena, still wielding two swords, spars with several Romans
- * Sabina knocks down a Roman with a spin-kick
- * Haimon knocks a Roman's sword out of his hand, then brings him down with a punch
- * A man, one of the refugees, uses a long stick as a staff to repel the Romans
- * A female refugee uses a pitchfork to block a Roman's sword
- * Xena wounds a Roman and he falls to the ground
- * One of the male refugees falls down with a groan

As the battle momentarily disappears in a haze of smoke, the sound of a trumpet cuts into the pandemonium. The combatants pause momentarily and an eerie quiet falls over the field.

MALE VOICE (off-camera):

Stop the fight!

The voice is strong and authoritative, and actually makes the combatants pause and turn. The camera pans toward a middle-aged man in rich armor, astride a dappled gray horse. It's Vespasian. There are more troops behind him. He looks over Xena, Sabina, Haimon and their makeshift army.

VESPASIAN:

You don't look like the army of Civilis. Who are *you*?

XENA:

I could ask you the same question.

SABINA:

I've seen the face before--on Roman coins. (close-up on Sabina) Emperor Flavius Vespasian.

A murmur goes through the crowd of refugees, with muffled exclamations of, "The emperor!--It's the emperor!"

XENA (with a start):

Vespasian?

VESPASIAN:

That's right. Let me guess. (He looks from her to Sabina) Xena, Warrior Princess. Valeria Sabina.

Xena and Sabina nod in acknowledgment.

VESPASIAN:

Why did you attack my advance troops?

HAIMON (his sword lowered):

Civilis is headed this way. We thought--



XENA (interrupts):

Look--we couldn't care less about your fight with Civilis. Our only interest is in protecting the Jeronim hospice. It's the only shelter left for a lot of people made homeless by this war.

VESPASIAN (thoughtfully):

Is that so.

Close-up on Vespasian as he looks at Xena, Sabina and Haimon, obviously contemplating something; then pan over the faces of Xena (looking impassive), Sabina (calm but curious) and Haimon (anxious yet clearly fascinated).

CUT TO

The yard of the hospice. Vespasian emerges from the building, sipping wine from a goblet, one of his lieutenants at his side. Xena, Gabrielle, Sabina, Siran and Haimon follow. Some of the refugees milling about the courtyard look at him from a distance, clearly impressed.

VESPASIAN (to Siran):

So--how long can you feed all these people with the supplies you have now?

SIRAN (with visible discomfort):

About ten days, sir. We could try to stretch it out to two weeks...

VESPASIAN:

And then?

SIRAN:

I'm not sure, sir. We nearly had a riot before--

VESPASIAN (turns to his lieutenant):

Decimus. Give her three wagons of food from our supplies.

SIRAN (gravely):

God bless you, sir.

VESPASIAN (looks at her curiously):

God? Are you one of the Elijans, then?

SIRAN (inclines her head):

I follow the faith of Eli.

Vespasian ponders this for a moment.

DECIMUS (dubious):

Does your order still stand, Emperor?

VESPASIAN:

But of course. If the gods of Rome are offended by this young lady's beliefs, let them punish her as they please--in this world or the next. As long as she obeys our laws, I have no quarrel with her. The days of Nero and his cruelties have long passed.

Pan to Xena, Gabrielle and Haimon. Even Xena is grudgingly impressed; Gabrielle looks clearly moved, while Haimon looks at Vespasian with undisguised admiration.

VESPASIAN (continues, addressing Haimon):

You can go with Decimus and give him a hand with the supplies.

HAIMON:

Gladly, sir.

SIRAN:

Thank you.

They start to walk off with Decimus.

XENA:

We'll help too--come on, Gabrielle.

She makes to follow Decimus, Siran and Haimon.

VESPASIAN:

Wait.

Xena and Gabrielle stop and look at him expectantly. Haimon slows down as well and turns to listen to Vespasian.

VESPASIAN:

I'm glad I got a chance to thank you personally for your help in the defense of the Moesia colony.

XENA (rather coldly):

We were protecting innocent people from slaughter.



VESPASIAN:

At the time, you refused my offer of honorary Roman citizenship. I understand how you feel, after your--unfortunate experiences with my predecessors. But I want you to know that my offer remains the same.

XENA:

So does our answer.

Gabrielle nods in assent.

VESPASIAN:

Pity. I didn't expect another answer, but--I thought I'd try. You see, once Civilis is defeated, I plan to make a lot of changes--not only for the people of Rome but for all the peoples of the Empire.

XENA (dryly):

Good luck. Now, if you'll excuse us--we have some food to unload.

She and Gabrielle go off, leaving Vespasian and Sabina alone.

Vespasian sips some more wine, then gives Sabina a thoughtful look.

VESPASIAN:

You're quite a fighter.

SABINA:

I know.

Vespasian chuckles and starts walking toward his horse. Sabina remains standing where she is. He stops and turns to look at her.

VESPASIAN:

You know, you put two of my officers out of commission today. I think you owe me.

SABINA (mockingly):

Send me the bill.

VESPASIAN:

I have a better idea. A warrior of your stature is wasted here. (Pan to Sabina, who listens to him attentively) Why don't you join me as one of my commanders? You'll report directly to me.

There is a momentary flash of joy in Sabina's face but she quickly composes herself and approaches Vespasian.

SABINA:

I promised Siran I'd be here to protect her--and the hospice.

VESPASIAN:

I'll dispatch some of my men. Trust me, your friend will be safe.

There is a long, tense silence. Finally Sabina nods.

SABINA:

Then I accept.

VESPASIAN (businesslike):

Good. Report to my command tent in an hour.

SABINA (salutes him, coldly and with a hint of mockery):

My emperor.

VESPASIAN (salutes back):

Officer. (He turns away and calls out to his attendant) Elpenor! My horse.

The attendant leads the horse up to Vespasian, who gets in the saddle and rides off without turning back. Sabina stares after him, lost in thought, then turns and walks inside the building.

DISSOLVE TO

An overhead shot of the field outside the town, with Vespasian's army camped out. Three horse-drawn wagons laden with sacks are moving toward the town.

CUT TO

A small room. Sabina is packing a bag. Siran comes in, looking happy and relieved.

SIRAN:

There you are. We've got--

She stops in her tracks, realizing that Sabina is packing. They stare silently at each other.

SIRAN (clearly understanding):

Oh...

CUT TO

The courtyard. Sabina stands by her saddled horse. Xena and Gabrielle are standing by.

SABINA:

So, Xena. Next time we meet--what do you think it'll be? Allies or adversaries?

XENA (shrugs):

That may be up to you.

GABRIELLE:

You know what? I think that deep down, you now understand the difference between right and wrong. Siran is a good teacher.

SABINA (wryly, trying not to show emotion):

Oh dear. I *will* so miss our sensitive chats.

She checks her horse's bridle and tugs at the straps to make sure the saddle is securely fastened, then lingers a moment.

SIRAN (off-camera):

Sabina!

Pan to Siran, who is almost running toward Sabina. Xena and Gabrielle glance at each other.

XENA:

Good-bye, Sabina. (a little awkwardly) Good luck.

GABRIELLE:

Good-bye.

SABINA (tensely):

Good-bye.

Xena and Gabrielle walk off. Sabina and Siran remain facing each other. Finally, Sabina speaks.

SABINA:

Are you angry at me?

SIRAN (shakes her head):

No, not angry...just sad. I'll miss you.



SABINA (with restrained emotion):

I'll miss you too.

Siran comes closer and takes Sabina's hands.

SIRAN (tears in her eyes):

I know this wasn't the right life for you. You may not believe it but you do have a good heart, Sabina. Don't ever close it to compassion. (She sighs) Thank you...for everything.

SABINA:

Thank *you*, Siran. (pauses) Stay safe. I know your faith will keep you strong.

SIRAN:

Faith means nothing without love.

They hug. Close-up on Sabina's face as she closes her eyes for a moment.

DISSOLVE TO

Sabina riding away, facing the camera.

An image of Siran standing and staring ahead is gradually superimposed on that of Sabina riding away; then,

DISSOLVE TO

A close-up of Gabrielle staring ahead.

The camera pulls back to show that Gabrielle is watching as Haimon drives a fence post into the ground with a heavy mallet. Breathing heavily, he steps back to inspect his work, pulling on the post to test how securely it is in the ground. Gabrielle approaches him apprehensively. Haimon finally turns around and notices her and Gabrielle stops short.

GABRIELLE:

Hi!

HAIMON:

Hi. (he gestures to the fence) Almost done here. (looks around) The place is really starting to look up.

GABRIELLE:

I guess we got a happy ending after all.

HAIMON (chuckles):

If you can call Sabina at the head of another army a happy ending. But still, I trust Vespasian. He would never allow Sabina to do anything he didn't think was right.

GABRIELLE:

Unfortunately, Roman Emperors tend to have a broad definition of right and wrong. But...I don't really want to talk about Vespasian. Haimon...I think we should talk about us...

HAIMON (frowns and nods):

Right. Us.

Haimon drops the mallet to the ground and he and Gabrielle are both silent, not looking at one another. Finally they both speak at the same moment.

GABRIELLE:

Haimon, I'm--

HAIMON:

Gabrielle, I'm going to join Vespasian.

Gabrielle shakes her head, as if not understanding.

GABRIELLE (numbly):

You're going to--

HAIMON:

I know how you and Xena feel about him but I think you're wrong. Vespasian is going to do great things. And that's something I want--to have a chance to be part of something...great.

Gabrielle glances around her, as if searching for the right thing to say. Haimon rushes on.

HAIMON:

You've got Xena and Darion. You're the Battling Bard of Poteidaia. And I'm proud of that--proud of you! Now I need something too.



GABRIELLE::

Haimon, you know how I feel about you...

Haimon smile and touches her cheek.

HAIMON:

I used to think that one day you'd be ready to settle down and leave the road. I mean, I knew there would always be Xena and helping people. But I thought... (he shrugs) You, me, Darion and maybe... (he laughs dryly) I sound like some sappy schoolboy, don't I?

GABRIELLE:

No, I think it sounds very sweet.

Haimon looks meaningfully at Gabrielle.



HAIMON:

But it could never happen, could it?

Gabrielle says nothing. He takes a step forward and kisses her on top of her head.

GABRIELLE:

When are you going?

HAIMON:

I need to talk to Darion and then I'm riding out with Vespasian. He's on his way to Rome, so you--

GABRIELLE (nods):

I'll know where to find you if I need you. (pauses) Darion is in the kitchen.

Haimon nods and turns to go find Darion. He stops and turns back.

HAIMON:

You wanted to talk to me about something.

GABRIELLE:

What?

HAIMON:

The other day you said you wanted to talk to me about something.

GABRIELLE:

Oh... (she thinks a moment then shrugs) I can't remember. I guess it wasn't very important.

HAIMON:

I guess not.

Haimon smiles and reaches out to pet her hair affectionately then turns and heads off towards the kitchens. Gabrielle watches him a moment, a wistful expression on her face. She sniffs and looks away, realizing that Xena has stepped up beside her.

XENA:

Well?

GABRIELLE:

He's joining Vespasian.

Xena lays a hand on her shoulder. The two women stand in companionable silence a moment. Gabrielle crosses her arms across her chest and looks down at her feet.

GABRIELLE (continues):

I didn't tell him.

XENA:

Why not?



GABRIELLE:

Xena, Haimon wants to do this. If he knew he would stay even though his heart would be somewhere else. I can't use a baby to force him to stay when he doesn't want to.

Xena says nothing. Gabrielle is silent a moment then finally looks up, with a forced smile.

GABRIELLE:

Besides, we don't need anyone else. You and I can raise this baby together, right?

Xena draws her arm around Gabrielle.



XENA (nods and smiles):
You and me.

Xena draws Gabrielle's head down onto her shoulder, kissing her on top of the head. Gabrielle puts her arms around Xena and they embrace as we:

FADE OUT

THE END

[Some relationships were damaged during the production of this motion picture.]