

# SHIPPER SEASON NINE



**Production #XWP202/SS68**  
**Episode #9.21**

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## **Logline**

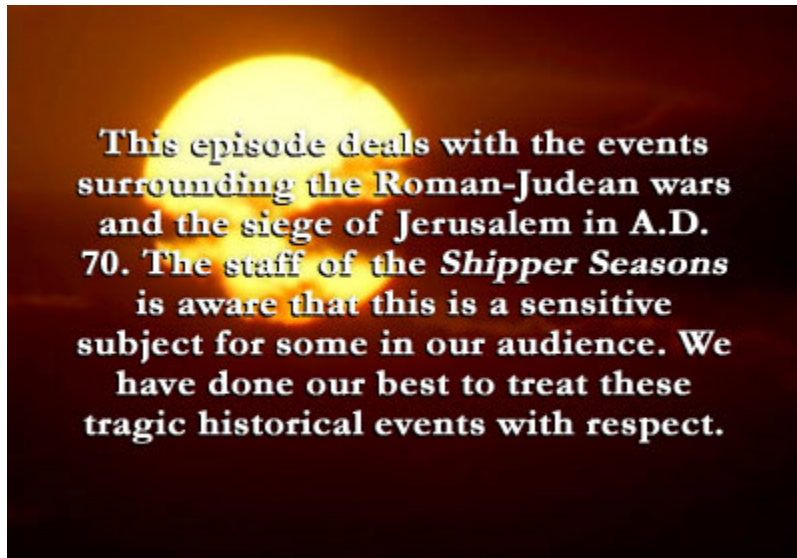
With the Romans laying siege to Jerusalem and Gabrielle about to give birth, Xena is torn between her loyalty to the Israelites and her concern for Gabrielle's safety.

## **Airdate**

October 17, 2007

## TEASER

### *FADE IN*



Previously on Xena...

- \* A fight in a crowded city marketplace.
- \* An unkempt, wild-eyed preacher in the streets.

#### **PREACHER:**

Destruction awaits Jerusalem!

- \* The fight in the marketplace. Eleazar and Simon Bar-Giora are sparring when John of Giscala interposes his sword between theirs.

#### **JOHN:**

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

- \* John and Eleazar talking.

#### **JOHN:**

If we were to make an alliance with Josephus--

#### **ELEAZAR:**

There's someone who can help.

- \* Xena and Ares on the docks, Gabrielle and Darion visible in the background.

#### **XENA:**

I'll see you in the fall.

Ares places his hand over hers.

\* The ship sails out into the harbor.

\* Xena and Gabrielle in the cabin of the ship, facing Darion.

**GABRIELLE:**

You were supposed to stay with Ares.

**DARION** (holding back tears):

Something bad could happen to you and I would never know.

Gabrielle nods, obviously moved.

\* Jerusalem . Xena and John are walking together along a crowded street.

**XENA:**

This does not look like the city on the brink of a war.

\* A long shot of Xena, John and Eleazar fighting the black-clad Sicarii warriors.

\* Zoom in on Xena fighting another Sicarii warrior. She spins around and kicks him in the chest, then knocks away his sword as he staggers back, and downs him with another kick. She points her sword at him.

\* A Sicarii warrior looks contemptuously from Xena to John of Giscala.

**SICARII WARRIOR:**

So the great defender of Israel has a pagan murderer on his side.

\* Xena and John walking down the street.

**XENA:**

So, tell me more about this Bar-Giora.

\* Simon Bar-Giora faces John, a sarcastic smile on his face.

\* Xena and John.

**JOHN:**

He wants to rid us of the Romans, yes--but only to put us under the tyranny of fanatics like himself.

\* Xena and Gabrielle, in *Legacy*-type outfits, ride across the desert toward a distant fortress.

\* Xena and Gabrielle face Josephus in the fortress courtyard.

**XENA:**

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

**JOSEPHUS:**

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

\* Xena and Gabrielle ride through the desert.

**GABRIELLE:**

You think he can be trusted.

**XENA:**

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

\* Josephus and his defenders face the Roman legion.

**SOLDIER:**

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

\* Josephus smashes his shield into a Roman soldier's face and sweeps his legs out from underneath him before running him through.

\* Josephus and his men are inside the garrison while ramming is heard at the door.

\* Xena, Gabrielle and John in Xena and Gabrielle's quarters in Jerusalem , Xena clad only in her tunic and Gabrielle in a gown.

**JOHN:**

Josephus decided they would commit suicide rather than submit to the Romans.

**GABRIELLE:**

There's nothing left between the Romans and Jerusalem .

\* The Roman troops on the move, with Titus and Sabina riding at the head of the cavalry.

\* Xena and Gabrielle in their quarters.

**GABRIELLE:**

Xena, these people need our help.

**XENA:**

We can't help here anymore.

\* Pandemonium near the city gates. People are in a panic, running in every direction, shouting.

**PEOPLE:**

The Romans are coming!

Xena and Gabrielle share a look of dread.

\* A wide shot of the Roman troops camped out by the walls of Jerusalem. A man in a hooded brown robe, on horseback, rides toward the gates waving a white flag. Four Roman soldiers follow behind him on horseback.

\* Xena, Gabrielle, John and Eleazar by the Western gate.

**JOHN:**

The Romans have sent someone to negotiate the surrender of the city.

\* The brown-robed man removes his hood. Xena, Gabrielle, John, and Eleazar stare at him with curiosity which quickly turns to shock.

**XENA** (grimly):  
Josephus...

Slow fade to Ares and a Roman Centurion seated over mugs of ale in a tavern. The Roman has a dusty appearance, as if he has been traveling a long distance. He is in his mid-late 30's and it is apparent from his bearing that he is a veteran.

**BUCCO:**

...of course the rebels refused Josephus's offer and sent him packing.

**ARES** (wryly):

So Josephus was the only survivor of a suicide pact that was his idea in the first place. Funny that.

**BUCCO:**

Josephus claims he was captured before he was able to see it through. He told Titus he thinks his god must have meant him for a higher purpose.

Ares snorts in disgust, dismissing Josephus.

**BUCCO:**

So that's where Jerusalem stands right now--under siege by four of Vespasian's best legions.



**ARES** (shrugs):

I'd match Xena up against a *hundred* Roman legions.

Bucco shakes his head ruefully.

**BUCCO:**

Your confidence in Xena's skill is naturally warranted, my Lord Ares. But in this particular situation I respectfully beg to disagree with you. Titus is content to let the siege play out. Sooner or later Jerusalem will starve. Already there are signs of food shortages.

**ARES:**

War breeds opportunity, Bucco. You should know that better than anyone. Smugglers will get through with food, medicines--not to mention the luxuries.

**BUCCO:**

Three weeks ago my men captured two trying to bring food back into the city. Titus ordered them crucified in the hills overlooking Jerusalem so that the people within the city were able to see what we do to smugglers. (he snorts) Smugglers--a father and his ten year old son trying to get food to their hungry family.

Close up of Ares's face as he flinches. The screen flashes white to a long shot of a hill overlooking Jerusalem. Two bodies hang from crosses, one a grown man and the other a young boy of ten.

***CUT TO***

Xena and Gabrielle both staring grimly up at the hills. Xena turns to look at Gabrielle and her jaw clenches.

The screen flashes white again back to Ares.

**ARES:**

Fear is a powerful weapon, Bucco.

Bucco takes a long sip of his ale.

**BUCCO:**

Perhaps I've gone soft, but when I saw that I lost heart for this campaign. I was only too glad to be away from there, to serve as dispatch between Titus and the Emperor. (he frowns in self-disgust) Here I am--confessing this to you of all people--sounding like some silly schoolgirl with no spleen.

Ares bumps Bucco on the shoulder in a comradely way.

**ARES:**

You've always been a loyal follower as well as a good friend. One thing I've come to understand is that people change. The God of War would have reveled in the siege of Jerusalem. But as a mortal... (he trails off and shakes his head, taking a long sip of ale)

**BUCCO:**

The world is a different place, my lord Ares. Despite what happens in Jerusalem, Rome is fighting a losing battle. This one god business has taken root. (he takes another sip of ale) But still, I wouldn't want to be in the place of the Israelites right now. They've got the weight of history on their shoulders. And I'm sure even Xena realizes that this war isn't for fighting--it's for surviving. Titus is determined to spare no one. Neither man, woman--nor child.

Close up of Ares, a troubled look on his face. A bit shakily he downs his mug of ale.

***SLOW FADE TO***



Gabrielle walking down a street in Jerusalem. Her belly is large and she is obviously very close to term in her pregnancy. She moves slowly, tiredly, clearly uncomfortable. The sun is hot and bright and the streets are overcrowded. Darion walks ahead of her, determinedly pushing people aside to clear the way for her. Gabrielle stops a moment to catch her breath and inspects the contents of her food basket, which is nearly empty. She frowns and then follows resolutely after Darion.

***FADE OUT***

## **ACT ONE**

***FADE IN***

Xena and John of Giscala stand atop the walls of Jerusalem, looking out. Perhaps half a mile outside the city several Roman legions have surrounded them and are heavily dug in. The landscape is bare and hostile. John leans against the wall, squinting against the bright, afternoon sun.

**JOHN:**

Titus may have cleared all the trees for better observation, but on the bright side, we can see him too.

**XENA (frowns):**

Not that it does us any good without artillery.

**JOHN (sobered):**

True.



**XENA:**

You can't sit in here forever. Sooner or later you're going to run out of food and water. Titus knows that and he's content to wait you out. We've got to find a way to break out and push the Romans back so that you can make it into the countryside to rally fresh troops.

**JOHN:**

My men have started working on a tunnel. If we're able to extend it far enough out we'll be able to come up on Titus from behind in a surprise attack.

Xena frowns ponderously, considering this for a moment and finally shakes her head.

**XENA:**

It's too risky. The weight of the city walls would probably collapse the tunnel before you even got close to their lines.

She gazes out at the legions.

**XENA:**

The only answer is a swift, frontal charge--right out the gates and straight at their lines. Hit them fast and hard with two waves of men before they have time to react.



**JOHN:**

In theory that plan might work--but I'm not about to be the first outside these gates. I wouldn't put it past Simon to bar them behind me, leaving me and my men to be slaughtered by the Romans and declaring himself king of Jerusalem. (he chuckles mirthlessly.) Of course Simon would also refuse to be the first out of the city because he would be afraid I'd do the same to him.



**XENA:**

Then meet with him. It's the only answer.

**JOHN:**

There's no point in talking to that madman.

Xena shakes her head and walks off. John turns and looks down upon the scene inside Jerusalem. The city is crowded but despite the siege things appear fairly normal as people go about their daily business. John takes note of six young men loitering outside a shop just below him on the wall.

**CUT TO**

The same six men, swords strapped to their backs. They have a dangerous air about them as they survey the crowds. It is obvious they are members of the Sicarii, Simon bar Giora's men.

Sicarii #1 sneers at the crowds as they pass by, going about their business.

**SICARII #1:**

Look at these sheep. What do they care that Rome is just outside these gates? They've forgotten that this is the land of *our* people promised to us by God--not the city of some pagan Roman emperor!

**SICARII #2:**

They've become complacent. As long as the siege doesn't affect their lives too greatly they're content to just ride it out and hope for the best.

**SICARII #3:**

The people need something to shake them up. Hardship and sacrifice might help rally them to our cause.

**CUT TO**

Gabrielle exiting the shop with Darion at her side. She carries a basket with a few jars and some vegetables inside. The Sicarii's voices can be heard indistinctly in the background.



**GABRIELLE:**

The shortages are starting to get worse. I don't know how much longer the food is going to hold out.

**DARION:**

Xena says she's going to sneak out of the city to forage. I want go with her.

**GABRIELLE** (vehemently):

You're not stepping one foot outside this city on any foraging party! (she seizes his shoulder) Do you understand me, Darion? I want you to promise me!

Darion wiggles out of her clutch.

**DARION** (resentfully):

I can take care of myself.

He turns and walks off, with Gabrielle close on his heels.

**GABRIELLE:**

Darion, I want you to promise--.

She rounds the corner of the shop and she and Darion stop short at seeing the six Sicarii, engaged in heated conversation.

**SICARII #4:**

...drastic measures are called for in times such as these! A cleansing of the soul of Jerusalem by fire.

**SICARII #2:**

Not to mention that fear and violence can be a most effective tool.

They all stop and notice Gabrielle and Darion staring at them.

**SICARII #1:**

What are *you* looking at?

Darion sniffs indignantly.

**DARION:**

Nothing much.

Sicarii #2 takes a menacing step towards Darion and Gabrielle steps between them.

**GABRIELLE:**

I heard what you said. Fear and violence is an effective tool, is it? Well, if you're so brave why don't you make your move on me? You might just get more than you bargained for.

**SICARII #2:**

Now listen here, my little Greek friend. We've had just about enough of your meddling--you and your warrior friend. The day of reckoning is fast approaching.

**DARION** (snorts):

I bet you wouldn't act so tough if Xena was here.

Sicarii #1 draws a dagger halfway from its sheath in threatening manner.

**SICARII #1:**

I'd watch that smart tongue if I were you, little man. The Romans aren't above teaching boys your age a lesson--and neither are we.

Gabrielle makes a surprisingly agile move towards him.

**GABRIELLE:**

You son of a--.

A young man of twenty-five comes running up and jumps in between Gabrielle and Sicarii #1. He is of average height and build.

**SAMUEL:**

Is this what your noble cause has become, Barnabas? Bullying children and pregnant women?

**SICARII #1:**

Until a few months ago ours was your cause too, Samuel.

Samuel glares back at Barnabas.



**SAMUEL:**

People change, Barnabas. My only cause now is peace. But if you keep up with this harassment of Gabrielle and Darion I'd be more than willing to make an exception.

Barnabas and Samuel square off against one another a tense moment until finally Barnabas laughs dismissively.

**BARNABAS:**

You've lost your guts, Samuel. But the day is fast approaching when you'll be called upon to stand up like a man or lie down like a dog. The choice is yours.

The five Sicarii follow Barnabas down a narrow passageway. Close up on Samuel as he glares unflinchingly until they are finally gone from sight.

**CUT TO**

Evening in the home of Samuel and his mother Naomi. Xena, Gabrielle, Darion, Samuel and Naomi are gathered around a table for the evening meal.

**NAOMI:**

It's fortunate that my son happened by when he did.

**GABRIELLE:**

I'm grateful. Normally I can take care of myself...

**XENA:**

But she's a little out of commission at the moment.

Gabrielle pats her large belly.

**GABRIELLE:**

Right. Just a little.

**XENA:**

Gabrielle and I were lucky to find lodging with such good people.



**NAOMI:**

And of course a woman in your condition requires some extra looking after at this time. This is your first child?

Xena glances at Gabrielle, who carefully chews her mouthful of food and swallows and speaks a bit curtly.

**GABRIELLE:**

That's right--my first.

Both Samuel and Naomi recognize the lie but graciously ignore it.

**NAOMI:**

Have you thought of a name yet?

**GABRIELLE:**

No--not yet.

**XENA:**

The right name usually suggests itself when you least expect it.

**SAMUEL:**

I was named for my grandfather. He was a remarkable man--a man who believed in trying to understand those who are different from us--even our enemies. He believed that most of the time, war could be avoided if we only tried hard enough. He was a great voice of peace.

**GABRIELLE** (after a brief silence):

In the market today, Barnabas said something about you having been with the Sicarii once...

Samuel nods, almost in embarrassment.

**SAMUEL:**

Yes. For a time. I was a hothead--young and idealistic. I believed I was acting for love of my country.

**XENA:**

What changed it for you?

Samuel is thoughtfully silent a moment.



**SAMUEL:**

I think I finally realized that it was a greater act of love for my country is to live up to the ideals of my namesake--to become a man of peace rather than one of violence.

Gabrielle smiles softly in admiration.

**GABRIELLE:**

That's very noble of you.



**XENA** (grimly):

Too bad that right now, peace doesn't stand a chance.

There is a tense silence. Breaking it, Naomi stands and begins to clear the table.

**NAIOMI** (to Gabrielle):

Are you finished, dear?

**GABRIELLE:**

Yes--but I wish you'd let me help you.

**NAOMI:**

I won't hear of it. A woman in your delicate condition needs pampering.

Xena raises her eyebrows.

**XENA:**

Delicate?

**NAOMI:**

Xena, you should take Gabrielle out into the garden for some fresh air before it gets dark. You'll do that, won't you?

Xena is barely suppressing a smile of amusement.

**XENA:**

Of course, Naomi.

**CUT TO**

Xena and Gabrielle outside. There is a stone bench and Gabrielle glances down it.

**GABRIELLE:**

I think I'm going to need some help with this one.

Xena takes her arm and gently lowers her onto the bench. Gabrielle lets out a sigh.

**GABRIELLE:**

Ah. Thanks. (she pats her belly) It won't be long now.

Xena takes a seat beside Gabrielle.

**XENA:**

You should try to enjoy this time.



**GABRIELLE (nods):**

I do. It's just that days like today remind me of my limitations. I'm not used to needing anyone swooping in to rescue me. (she laughs) Well--except you, of course--whether I need you to or not. (she is thoughtfully silent a moment.) Xena...I think Simon's men are planning something. All that talk about cleansing the soul of Jerusalem by fire and fear and violence being effective weapons...I wish I had heard more so that I knew exactly what was going on.

**XENA:**

We're going to have to keep an eye on them. Tomorrow John is meeting with Simon to try to forge an alliance. A bunch of young troublemakers like your friends from the marketplace might upset that.

Gabrielle nods and hides a yawn behind her hand.

**XENA:**

Tired?

Gabrielle nods reluctantly.

**GABRIELLE:**

Every day it's taking me longer to get food in the marketplace. Most of the shops are either near-empty or have long lines... (she sighs) I guess that's what happens sooner or later in a city under siege. (reflectively) It's funny, I was thinking of the refugees at Jeronim and how Vespasian gave them food--and now, here's his son, trying to starve out the city we're trapped in.

Xena stares at her in gloomy silence.

**GABRIELLE (continues):**

Darion mentioned you were planning a foraging party.

**XENA (nods):**  
Tonight.

Gabrielle gives Xena an intense glare.

**GABRIELLE:**  
He also mentioned he wanted to go with you.

**XENA:**  
You know I wouldn't take him, Gabrielle. Not after-- (she falters)

**GABRIELLE:**  
I'm not crazy about you going out there either.

**XENA:**  
You know we don't have any choice. The food shortages are going to keep getting worse and worse, you said so yourself. I've already told Samuel and Naomi that we've got to be prepared. We need to start hoarding our own supplies.



**GABRIELLE:**  
Hoarding? (she shakes her head vehemently.) No, Xena! I won't do that. You know that humanity and compassion are always the first casualties of war. And I refuse to become a part of it by refusing to help someone else in need. We'll become no better than the Sicarii. And then what's the point?





**XENA:**

The *point* is survival, Gabrielle. I've got you and your baby and Darion to think about. And if you think for one moment that I won't do anything I have to in order to keep you all alive then you obviously don't know me very well.

Xena turns and marches out of the garden. Gabrielle watches her in angry silence a moment. Finally, she sighs and drops her head tiredly.

**CUT TO**

A darkened room. Gabrielle is asleep. Softly, a door can be heard creaking open then shutting quietly. She rouses slowly and looks over her shoulder, noticing Xena tiptoeing into the room.

**GABRIELLE:**

You're back.

**XENA** (whispering):

Sorry--I didn't mean to wake you.

**GABRIELLE:**

Are you all right?

Xena sits down on her bed and wearily removes her boots.

**XENA:**

Fine. I even found us a milking goat. Would you believe it actually followed me back?

She takes off her gauntlets and starts to settle into bed as she continues to talk.

**XENA** (yawns):

Darion will have to milk her first thing in the morning...

**GABRIELLE** (smiles uncertainly):

I'm glad you're okay. Looks like you need some sleep.

**XENA:**

I sure do...

Suddenly, she sits up, alert.

**GABRIELLE** (startled):

What is it?

**XENA** (quietly, nods toward the window behind Gabrielle's back):

There. Look.

Gabrielle turns. Pan over to the window. There is a faint orange glow in the distance.

**GABRIELLE:**

What do you think that is? A fire?

Xena is already pulling on her boots.

**XENA:**

I'm sure of it. (Rises abruptly)

**GABRIELLE:**

The Romans--?

**XENA:**

I don't know. Stay here.

She puts on her armor and gauntlets, grabs her sword and races outside. Gabrielle looks after her, clearly troubled.

***CUT TO***

Xena running out of the house, shutting the door behind her with a bang.

***CUT TO***

The bedroom. Gabrielle is sitting on the bed. The bedroom door is pushed open slightly. Gabrielle looks up, startled, but it's only Darion.

**GABRIELLE:**

Darion! What are you doing up?

**DARION:**

I heard a noise--just wanted to check and make sure everything's okay.

**GABRIELLE:**

Everything's fine.

**DARION** (a little apprehensive):

Xena's not back yet? I thought I heard--

**GABRIELLE:**

She came back and then went out again. I think there's some--trouble.

Darion stares at the window, riveted.

**DARION** (points):

Is that a fire?

**GABRIELLE** (nods):

Yeah. (She reaches out to take his hand) Don't be scared.

**DARION** (squeezes her hand):

I'm not.

She turns and they both look at the distant blaze.

## ***DISSOLVE TO***

A roaring fire that some people are trying in vain to put out.

Pan to John of Giscala. He looks both majestic and frightening in the orange light of the flames, his eyes blazing.

**JOHN:**

More water! Now!

**RESCUER #1:**

It's no use!

Xena runs up, sword in hand.

**XENA:**

What happened?

She stands still, understanding suddenly dawning on her face.

**XENA:**

The main granary.

**JOHN:**

One of the city's two. Both set on fire tonight.

**XENA** (her face full of disgust):

Let me guess. The Sicarii.

The camera pans to Eleazar, who has just come up, panting for breath.

**ELEAZAR:**

They weren't shy about it either. (he holds up a dagger) Left one of their daggers as a signature.

Xena stares at the flames, her face hard.

**XENA:**

We're going to run out of time much sooner than we thought.

Pan to the flames, then to Xena, John, and Eleazar looking at the fire, bathed in its eerie glow, as we:

***FADE OUT***

## **ACT TWO**

***FADE IN***

Fade-in on an overhead shot of Jerusalem, smoke still rising from the burnt-out granary.

## **DISSOLVE TO**

Xena and Gabrielle in the main room of their living quarters, Xena in her leathers, Gabrielle in the *Legacy*-style outfit. Xena is pacing across the room while Gabrielle is standing at the window, looking out.

**GABRIELLE** (agitated):

*Cleansing fire...* I can't believe this is what they meant. Taking the food away from their own people to make them more desperate?

**XENA** (bitterly):

You're still shocked?

**GABRIELLE:**

By what? How cruel people can be to their own kind?

**XENA:**

By how people can justify any act of cruelty once they've convinced themselves truth is on their side.

Gabrielle turns around and looks at her, stricken.

**GABRIELLE:**

And you still think you can work with Simon? After this?

**XENA** (harshly):

I have to.

Wordlessly, Gabrielle shakes her head.

**XENA:**

I have to work with the only choices I've got.

There's a discreet knock on the door. Xena and Gabrielle turn, startled.

**GABRIELLE:**

Yes?

The door is pushed open and Naomi stands in the doorway. She looks troubled.

**NAOMI:**

You have-- (she hesitates a moment) a visitor.

**GABRIELLE:**

Who is it?

Naomi stands aside to reveal Josephus.

**XENA** (brusquely):

Tell him we're not at home.

She walks out briskly, pushing right past Josephus. Naomi gives him an unfriendly look and walks away as well. Josephus remains standing in the doorway. Gabrielle turns to the window, looking away.

**JOSEPHUS:**

What about you, Gabrielle? You'll hear me out, won't you?

**GABRIELLE** (softly):

What do you want?

Josephus comes in and closes the door.

**JOSEPHUS:**

I have an offer from Titus.

Gabrielle turns around.

**GABRIELLE:**

To surrender the city? You know it's not ours to surrender--even if Xena and I wanted to. It's not going to happen.

**JOSEPHUS:**

No, it's not about that. (off her curious look) The offer--is for you to leave the city unharmed.

**GABRIELLE:**

You mean--

**JOSEPHUS:**

Safe passage back to Greece. For you *and* Xena. I understand you have a child with you--a boy about ten years of age. You can take him as well. (he pauses as she takes in his words) Trust me, Gabrielle--you are not going to get a better offer.

Gabrielle looks at him defiantly.

**GABRIELLE** (quietly but with a steely edge in her voice):

What makes you think we'd take it?

**JOSEPHUS:**

This isn't your fight.

**GABRIELLE:**

Then you obviously don't know me very well. When Xena and I give our word to help someone, it's our fight from then on.

**JOSEPHUS:**

You can't help these people, Gabrielle. You can only die with them--a pointless death. (He strides up to her and stops, face to face with her, then continues, his voice harsh and almost brutal.) Do you want to sacrifice that boy for principle? (after a brief pause, he makes a slight gesture toward her belly) And the child you are carrying within you?

Shaken, Gabrielle crosses her hands protectively over her stomach and steps back; then she rallies herself, her eyes narrowing.

**GABRIELLE:**

You mean, the way you sacrificed your men.



**JOSEPHUS** (unperturbed):

I was prepared to die, Gabrielle. It was God who stayed my hand--because he had other plans for me.

**GABRIELLE** (rolls her eyes in disgust):

I can't believe this...

**JOSEPHUS:**

You of all people should understand. You're a bard. (Off her uncomprehending look.) We have to survive- because we must tell the stories.



**GABRIELLE** (incredulous):

And that makes our lives more precious?

**JOSEPHUS** (impassioned):

Yes! (off her headshake) Back in that crypt--I *knew* God wanted me to live--because I have to tell the true story of this war. I have to tell the true story of my people--to let the world know we're not just another barbarian tribe conquered by Rome.

**GABRIELLE** (sarcastic):

God wanted all that. How convenient for you. (after a brief pause) I'm surprised you ventured to enter the city. Some poor ignorant soul might mistake you for a common traitor and cut your mission short. (She pauses) Do you think God is watching over you? (scornfully) Or is it more that--your new Roman friends are holding hostages whose lives are protecting yours?

Josephus swallows, his pride obviously stung.

**JOSEPHUS:**

I came here to offer my help--to you. (adds, almost as an afterthought) And Xena.

**GABRIELLE** (looks at him curiously):

Why?

**JOSEPHUS:**

I told you. I'm a great admirer of yours. (He comes closer, looking at her meaningfully) You're a very remarkable woman, Gabrielle. (quietly) Far more than your friend.

There is a brief silence. Gabrielle looks down, then looks up at Josephus again and speaks, her voice firm.

**GABRIELLE:**

The answer is no.

Josephus stares at her sullenly, then nods.

***CUT TO***

Xena sits on the porch of the house, mending her boot. Her motions are brusque and almost violent.

The door opens behind her and Josephus starts to come out of the house.

Zoom in on Josephus's face.

A whizzing sound is heard.

Pan to an arrow flying toward the camera.

Pan back to Josephus, who looks startled and terrified as the arrow is a mere inch away from his neck.

A familiar hand with a gauntleted wrist shoots into the frame, catching the arrow.

The camera pulls back to show Xena holding an arrow in each hand. She gives Josephus a grim look and throws the arrows down.

**JOSEPHUS** (recovering from the shock):

I--guess I should say thanks.

**XENA** (grimly):

You may be a rat, but you're still an ambassador. (after a pause, with a bit of a sneer) Besides, your pathetic life isn't worth those of the hostages the Romans would have killed.

**JOSEPHUS** (dryly):

Very thoughtful of you.

**XENA** (narrows her eyes at him):

So. What was your embassy this time? (sarcastic) Did Titus think he'd have a better chance negotiating with me because I'm not one of the Israelites--and maybe I'll hand him the keys to the city on a silver platter?

Josephus gives her a penetrating look.

**JOSEPHUS:**

Titus was prepared to offer safe passage out of the city--for you and Gabrielle--and the boy.

**XENA** (quietly):

I see. (after a brief pause) I assume Gabrielle turned you down. (Off his sullen look) Thought so.

They stand still for a moment, facing each other.

**XENA** (continues):

Well, better move on before I have to catch any more arrows. You never know--one of these days, I just might miss one.

Josephus remains standing still, facing her.

**XENA** (continues, incredulous):

Don't tell me you expect to get further with me than you did with Gabrielle.

**JOSEPHUS** (quietly):

Perhaps.

**XENA** (brusquely):

Then you're not half as smart as I thought you were.

**JOSEPHUS:**

Really. (he comes closer to her) Well, I'm smart enough to know you've always protected Gabrielle--even against what you call--the Greater Good. (he pauses) I've read the scrolls, Xena. I know you wanted to save her when it was a choice between saving her and stopping the Persians.

Xena stares at him. His words have clearly gotten to her, though her face remains impassive.

**XENA:**

Then you also know that she stopped me.

**JOSEPHUS:**

Back there-- you could do something. Here--



**XENA** (interrupts, bitterly):

Here, you think I should just give up--the way you did. Well, I don't do that. (she pauses) Besides, these people asked for my help. They'll lose hope if I leave. I'm not going to let that happen.

**JOSEPHUS:**

Then let her leave without you. (He pauses, letting it sink in; then continues on a slightly sarcastic note) If you truly think there's something you can accomplish by staying here...having to worry about her, and that boy, is only holding you back. (Off Xena's glare) You can save her life--and still do what you think is your duty.

Xena gives him a long look, hostile but also somewhat thoughtful.

**XENA:**

Suppose I said yes. How would I go about getting her out? Tie her up, load her in a cart and take her outside the gates?

**JOSEPHUS:**

Where there's a will, there's a way. (he smirks a little) At least for you. Don't you think I know that?

They stare at each other in silence, until Josephus speaks again.

**JOSEPHUS:**

Come on, Xena. You know I'm right.

After a long pause, Xena averts her eyes and speaks in a hushed voice.



**XENA:**

I--have to think about it.

**GABRIELLE** (off-camera):

No, you don't!

Simultaneously, a door opens with an exaggerated "Whoosh" sound.

Pan to Gabrielle standing in the doorway, looking very angry.

**GABRIELLE** (to Josephus, her voice full of contempt):

Get out. Go back to your Roman masters. Tell them I'm not accepting any favors from them--or you.

Josephus looks at her, his face hardening. Then he turns around and walks away.

Gabrielle turns around, as brusquely as she can with her huge belly, and walks into the house. Xena goes after her.

### ***CUT TO***

The main room of the house. Gabrielle strides in, looking determined. Xena follows her.

**XENA:**

Gabrielle--

**GABRIELLE** (whips around):

So I'm a burden?

**XENA** (pained):

You know that's not it.

**GABRIELLE** (vehemently):

You were thinking of going behind my back to arrange for me to be taken out of the city. I can't believe it. (She pauses) Xena, I may be with child--but I'm not a child.

Xena comes up to Gabrielle and takes her hands, looking into her eyes. She is close to tears.



**XENA:**

Gabrielle-- you know how worried I am about you and Darion and--

**GABRIELLE** (vehemently):

And that makes me different than all the other people who are trapped here with their children? Who have no way out?

**XENA:**

Your staying here and risking your life won't do them any good. (She sighs, then continues in a hushed voice) You know it's not about winning anymore--it's about surviving.

There's a momentary silence. Then, Gabrielle shakes her head.



**GABRIELLE:**

No--it's also about being able to live with ourselves if we do survive.

Xena looks at her, choking up a little, and nods.

They embrace tenderly, then pull apart. Gabrielle wanders over to a bench by the window and sits down, looking pensive. Xena wanders over and sits down next to her, putting her hand around Gabrielle's shoulders.

**GABRIELLE** (in a near-whisper):

Think we'll ever see Greece again?



**XENA** (likewise):

I hope so.

She stares ahead, a thoughtful, wistful look on her face. Gabrielle glances at her, then takes her hand.

**GABRIELLE:**

You miss him, huh...



Xena gives her a startled look, then wordlessly squeezes her hand.

**GABRIELLE:**

You know, this is one time when I kind of wish he was still a god--and you could just call him and he'd pop in (she clicks her fingers) just like that.

**XENA** (chuckles):

Yeah, I guess that'd be nice...

She stares silently into the distance, then hugs Gabrielle tighter and kisses the top of her head.

***CROSS-FADE TO***

Morning at the docks. Ares is facing a stocky man of Middle Eastern appearance and dress, with a weather-beaten face--the captain of a ship which is right behind them.

**CAPTAIN:**

We sail at noon. A hundred dinars--take it or leave it. (he gestures toward Ares' jewels-laden sword) You've got money, by the looks of you.

Ares scowls at him, then swaggers a little.

**ARES:**

Money, huh? Funny thing--I never really needed it before.

**CAPTAIN** (scoffs):

Yeah? Getting by on your good looks up until now?



**ARES** (scowls):

Listen, I'm sure you'd love to listen to the story of my life, but let's make this short. (He unbuckles one of his gauntlets, looks it over with some regret, then thrusts it at the captain) This is worth way more than a hundred dinars.

**CAPTAIN** (eyes the gauntlet greedily):

I don't have change.

**ARES:**

Fine. Just take the damn thing.

The captain snatches the gauntlet and looks it over with a chuckle, then looks up at Ares.

**CAPTAIN:**

What's your business in Jerusalem, anyway? You know about the siege, right? The place is *crawling* with Romans. (He clucks his tongue and shakes his head in dismay) Fighting, pillaging, crucifixions... Not exactly a nice tourist spot.

**ARES** (with a bitter half-grin):

Just like it said in the brochure.

**CUT TO**

A wooded glade. Afternoon. John along with Eleazar and another one of John's lieutenants approach Xena, who has her back to them and is speaking in hushed tones with two other men.

John and his crew can't make out who the two other men are because Xena's obstructing their view. When they're about a foot away from Xena, she turns to face them and they can now see that Xena is there with Bar-Giora and Dov, Bar-Giora's second-in-command.

John looks furious. Bar-Giora and his friend, showing no surprise at seeing John and his lot. Xena remains as stoic as ever.

**JOHN:**

Is this a joke?

**XENA:**

Believe me, I don't like this any more than you do. But if we're to have even a chance to save the city from the Romans--we need all the help we can get, including him.

Bar-Giora bristles.

**BAR-GIORA:**

You think I'm happy to be working with the two of you--a fool and a heathen? But I want to save my city.

**JOHN** (scoffs):

By burning it down?

**BAR-GIORA** (smiles):

C'mon, John, if I can be big enough to do this, can't you?

Xena eyes John, waiting for his decision.

**JOHN:**

At least you were told the truth. I was tricked.

**XENA:**

That's only because I knew you'd be too proud to come. Now, all three of us want the same thing: to save Jerusalem. We don't have to be friends to do that, we just have to be able to work together and trust each other.



**JOHN:**

I could never trust a man who would defile the temple of his own god.

**BAR-GIORA:**

You say defiled, I say saved.

**JOHN:**

You--

**XENA:**

Enough!

That gets everyone's attention. John and Bar-Giora look at each other, mutual hatred in their eyes. Then John sighs in acceptance.

**JOHN** (grudgingly):

All right, we'll work together. (beat) Under her command. (gestures toward Xena)

Now it's Bar-Giora's turn to look as if he's about to explode. Dov's expression mirrors his.



**BAR-GIORA:**

That is *not* going to happen!

Pan to Xena, who remains calm.

**JOHN:**

She's the best fighter I've ever seen--*and* the best strategist.

**ELEAZAR:**

He's right. When she helped us keep the Romans from breaking through the gates--

**BAR-GIORA** (interrupts):

But she's a foreigner. She has no respect--

**JOHN:**

If we have a chance of winning, it will be *only* under Xena's leadership. She can keep you in check. That's the only way I'm agreeing to this alliance. (He pauses, then speaks emphatically) *Temporary* alliance.

A brief pause as Bar-Giora weighs his options.

**BAR-GIORA** (barely suppressing his outrage):

Have it your way.

John holds out his hand. After a long moment, Bar-Giora extends his and they clasp forearms.

Pan to Xena, who looks on, her expression is not too hopeful.

**XENA:**

Let's talk strategy.

## ***DISSOLVE TO***

Exterior shot of the Roman campground. We see various Roman soldiers sparring, cooking, and making fires.

Josephus rides up on his horse. He gets off and salutes some soldiers on his way to:

## ***QUICK CUT TO***

Titus's tent. Titus and Sabina sit vis-à-vis when Josephus enters. They both look up, clearly interested in what he has to say. Titus is sipping from his wine goblet, which he continues to do throughout the scene.

**TITUS:**

Well?

**JOSEPHUS:**

They've declined the offer--both of them.

Titus gives Sabina a smug look. She shrugs slightly, her face impassive.

**TITUS** (to Josephus):

Leave us.

Josephus bows slightly, then leaves the tent.

**SABINA:**

Yes, you told me so. (brief pause) It was worth a shot.

She holds his gaze steadily.

**TITUS:**

Well, I followed your advice. Now we do it my way. Imagine the look on my father's face when I lead Xena and Gabrielle in a triumphal procession along with the leaders of the Israelites.

**SABINA:**

You'll have to capture them first.

**TITUS:**

That's not going to be an issue.

Sabina smirks.

**TITUS:**

If you've got something to say, say it.

**SABINA:**

Don't forget--I've fought not only against Xena and Gabrielle, but beside them as well. And if you think capturing them will not be an issue--prepare to be unpleasantly surprised.



**TITUS:**

Except--I'm not you.

**SABINA:**

You're very right about that.

**TITUS** (chuckles):

I'll get them, you'll see.

**SABINA:**

How do you even know Vespasian wants that? It wasn't long ago that he wanted to make Xena and Gabrielle honorary Roman citizens for helping the Moesia colony.

**TITUS:**

They might have been allies then. Now, they're back to being enemies of Rome.

**SABINA** (mockingly):

Well, then--let's just hope Daddy sees it your way.

Titus ignores her and goes for his wine goblet. It's empty.

**TITUS:**

If I had known sieges were so boring, I'd have brought more wine. (He leans back lazily) And slave girls.

**SABINA:**

Don't worry--it won't be boring for long.

Titus narrows his eyes at her.

**TITUS:**

And why is that?

**SABINA:**

Because Xena's inside those walls. That means she's working on a plan.

Titus gives her a skeptical look.

**TITUS:**

We'll be ready for her.

**SABINA:**

A lot of people have said that. And where are they now?

Titus scowls at her.

**TITUS:**

I said we'll be ready.

Sabina gives him a mocking look as we:

**FADE OUT**

## **ACT THREE**

### **FADE IN**

The courtyard of Samuel and Naomi's home. It is just before dawn and there is a quiet stillness in the air. Xena and Gabrielle solemnly face one another silently, as if unsure of what to say to one another. Finally, both go to speak at the same time:

**GABRIELLE:**

Xena--

**XENA:**

Gabrielle--.

They both stop. Xena lets out a small, awkward laugh and Gabrielle looks away, as if searching for the words.

**GABRIELLE:**

We've been through this so many times before that there doesn't seem to be anything left to say.

Xena touches Gabrielle's cheek tenderly.

**XENA:**

You don't have to say anything, Gabrielle.

**GABRIELLE** (sighs):

Xena, I know this seems like just another battle but....I just get the feeling that it's something more. (she looks at Xena) Do you know what I mean?

Xena gives a small nod, a small hint of anxiety on her face as the thought has occurred to her as well. She forces a tiny, reassuring smile onto her face.

**XENA:**

Everything is going to be fine, Gabrielle.

Darion comes out into the yard, carrying Xena's sword and a small pack that Gabrielle takes from him. Darion hands her the sword.

**XENA:**

Thanks. (she puts her arm around his shoulder and leads him a few feet away and speaks in a hushed tone.) Darion, remember what we talked about. If anything happens to me you're going to have to look after Gabrielle and the baby.

**DARION:**

Nothing is going to happen to you, Xena. You can beat the whole Roman army.

**XENA** (chuckles):

Thanks for the vote of confidence, kid. You'll promise me, won't you?

Darion stares up at her a moment and he seems to age before Xena's eyes. Finally, he nods gravely.

**DARION:**

I promise, Xena.

Xena hugs him tightly then turns back to Gabrielle who hands her the bundle Darion brought outside.

**GABRIELLE:**

I made this pack up for you last night. There's some food and water, bandages...the usual stuff.

Xena takes the pack.



**XENA:**

Thanks. Still looking out for me, huh?

Gabrielle nods and swallows, blinking back tears.

**GABRIELLE:**

Always.



They hug a bit awkwardly due to Gabrielle's size. When they break apart Xena gives Gabrielle's belly an affectionate pat and starts off. When she reaches the gate of the courtyard she turns back and lifts her hand in farewell. Gabrielle waves back. Xena exits the courtyard and we cut back to Gabrielle. A single tear can be seen on her cheek.

**GABRIELLE** (whispers):  
Be careful.

### ***CUT TO***

The Western Gate. Xena and John, on horseback, are at the gate, many armed men lined up behind them. Bar-Giora and his men stand to the side. Some of them look at Xena with distrust and hostility, but most eyes fall on John. His look is solemn.

**JOHN:**  
I'm not one for speeches--but now, as we face a battle to the death, seems like a good time. I truly believe that the Lord is on our side and wants us to prevail. That is why he has sent us--Xena.

Xena looks somewhat uncomfortable with these words from John--though not with the groans and guffaws from some of Bar-Giora's men.

**JOHN** (continued):  
And now--let us all bow our heads in a silent prayer.

Everyone, save for Xena, complies. Close-up on Xena, who looks stoic and determined.

After a few moments, everyone looks up. John turns to Xena, a little nervous.

**JOHN:**  
Well--this is it.

**XENA:**  
You ready?

**JOHN:**  
Do I have a choice?

Xena gives him a knowing smile.

**XENA:**  
It's all right to be anxious. I remember when my hometown was under siege. Just hold it together as best you can. I'll do the rest.

**JOHN:**  
Xena, I just wanted to thank you again, and to say that I'm sorry about--

Xena puts her hand up to stop him.

**XENA:**  
Water under the bridge. (turns to the men) Let's move out!

The gates start to open.

***CUT TO***

Roman campground. Overhead shot of a Roman scout riding toward the campground. The camera holds steady on him until he reaches Titus and Sabina standing together, talking.

When they see the scout, they stop talking and give him their full attention. The scout gives them the Roman salute.

**TITUS:**

Report.

**SCOUT:**

My lord--a large force of Israelites has left the city gates. They're coming this way, thousands of them--led by--

**SABINA:**

Let me guess. A tall, dark-haired woman.

**SCOUT** (swallows nervously):

That's right, ma'am.

Sabina shoots Titus an "I told you so" look, but he pays her no mind.

**TITUS** (motions to an aide):

My horse!

***CUT TO***

Outside the gates. Xena and John ride at the head of their troops.

***CUT TO***

A wide shot of the Roman camp. Zoom in on Titus on his horse, addressing the Romans.

**TITUS:**

The Israelites are on the move. We have given them every opportunity to see reason and give up. But they seem to think their faith is going to save them. Well, we'll show them faith. Our faith in the might of Rome!

Loud cheers go up as the soldiers shoot their fists in the air. Pan to Sabina, who looks cool and sarcastic as usual but also has an excited glint in her eye.

Pan to Josephus, standing on the sidelines. He looks slightly pale, the expression on his face a mix of remorse, apprehension and disgust.

***CUT TO***

A quick montage of the Roman soldiers on the move, the cavalrymen mounting their horses and the infantry soldiers marching out of the camp.

## **CUT TO**

SPLITSCREEN of the Romans and the Israelites marching toward each other. The Roman's first line is the infantry; the Israelites have their cavalry out in front.

The two armies collide, ending our SPLITSCREEN.

Xena leads the charge, her sword drawn. She cuts down every enemy in her path with about three dozen cavalymen galloping behind her, demolishing more Roman infantry men along the way. Xena and her men ride along the side of the army.

Close-up on Sabina, eying Xena from a distance.

**SABINA** (mutters):

What are you up to, Xena?

Pan to Xena as she sticks her middle and her index finger up and makes a "V" with them.

Pan back to Sabina, who notices this gesture; then to Titus. A long shot of the field as John and rest of the cavalry move forward.

**TITUS** (to the cavalry):

Char--

**SABINA:**

No, you're playing right into her hands.

**TITUS:**

You forget who leads this army. (to the cavalry) Charge!

The Roman cavalry charges. Along with the remaining infantrymen, they meet John head on just as a long line of Israelite infantrymen whip out their bows and open fire on the Romans. The air thickens with hundreds of arrows.

**SABINA:**

Shields!

It's too late. Most of the Roman infantrymen are struck down, as is a good chunk of the Roman cavalry.

Xena points her index finger straight up, then points it down. That's the signal for a second line of Israelite infantrymen to hurl spears at the Romans, striking down more infantrymen and impaling a few cavalymen and horses.

A wide shot of the field. Xena and the cavalymen she had with her have managed to swoop up behind the Romans, trapping them between two lines of fire.

Zoom in on Sabina and Titus, side by side. Sabina can't help but smile at Xena's cleverness.

**SABINA:**

Oh, she's so good. I'll have to remember that one.

Titus gives her a nasty look.

**TITUS:**

Then why don't you go join her?

And with that, Titus charges into the battle, swinging his sword wildly at any man that dare come his way. Sabina gives Titus (who now has his back to her) a hard look, then follows his lead.

Two warriors on horseback charge Xena. She leaps out of her saddle, doing a jumping "V" kick, then does a reverse somersault to resear herself on her horse.

John parries with a warrior on horseback before stabbing him in the side. He spins and is hit by another warrior, knocking him off his horse. The warrior tries to trample him, but John wiggles and rolls to get out of the way. As the warrior swings down, making to run him through, John thrusts his sword upwards and stabs him in the chest. The horse neighs and flails about in alarm, throwing off the dying rider. John gets to his feet, reclaims his horse and rejoins the battle.

**CUT TO**

Gabrielle carries a bucket out to the goat pen. She seems distracted. A faint roar of men can be heard in the distance and she looks up towards the noise. She is obviously worried by the sounds of the battle. The goat bleats and she looks down at it.

**GABRIELLE:**

Oh--sorry.

She empties the bucket of water into the trough and the goat begins to drink. Another faint roar can be heard along with the clash of weapons. Gabrielle drops the bucket and moves swiftly towards the sound of the battle. Remembering herself she stops abruptly, as if being held by a tether. She stares off into the distance, a troubled look on her face. Suddenly she gasps and clutches at her stomach.

**CUT TO**

Naomi kneeling beside the hearth, stirring the contents of a pot. Gabrielle enters, still clutching her middle.

**GABRIELLE:**

Naomi!

Naomi leaps to her feet and rushes to her.

**NAOMI:**

Gabrielle! What is it, child? Is it time?

**GABRIELLE** (nods):

It started earlier this morning. I couldn't be sure--but the pains are coming closer together now!

Naomi takes hold of Gabrielle's elbow and leads her.

**NAOMI:**

You need to lay down. Darion!

Darion comes running in and his eyes go wide at the sight of Gabrielle.

**DARION:**

What's wrong? Is it--?

**NAOMI:**

It's time. Fetch some water and put it on the fire. And bring me towels. (Gabrielle gasps as another contraction hits. Naomi waves impatiently at Darion.) Quickly!

Darion takes off running.

**CUT TO**

Xena running across the battlefield.

Pan to Sabina, wielding two swords. She whips them back and forth, disarming and killing four men in a matter of seconds, then hurling one of the swords at an oncoming Israelite cavalryman. Close-up on the Israelite's face, then on the sword hurtling toward him. There is the sound of a blow. Pan to show the soldier from the back, the blade protruding from the back of his head as he falls.

Pan back to Sabina as she continues to fight. In the background, we see Xena do a flying kick, then pause as she clearly spots Sabina. She lands on her horse, a fierce look in her eyes.

**XENA:**

Alalalala--sheeeeyah!

Sabina, who has her back to Xena, freezes at the battle cry. Then, slowly, she turns to face Xena.



The two women stare at each other for a long moment, each with her sword drawn.



Close-up on Xena, her face hard, lip curled up in a slight snarl.

Close-up on Sabina, a chilly smile on her face.

Medium shot of Xena as she turns and rides away.

Close-up on Sabina as she stares after Xena.

**SABINA:**

Maybe next time.

INTERCUT with Gabrielle at Naomi's home.

Naomi stands next to Gabrielle.

**NAOMI:**

How are you doing?

***CUT TO***

Xena does a flying scissors kick, removing two warriors from their horses.

A Roman cavalryman decapitates a Israelite cavalryman.

The Israelite archers fire another round at the Romans, but the Romans are ready for them this time. They bring their shields up and as a result, only a few Roman cavalymen die.

***CUT TO***

Gabrielle shakes her head, red in the face.

**GABRIELLE:**

I'm pushing but--nothing's happening!

Naomi lays her hand on Gabrielle's stomach. She sighs and shakes her head.

**NAOMI:**

It's breech.

**GABRIELLE** (gasping):

Then that means you'll have to cut--

Naomi presses her lips together and pats Gabrielle's hand comfortingly.

**NAOMI:**

I'll be right back, child.

***CUT TO***

Xena, using her thighs as a vise, strangles a warrior while sitting on top of him.

John now has an axe that he is using to thrash his opponents.

Titus gets cut on the arm by a warrior coming up behind him and his reaction is a bit more wimpy than what one would expect from a military leader. He wildly swings his sword behind him in a blind rage, slashing the warrior's throat.

### ***CUT TO***

Naomi hurrying to find Darion seated beside the hearth, watching a boiling kettle of water. He jumps up when he sees her.

**DARION:**

How is she?

**NAOMI:**

Darion, I need you to do something for me. Run down to the end of the street and find Efrat, wife of the blacksmith Jonah ben Adi. Tell her to come right away!

Darion swallows, wide eyed. He is obviously terrified.

**DARION:**

Naomi, is Gabrielle going to--?

**NAOMI:**

Don't talk foolish, boy. Run for Efrat!

Darion nods mutely and runs off.

### ***CUT TO***

Xena slashing a man across the abdomen with her sword before running him through.

A panoramic shot shows that even with Xena's help, the Israelites are no match for the Romans. The Romans have maneuvered out of being trapped between two lines of enemies and are steadily pushing the Israelites back toward the gates of the city.

Zoom in on John, who is covered in blood--but mostly the blood of his enemies.



Pan to Xena, at some distance from him, fighting on foot. There is a brief pause as she and John exchange a meaningful look.

A long shot of Xena as she finishes off the warrior she's fighting with a palm heel to the nose and a kick to the face. Two more Roman infantrymen charge at her. She knocks down one of them and spars with the other. Meanwhile, the soldier she knocked down before staggers to his feet, swings his sword in slow motion, and hits Xena in the back of the head.

Xena sways and falls.

Pan to John as he yells out frantically to his men.

**JOHN:**

Xena's down! Get her inside now!

Pan to Titus.

**TITUS** (to his men):

Get Xena! She's down, take her now!

Sabina gallops up to him.

**SABINA:**

What's going on?

**TITUS** (smirks):

Xena is down... (off her shocked look) at the hands of a common soldier.

**SABINA** (stunned):

That's impossible!

**TITUS:**

I always knew she was overrated.

Sabina gives him a look that mixes scorn and disbelief.

A group of Roman cavalrymen ride toward where Xena fell, but she is already surrounded by Israelite foot soldiers and cavalrymen. She is hoisted up on one of the horses and carried toward the gates, into the thick of the Israelite forces.

Pan to Titus, who lets out an infuriated groan.

**CUT TO**

Darion in front of a house. He pounds his fist on the front door but there is no answer. He runs around the side in an attempt to find a window.

A passing old man notices him.

**OLD MAN:**

Looking for Jonah the blacksmith, are you, boy?

Darion shakes his head breathlessly.

**DARION:**

I need to find his wife Efrat. Do you know where she is?

**OLD MAN** (shakes his head):

Jonah and Efrat made a run for it once the battle began. You won't see them for dust.

Darion glances back at the house then takes off running.

**CUT TO**

Inside the gates. An Israelite warrior rides up with Xena in the saddle. She sits up, then dismounts.

Two men in Roman uniforms are standing right behind her. Xena looks back at them and grins.

**[FLASHBACK]**

Close-up of Xena sparring with one of the men.

**XENA** (to the man she's sparring with):

You're doing good.

She turns to the other man, who is starting to stagger up to his feet.

**XENA:**

Now!

The man swings his sword, stopping just short of hitting Xena in the back of the head.  
Xena collapses.

**[END OF FLASHBACK]**

**XENA** (to the men):

Told you the fake uniforms would work.

The men take off their helmets.

**MAN #1** (grins sheepishly):

Yeah--as long as they didn't get us killed by our own side.

**XENA:**

You did great.

Bar-Giora and Eleazar approach.

**ELEAZAR** (chuckles, to Xena):

How's the head?

**XENA** (mockingly rubs the side of her head):

Peachy. And now for the second wave. Remember, we wait until the Romans are almost at the gates, and then--

There is a commotion off-camera. A child's voice is heard shouting, "Let me go!"

Xena whips around to see one of the Sicarii holding a boy who tries to break free. Xena instantly knows who it is.

**XENA** (raises her voice):

Let him through.

The Sicarii warrior looks to Bar-Giora, who nods. The warrior lets go of the boy, who runs up to Xena. It's Darion.

**XENA:**

Darion! What are you doing here?

**DARION:**

It's Gabrielle. She's--

All of the color drains from Xena's face.

**DARION** (continues):

She's in trouble. There's something wrong with the baby. (He's almost crying) *Really* wrong. She's going to die if--



Close-up on Xena as she stares at him, horrified. His voice fades as we go to:

**[FLASHBACK]**

From *One Against an Army*

Gabrielle is lying down, looking very sick. Xena is standing over her.

**GABRIELLE:**

The first thing is the greater good--you taught me that.

**[END OF FLASHBACK]**

Medium close-up on Darion. There are tears streaming down his face.

**DARION:**

Xena, *please!*

Xena stares at him, her face reflecting a struggle.

**[FLASHBACK]**

**GABRIELLE:**

We both know that I'm right. This is right. Xena, promise me--promise me that you will not leave this battle because of me.

**[END OF FLASHBACK]**

**XENA** (to Eleazar and Bar-Giora):

You two--start the second wave. I'll come back as soon as I can.

**ELEAZAR:**

Wait a minute--you can't leave now--

**BAR-GIORA:**

I knew it. I knew we couldn't count on you. I told that fool--

Xena grabs him in anger. Bar-Giora is momentarily caught off-guard, as is Eleazar. One of the Sicarii tries to make a move on Xena, but a swift, hard kick in the chest from her puts him in his place: knocked out in the corner.

**XENA:**

I don't have time for this. My friend needs me. Now, you are going to stay here and follow the plan.

Bar-Giora finally finds his nerve. He breaks her grip on him.

**BAR-GIORA:**

I'll do what I have to.

**ELEAZAR** (glumly):

So will I.

**XENA:**

Looks like I'll have to trust you. Darion, come on.

They run off.

The camera moves in on Eleazar and Bar-Giora, who look after them. Eleazar looks disappointed and angry; Bar-Giora has a slight grin on his face as we:

***FADE OUT***

## **ACT FOUR**

***FADE IN***

Xena, along with Darion, running through the streets of Jerusalem. Off-camera, the sounds of battle are heard, like a soundtrack to a film.

***CUT TO***

The battle just outside the city gates. The Israelites are retreating with the Romans pushing them back to the gates.

A close-up on John fighting. He has a bleeding cut on his cheek.

***CUT TO***

The Western Gate. Eleazar and Bar-Giora stand ready. The square in front of the gates is filled with Bar-Giora's Sicarii. A small group of John's men huddle around Eleazar.

A watcher shouts from the gate tower.

**WATCHER:**

They're almost at the gates!

**ELEAZAR (shouts):**

All right! Remember, once we're out of the gates, the archers fire!

***QUICK CUT TO***

Archers on the towers, hidden behind the battlements.

***CUT TO***

At the gates. Eleazar turns to Bar-Giora.

**ELEAZAR:**

It's time. Give the signal to open the gates.

Bar-Giora stares at him, not moving. Eleazar frowns slightly.

***CUT TO***

Naomi's Home. Naomi is sitting beside Gabrielle's bed, clutching her hand. Xena and Darion rush through the door, slightly out of breath.

**GABRIELLE:**

Xena? (to Darion) You were supposed to get the midwife.

**DARION:**

I couldn't find her.

**GABRIELLE:**

Xena, you shouldn't be here. You're needed on the battlefield.

Xena goes over to Gabrielle.

**XENA:**

Never mind about that right now. How are you?

Gabrielle presses her lips together, knowing it's futile to argue.

**GABRIELLE:**

It's breech.

Xena puts her hand on Gabrielle's abdomen.

***CUT TO***

A Roman soldier getting his hand chopped off by John's axe on the battlefield.

***CUT TO***

Western Gate. Eleazar stares expectantly at Bar-Giora.

The camera pulls back as Bar-Giora turns to the crowds of his followers. He stands in an almost regal posture and raises his arms.

**BAR-GIORA** (in a resonant voice that carries above the crowd):

The gates--stay locked.

Pan to Eleazar, who is in shock. There are gasps from John's followers, drowned out by cheers from the Sicarii. The camera pans over the crowd of onlookers who have gathered nearby. They look worried. One of them is Samuel.

**ELEAZAR** (explodes):

Bar-Giora, you--madman! We had a deal!

**BAR-GIORA** (smiles brazenly):

Exactly--we *had* a deal. Xena was part of it. And now--she's not.

**ELEAZAR:**

Get out there and fight, coward!



**BAR-GIORA** (still smiling):

Sticks and stones, my friend. (he raises his voice again) I know a sign from the Lord when I see one.

**ELEAZAR** (stunned):

What are you talking about?

**BAR-GIORA:**

At the very hour that the final step of this plan was to be carried out--the Greek harlot deserted us. Do you think that was mere coincidence? No, it was a sign from our Lord--that we have earned his wrath by taking orders from a heathen. And why do you think it is that John and his followers are out there-- (he gestures toward the gates) being slaughtered by the Romans--while my men and I are in here?

Quick pan to Samuel, who steps forward. He looks furious.

**SAMUEL:**

Because you locked them out, you charlatan!

Bar-Giora stares at him with a cold, terrifying smile.



**SAMUEL** (continues, looking at John's followers, the onlookers, and the Sicarii):

Come on! Are you going to listen to him? Desert your brothers? (he gestures toward Bar-Giora) I used to follow him once, until I saw him for what he is.

Bar-Giora walks toward him while Samuel continues to speak.

**SAMUEL:**

I promised my mother--who has no family left but me--that I would not go into this battle. But I would rather break my word to her than watch him get away with this! Come on--let's open the gates and get out there and fight!

He moves to walk toward the gates, but Bar-Giora blocks his way and puts a hand on his shoulder. He is still smiling.



**BAR-GIORA:**

You should have heeded the word of God.

Pan to Samuel, who stares at him with puzzlement and hostility; then to Bar-Giora for a close-up.

**BAR-GIORA** (continues):

Honor your mother.

He clenches his jaw and grunts slightly, as if from exertion.

Pan to a close-up on Samuel. His eyes bulge and he groans.

The camera pulls back to show Bar-Giora yanking a dagger out of Samuel's chest. Samuel crumples to the ground, dead.

There are gasps from the crowd. Pan to Eleazar, who looks horrified; then to the ranks of Sicarii. Even some of them look troubled. The camera pans over to Barnabas, the Sicarii who was involved in the confrontation with Samuel in Act 1. He looks at Samuel's dead body, clearly uneasy.

Meanwhile, Bar-Giora turns to the crowd and continues to speak as if nothing happened.

**BAR-GIORA:**

They're being killed out there--because they followed Xena. Now I can clearly see what the Lord wants: he has chosen me to lead Jerusalem. And I accept.

Most of the Sicarii cheer loudly. Unnoticed by the rest, Barnabas breaks off from the crowd and leaves, walking off into a side street. Many of the onlookers begin to back away and leave the square as well.

***CUT TO***

The battlefield. John and his men are trying to hold off the Romans. One of John's lieutenants yells to him over the noise of the battle.

**LIEUTENANT:**

They should have been out of the gates by now!

**JOHN:**

Something's wrong.

## ***CUT TO***

The square by the gates.

**BAR-GIORA** (raises his arms):

Behold--your true king! Together, we shall defeat the Romans--and restore this city to the glory of the Lord!

As the Sicarii cheer, Eleazar and the rest of John's followers look around grimly, realizing that resistance is futile.

Pan to Eleazar as one of his men speaks to him quietly.

**WARRIOR #1:**

We've got to do something to help them.

Eleazar nods. After the cheers die down, he shouts out.

**ELEAZAR:**

Archers--*fire!*

Pan to the archers on the walls as they pop up from behind the battlements and rain arrows down on the Romans; then down to the field to show dozens of Romans falling, dead or wounded.

Pan to Titus.

**TITUS:**

Fall back!

As the second volley of arrows comes down, the Romans fall back.

Pan to John. He is breathing hard and looks very grim, realizing he is cornered.

**JOHN:**

We'll have to do this ourselves, then. (raises his voice) *Charge!*

Though exhausted and outnumbered, the Israelites charge at the retreating Romans.

## ***CUT TO***

Inside the gates. As the Sicarii gather around Bar-Giora, Eleazar gestures to his men.

**ELEAZAR:**

Come on. We have to get out there and help John.

**WARRIOR #1:**

How? They'll kill us if we try to unlock the gates. The other gates are too far--we'll never reach them in time.

**ELEAZAR:**

The tunnel. Come on.

**WARRIOR #2:**

Didn't Xena say it was too dangerous?

**ELEAZAR** (grimly):

Well, *Xena's* not here.

**CUT TO**

Xena and Gabrielle at Naomi's house.

Xena lays her palms on Gabrielle's stomach.

**XENA:**

I can fix this.

**GABRIELLE:**

You'll have to-- (she winces) make an incision and--

**XENA** (shakes her head):

Not necessarily...

Naomi breaks down a little in relief.

**NAOMI:**

Praise the Lord of Hosts!

Gabrielle manages a small smile.



Xena puts both of her hands on Gabrielle's abdomen. She slowly but purposefully moves the fetus in a clockwise motion. Gabrielle lets out a small gasp and tosses her head. Xena works intently, slowly trying to turn the baby. Gabrielle squirms in discomfort. Finally satisfied that she has turned the baby, Xena nods in reassurance.

**XENA:**

Okay, now push.

Gabrielle grits her teeth and pushes with a loud grunt.

**GABRIELLE:**

Xena, what if this baby--?

**XENA:**

Don't think about that right now! Push!

**CUT TO**



The battle. John and Titus, both on horseback, clash with each other. John is the better trained of the two, and it shows. John makes graceful and skilled movements with his axe while Titus makes sloppy movements with his sword.

**CUT TO**

Naomi's home. Gabrielle is still pushing. Xena is kneeling by the foot of the bed. She wipes a sweaty lock of hair from her forehead and nods calmly.

**XENA:**

You're doing just fine, Gabrielle. I can see the crown of the head.

**CUT TO**

The battle. Sabina is in a sword fight with the lieutenant to whom John was talking before. He manages to hold his own for a few seconds before Sabina kicks his sword out of his hand and then, with another kick, sends it flying toward him so that it is buried in his chest. The man falls dead.

Medium close-up on Sabina as she smiles, clearly impressed with her own skill.

Sabina turns and the camera follows her gaze to show Titus battling John not far away. The two men grapple and tumble down from their horses. John is the first to jump to his feet and swing his sword, but Titus manages to dodge the blow by rolling away and then scrambling to his feet as well.

**SABINA:**

Oh my.

She whips around and, with a fierce cry, chops down two Israelites who were coming up behind her.

## ***CUT TO***

Naomi's house. Xena is still kneeling by the foot of the bed as Gabrielle has propped herself into a nearly sitting position by her arms. Her face is contorted by the exertion of pushing.

**XENA:**

Come on Gabrielle...just breathe and focus...one more push...

**GABRIELLE:**

You keep saying just one more!

**XENA:**

Well, I never was very good at math.

## ***CUT TO***

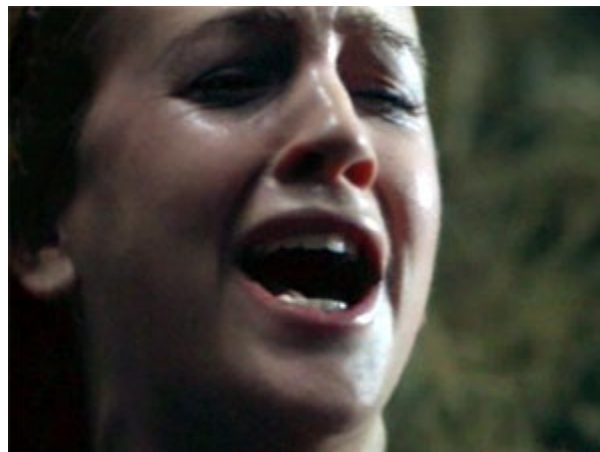
The battle. The ground is littered with bodies. The Israelites are clearly losing; most of them are dead or wounded, and the rest are trying in vain to hold off the Romans.

Pan to Sabina at the head of a squadron, advancing on the Israelites and pushing them back toward the walls.

Pan to Titus and John, who are still fighting.

As the camera zooms in, we see that Titus has several cuts on his face and nicks in his armor from John's axe. Each sword thrust he tries, John deflects. John twirls his axe, sharp side down. Thinking he has a shot, Titus goes for the kill--but John twirls his axe again, disarming Titus in the process, then slams the flat end of the axe into Titus' face, knocking him off his feet so that he lands flat on his back.

## ***CUT TO***



Naomi's house. Gabrielle lets out a final, guttural cry and collapses back on the bed in exhaustion. Xena proudly lifts the newborn up for Gabrielle's inspection. Her eyes are visibly moist from emotion.



**XENA:**

You have a son, Gabrielle.

Gabrielle gasps.

**GABRIELLE** (weakly):

Is he--

**XENA:**

He's fine. He's--perfect.

Close-up on Gabrielle, smiling through tears.

**CUT TO**

John raises his axe over Titus, about to make the kill. We see him from Titus' point of view. As he starts to bring the axe down, a kick in the side sends him flying--and, in his place, we see Sabina holding out her hand to Titus.

Pull back to show Sabina helping Titus to his feet.

**TITUS:**

Took you long enough.

**SABINA:**

Better late than never.

She turns around and charges John. He swings his axe at her, but she bobs and weaves, deftly avoiding his strikes. She somersaults over him, then kicks him in the gut as he turns around. He stumbles backward as she brings her sword down on his head. He raises his axe to block it; she moves the sword so that it chops the handle of the axe in half. John manages to catch the blade with the now-shortened handle and swings it at Sabina, cutting her on the arm.

**SABINA** (nonchalantly):

Not bad.

John draws a shortsword at his belt and charges Sabina, swinging the axe blade in his left hand and wielding the shortsword with his right.

**CUT TO**

A courtyard in Jerusalem. An opening in the side of a brick wall leads into what looks like an underground crypt. Eleazar, followed by a group of warriors loyal to John, come up to the wall.

**ELEAZAR:**

This way.

The warriors follow him into the crypt. The camera pans back to show that they are followed by a crowd of people who left the square after Bar-Giora proclaimed himself king.

**WOMAN IN THE CROWD:**

Come on, follow them! I heard them talking about a tunnel--it's a way out of the city!

**MAN IN THE CROWD:**

Are you mad, woman?

**WOMAN:**

Do you want to stay here, trapped between the Romans and that maniac?

She runs down into the crypt. The crowd hesitates a moment. Voices are heard shouting:

--This is madness!

--No, she's right!

--Don't listen to her!

--It's the only way out, let's go!

A few more people rush down into the crypt. The rest follow them.

***DISSOLVE TO***

Sabina fighting John. He manages to drive her back a few steps before she somersaults over him. He turns just in time to receive a kick from Sabina that knocks the shortsword from his hand. He swings the axe blade, which she blocks with her sword; however, John sees an opening and spins to deliver a kick at her gut. She staggers back, but rallies in time to dodge his punch, then spin and sweep his legs out from underneath him.

John starts to get up, only to find Sabina's sword at his neck.

**SABINA:**

Give it up. You have nothing left to fight for.

John looks around. Hundreds of his men lie dead or wounded; others are being shackled by the Romans.

John drops to the ground in defeat.

***CUT TO***

The underground tunnel, crammed with people. Pan to Eleazar and his men out in front.



**ELEAZAR:**

Hurry up!

One of the wooden beams holding up the ceiling of the tunnel snaps in half under pressure from the crowd. Soil, sand and pieces of rubble and stone are starting to rain down from the ceiling.

**WARRIOR #2** (looking up):

God help us--it's going to cave!

The crowd erupts in shots of panic as some people try to push back and others to push forward.

**CUT TO**

John, now disarmed, his hands shackled, standing before Sabina and Titus.

**SABINA** (to John):

So. What is Xena up to?

John remains silent. Titus glances at Sabina, surprised.

**TITUS:**

What are you talking about? We both saw her go down. She's probably dead or dying somewhere behind those walls. (chuckles) Some great warrior she turned out to be. (To the soldiers, nodding toward John and his men who have been captured alive). Take them away.

As John and his surviving men are led away, Sabina shakes her head.

**SABINA:**

You don't get it. There's no way she'd go down so easily. It's *got* to be part of a plan. (to herself, puzzled) But what is it?

**TITUS:**

No matter. We finish this now. (off Sabina's questioning look) We storm the gates.

**SABINA:**

Bad idea. I'm telling you, Xena's in there and she's got a plan. Storming the gates is probably just what she wants us to do. I know her.

**TITUS:**

Maybe you don't know her as well as you think.

**CUT TO**

The tunnel. It now looks ready to cave in at any moment. The people are screaming in panic; it's a complete pandemonium. Eleazar and his men are still trying to make their way forward.

**ELEAZAR:**

Keep moving!

The tunnel collapses, burying everyone under dirt and rubble. Their screams can be heard as the screen fades to black.

## ***CUT TO***

A portion of the city walls, over the tunnel, caves and collapses in slow motion.

## ***CUT TO***

Titus and Sabina, facing off against each other.

### **TITUS:**

Forget about Xena! Get the men ready to storm the gates.

There is a commotion among the Roman soldiers.

### **SOLDIER (off-screen):**

Sir! Look--over there!

Titus and Sabina turn around abruptly (with a "whoosh" sound) to see the wall collapsing and settling in a pile of rubble.

Pan to John, being led away in shackles. He turns and looks at the walls. A close-up on his face, filled with shock and horror.

Pan to Sabina, who shrugs slightly and grins.

### **SABINA:**

Well. I guess that saves us the trouble of knocking down the door.

## ***DISSOLVE TO***

The Roman army, with Titus and Sabina riding at the head of the troops, pours into Jerusalem through the breach in the walls.

## ***DISSOLVE TO***

Gabrielle, dressed in a loose white robe, is breastfeeding her baby, seated in bed. Her face is lit with a quiet glow.

The camera pulls back to show Naomi washing up with Darion's help, then pans to Xena, who sits on the edge of the bed, looking at Gabrielle. Close-up on Xena, a tender, bittersweet smile on her face.

### **GABRIELLE (looks up at Xena):**

Thank you.

Xena nods wordlessly and reaches out to squeeze her hand. After a moment she speaks.

### **XENA:**

Look--I have to go back there. I just hope--

There is a loud, insistent knock on the door. Xena turns abruptly.

**XENA** (to Naomi):

You stay here. I'll see who it is.

She goes out. Naomi and Gabrielle exchange a worried look. Then Gabrielle smiles at Darion.

**GABRIELLE:**

Look. You have a baby brother.

Darion comes up to her, a little apprehensive.

Xena returns with Barnabas. Gabrielle sits up, a look of fear and shock on her face.

**GABRIELLE:**

Xena, this man--

**BARNABAS** (interrupts, speaking to Xena):

You've got to stop him!

**XENA:**

Stop who?

**BARNABAS:**

Bar-Giora! He's gone mad!

Xena and Gabrielle exchange a look of dismay.

**BARNABAS** (continues):

I used to think he wanted the best for our people, but now--

Naomi comes up to him, looking fearful.

**NAOMI:**

Barnabas, what's going on?

Barnabas gives her a guilty look, as if not knowing what to say.

**NAOMI:**

Where's Samuel?

**BARNABAS** (stumbles over his words):

He's-- (takes a deep breath) He's dead.

Naomi cries out and covers her hands with her mouth, then collapses to the floor.

Gabrielle looks on, horrified.

**XENA:**

What happened?

Barnabas looks at her and swallows nervously.

## ***CUT TO***



A montage of Roman soldiers on the rampage through the city, the shots dissolving into each other:

- \* Roman soldiers running;
- \* houses burning;
- \* Roman soldier shouting, "Burn everything!"
- \* men, women and children running around in a panic;
- \* a man tries to fight back against a Roman soldier, wielding a shovel, but is quickly cut down;
- \* a woman runs out of burning house carrying a sack with some of her possessions; a Roman soldier grabs the sack out of her hands and pushes her to the ground;
- \* an old woman runs through the street, carrying a small child;
- \* Roman soldiers come out of a large house carrying looted jewelry, dishes, goblets, and rich fabrics;
- \* in a courtyard, a woman hits a Roman soldier with a frying pan; he punches her, knocking her to the ground;
- \* a Roman soldier torches a house.

## ***CUT TO***

An exterior shot of the temple. Zoom in to show Roman soldiers battling the Sicarii on the temple steps by the doors. Pull back to show Sabina, on horseback, looking on as the Sicarii fall.

## ***CUT TO***

Inside the temple. A crowd of people has gathered. They are kneeling and praying, led by an elderly priest in a prayer shawl.

## **PRIEST:**

Heavenly father, protect us in this our hour of need. Shelter us from the storm.

## ***CUT TO***

Outside. The bodies of the dead Sicarii are on the temple steps. A Roman soldier comes down the steps and approaches Sabina.

**SABINA:**

Are there people inside?

**SOLDIER:**

At least five or six dozen. Your orders?

Sabina pauses, looking at the majestic temple.

**SABINA:**

Get them out. Collect the temple treasures.

Zoom in on her face. There is a flicker of regret in it, but then her expression turns cold and hard.

**SABINA:**

Then--burn it.

## ***CROSS-FADE TO***

**MONTAGE:**

- \* Roman soldiers dragging people out of the temple, beating and kicking some of them;
- \* Roman soldiers looting the temple, carrying out vases, jars, plates and other things;
- \* Fire sweeping across the interior of the temple;



- \* an exterior shot of the temple in flames.

## ***DISSOLVE TO***

Naomi's house. Naomi is crouched on the floor, sobbing as Gabrielle (holding her baby) tries to comfort her. Darion looks frightened. Barnabas stands by the wall, looking uneasily at Naomi. Xena stands at the window, looking out.

Pan to the window, from Xena's point of view. Flames are seen in the distance; a growing din of pandemonium fills the air.

**XENA:**

Something's going on. I'm going outside to check it out.

She grabs her sword and heads toward the door.

**XENA** (to Barnabas):

Make sure they're safe.

He nods silently.

**CUT TO**

Exterior of the house. Xena comes down the porch and she sees about a dozen Roman soldiers coming out of the house next door, carrying their loot, which they throw into a cart. A sobbing woman, carrying a small child with two other children clinging to her skirts, is herded out of the house. The Romans then fling two torches into the house, setting it on fire.

Several of the Romans approach Xena.

**ROMAN SOLDIER #1:**

You don't look like one of the locals.

**XENA** (sneers):

Funny, neither do you.

**ROMAN SOLDIER #1:**

Well, whoever you are, you and anyone else that's in there (gestures toward the house) have got two minutes to get out.

Xena gives him the death glare.

**XENA:**

Oh yeah? Well, you've got ten seconds.

The Romans look at each other and burst out laughing, then charge. Xena leaps up, then stretches her body out horizontally, striking out with fists and feet, knocking four soldiers down.

She goes straight into a somersault. Her feet connect with a tree. She pushes off of it into a back somersault and hits a soldier dead in his chest with her feet, knocking him down.

As the remaining soldiers charge her, Barnabas runs out of the house, dagger drawn. He charges one of the Romans from behind and slits his throat while Xena runs another soldier through with her sword. Barnabas stabs another Roman in the chest and whips around--only to fall as a Roman's sword plunges into his chest. As he crumples, the Roman who killed him yanks his sword out of the dead body --only to be run through by Xena's sword.

As the Roman falls, Xena grabs his sword; with a fierce yell, she twirls both swords and kills two Romans coming up behind her.

**ROMAN SOLDIER #2:**

Come on, let's get out of here!

The remaining soldiers run off, abandoning the cart with the loot. Xena stands looking after them, breathing hard. Then she notices that the flames of the burning house are already licking the walls of Naomi's house. She turns and races inside.

***CUT TO***

Inside the house.

Naomi, who is slightly more composed now, sits on the bed, her hands crossed in her lap. Gabrielle with the baby is sitting next to her. Darion stands next to them, tense and anxious. Xena rushes in.

**XENA:**

We've got to get moving. *Now*. The Romans have taken the city.



**NAOMI (broken):**

I can't. I--I have nothing left. (choking a sob) This is the house where my son grew up--

**XENA:**

Naomi, the house is about to burn. Come on!

**NAOMI:**

Just save yourselves. All I can do is slow you down.

**GABRIELLE:**

We're not leaving you.

**XENA:**

Come on. (to Gabrielle) Can you walk?

Gabrielle gets up but is a little wobbly on her feet.

**GABRIELLE:**

I'll be fine.

***CROSS-FADE TO***

The burning temple. A crowd of wailing Israelites is watching the inferno. Suddenly, an imposing figure in purple robes pushes its way through the crowd. It's Simon Bar-Giora. He goes up the steps of the temple and addresses the crowd.

**BAR-GIORA:**

People of Jerusalem! Listen to me! The cleansing fire has come! (the camera zooms in on him as he speaks until we see him in close-up, a mad gleam in his eyes) It is the Lord who has sent this destruction--because our wickedness has made him turn away from us! His just wrath is upon us! He-

He is interrupted in mid-sentence, choking suddenly as his eyes bulge.

The camera pulls back to show the handle of a dagger protruding from his chest.

Pan to a black-clad Sicarii warrior standing in the front of the crowd, lowering his hand. His face is implacable.

Bar-Giora clutches at the dagger in his chest, trying to pull it out. Then he falls, dead.

**DISSOLVE TO**

A city street. Dusk is starting to fall, the air colored by the eerie light of flames. The houses have been reduced to still-smoldering rubble. Several dead bodies are lying on the ground.

A group comes into view: two women, one tall and one shorter, wrapped in black cloaks that cover their heads and leave only the faces open; a small boy; and a horse led by the taller of the two women. As they walk toward the camera, we recognize the women as Xena and Naomi. (The cloaks are similar to the ones that Xena and Gabrielle wore in *Motherhood*.) The camera pulls around and we see that the horse is pulling a cart--the one in which the Romans were carrying their loot before. In the cart is Gabrielle with the baby.

Xena looks up. The camera follow her point of view to show a Roman officer on horseback, blocking their way. Zoom in closer to show that it's Sabina. There are about a dozen foot soldiers behind her.

Xena stops abruptly, holding out a hand to stop Naomi. Sabina rides closer as the other soldiers stay behind.

**SABINA:**

You sure you aren't half-god, Xena? Because you do heal fast.

She rides closer. Xena remains silent.

**SABINA:**

So tell me, Xena--what was your game? Of course I figured out that you weren't really hurt out there on the field. (She thinks a moment) A couple of your own men in Roman uniforms, was that it?

Xena stares silently, her face hard and impassive.

**SABINA (continues):**

Hmm--I figured. Good one. So--what went wrong? I kept waiting for a trap--a trick--

An infant's wail is heard. Sabina's eyes widen. She rides closer and sees Gabrielle in the cart, rocking her baby. Her eyes meet Gabrielle's defiant stare. Then she looks at Xena, whose look suddenly turns soft and anguished.



**SABINA:**

So that's it. It was all about her. (She shakes her head) Oh, Xena, Xena. I knew that sentimental side would be your downfall.

**XENA** (through clenched teeth):

Spare me the lecture.

**SABINA:**

Straight to business? Well, then. (she pauses) I *could* take you prisoner. Titus really has his heart set on leading you two in his triumphal procession alongside John of Giscala. And something tells me you're not in the mood to fight.

Xena's hand goes toward her belt.

**VOICE** (off-camera):

Let them go.

Pan to Josephus, who has come up behind Xena and Gabrielle. He steps forward to stand by Xena's side. She whips around and gives him a stunned stare.

**SABINA** (mock surprise):

Now--why didn't I think of that?

**JOSEPHUS:**

I think you did.

**SABINA:**

Really.

**JOSEPHUS:**

If you take Xena down--you'd want it to be one on one, a fair fight. As your own victory--not a gift to your boss.

**SABINA** (scornfully):

I don't have a *boss*, little man. (Pan to Josephus, who bristles) Just--a supervisor.

She pauses a moment, then turns her horse around and shouts to her men.

**SABINA:**

Let's move along! (gestures toward Xena and her companions) These can go through.

Extreme close-up on Xena as she stares at Sabina with a mixture of shock, resentment, and gratitude. The camera pulls back slightly as she nods quietly and mouths a "Thank you."

Sabina rides back toward her men. Xena touches the bridle of the horse and they resume their walk, with Darion and Naomi in tow. They pass by Sabina and her soldiers.

**SOLDIER:**

Who are they? The way you were talking to that tall one, I thought she was someone special.

Sabina stares pensively after the small group, then finally speaks.

**SABINA:**

She's nobody.

**CUT TO**

Further down the street. The group continues to walk. Josephus catches up with them and starts to walk by their side.

**JOSEPHUS** (to Gabrielle):

Are you all right?

**GABRIELLE** (sighs):

I'm alive... ( She pauses, then adds with a sigh) Josephus...I guess I should thank you.

**JOSEPHUS** (with a small, slightly mocking smile):

Yes, I guess you should.

Xena lets out an angry, sarcastic "Hmph" and Josephus turns to her.

**JOSEPHUS:**

Come on, Xena. I'm not a bad man.

**XENA** (scoffs):

Some of us would beg to differ.

**JOSEPHUS:**

There was nothing I could have done to stop the Romans, Xena. Nothing! But now--because I'm alive--I can do something for my people. I can write the history of this war.

**XENA:**

Going to write about how your new masters burned down the temple of your God?

Josephus gives her a troubled look.

**JOSEPHUS:**

They didn't. It was the Sicarii. (heatedly) Come on, you know what madmen they are!

**XENA** (sarcastic):

Are you trying to convince me, or yourself?

They continue to walk in silence for a few moments. The dusk deepens, and the tint of orange flames in the sky is becoming more visible.

**JOSEPHUS:**

You know, some years ago we had a preacher here in Jerusalem who said that if the temple was destroyed, he could rebuild it in three days. (he chuckles mirthlessly)

**XENA:**

Too bad he's not here right now. You sure could use his help.

She continues to walk, Josephus still walking next to her.

**XENA:**

You know, just because you did us a good turn doesn't mean I want you following us around.

Josephus sighs and gives up, realizing that his attempts at friendliness are getting nowhere.



**JOSEPHUS:**

Xena, all I want is to help you get out of the city. Go to the Lions' Gate; it's lightly guarded.

**XENA:**

Thanks--but we're going out by the Western gate.

**JOSEPHUS** (puzzled):

Why?

**XENA** (glances at Naomi):

We have to find someone there--to pay our last respects.

Naomi bows her head in sorrow.

Josephus stops, his arms crossed on his chest. The camera tracks Xena, Naomi, Darion, and Gabrielle in the cart as they recede into the distance.

**CROSS-FADE TO**

Night. A campfire is burning. The camera pulls back to show Gabrielle nursing her baby. Darion is sitting nearby, staring thoughtfully ahead.

Off-camera, Xena's keening funeral song is heard.



Pan over to Xena to show her standing over a fresh burial mound with a rock on it. Naomi is kneeling at the burial mound, hands folded in prayer.

The song ends. After a brief silence, Xena walks back to Gabrielle and sits down next to her.

After a moment Naomi rises unsteadily and joins them, sitting down .

**NAOMI** (her voice shaky):

He's a beautiful boy. (after a pause) Have you chosen a name?



Gabrielle looks up at her and nods.

**GABRIELLE:**

I'm going to call him Samuel.



Naomi takes her hand and holds it between her palms, her eyes filling with tears. She pats the back of Gabrielle's hand and nods, then lets go of her hand and wipes away tears. Xena puts her arm around Gabrielle's shoulder.

The camera pulls away to show the group by a dying campfire: Gabrielle holding her baby, her head resting on Xena's shoulder, and Xena leaning slightly against Gabrielle, both of them staring into the distance; Darion sitting next to Gabrielle, also staring ahead; and Naomi, staring in the same direction, her face full of grief.

The camera slowly pulls around behind them until it is showing their point of view, then zooms out to show the distant, sinister glow of Jerusalem in flames as we:



***FADE OUT***

**THE END**

*[The tragic true events that form the basis of the episode continue to reverberate in history until the modern day.]*