

XENA

"Destroyer of Nations"
Pilot Story Outline
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TEASER

In classical mythology, Hercules was the greatest hero of Greek antiquity. Under the command of KING EURYSTHEUS of Argos, Hercules single-handedly performed his legendary Twelve Labors for the honor and glory of his monarch and country.

The reality was a lot different... Hercules was a mercenary who -- for a hefty fee from the King -- terrorized the enemies of Argos, humiliated its competitors, and stole whatever treasures his King coveted.

Also, Hercules didn't really perform his labors single-handedly. Hercules traveled with a small army of thugs, thieves, and pirates who helped him perform all the great deeds for which he took sole credit...

But one of Hercules's hired warriors proved to be his downfall.

This is her story...

1

EXT. THRACIAN COUNTRYSIDE -- OUTSIDE A FORTRESS -- DAY 1

HERCULES and a small team of his MERCENARIES -- including his toady nephew IOLAUS -- watch this heavily-guarded enclave. This is the castle of DIOMEDES, a Thracian warlord known across the land as a fearsome giant.

In Diomedes's stables are the prize of one of Hercules's legendary Twelve Labors: flesh-eating feral mares tethered in bronze chains. King Eurystheus wants to humiliate Diomedes by stealing his animals, and Hercules has been sent to steal the beasts with the promise of a rich reward.

Hercules, Iolaus, and his men argue as to how to best infiltrate and steal the horses. Afraid of the guards and mares, everyone wants to rush in and attack as a group... but one warrior wants to sneak in and ride the horses out.

That warrior is XENA, the only woman in the team.

No one believes she has what it takes to tame the mares. Xena calls the men cowards, and moves out on her own...

2 EXT. DIOMEDES COMPOUND -- CASTLE GROUNDS -- INTERCUT 2

Hercules and his men watch from afar. Xena sneaks into the grounds, KNOCKS OUT A GUARD and enters the Diomedan stables...

Then... silence.

Hercules and his men wonder -- was Xena killed by one of the flesh-eating mares? A guard?

No. The STABLE doors CRASH and out rides Xena, riding one of the wild horses, pulling the rest by their chains! That awakens the rest of Diomedes's guards, and that's when Hercules gives the call for his men to rush the castle.

3 INT. CASTLE OF DIOMEDES -- CASTLE GROUNDS -- CONTINUOUS 3

The battle is joined. Hercules's men and Xena on horseback make short work of the guards.

But as the battle rages around him, Hercules finds himself face to face with DIOMEDES: a hulking warrior well deserving of his reputation as a giant.

Diomedes corners Hercules and is about to deliver him a death-blow... but he is saved by Xena: who rides in, disarms Diomedes with her signature weapon -- the CHAKRAM -- and then THROWS the giant to his own mares to be eaten!

And as Xena helps Hercules to his feet -- having saved him, and not for the first time...

SMASH CUT TO MAIN TITLES

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

4 EXT. THRACIAN COUNTRYSIDE -- HERCULES'S ARMY CAMP -- NIGHT 4

Hercules and his army celebrate around a BONFIRE. Under a banner bearing his sigil -- the head of a snarling lion -- Hercules speechifies to his cheering mercenaries about how richly they will be rewarded by their master -- King Eurystheus of Argos -- when they return home.

Watching from afar, Xena steps away from the revels -- her mind occupied with plans and schemes bigger than the theft of a few mythical beasts -- and as Hercules sees her go...

5 **EXT. HERCULES'S ARMY CAMP -- SECLUDED SPOT -- NIGHT** 5

Hercules finds Xena. A former pirate and a fearsome soldier -
- she has been by his side since his labors began.

From their conversation, three things are completely clear:

1. Xena and Hercules share an attraction for one another.
2. She is clearly the smarter and more ambitious of the two.
3. Hercules is the leader, the one who has an army, a myth attached to his name, and a King who pays him: Xena needs him far more than he needs her.

Xena flatters Hercules, telling him that she sees him as something greater than muscle for hire for King Eurystheus. Why does he need to work for someone? His legend is powerful -- people think he is the son of a god -- and the world fears him. Xena proposes that Hercules could start keeping all the treasures they now steal for Eurystheus and use the wealth to build his army into a truly formidable fighting force.

One day -- Xena tells Hercules adoringly -- they could even march that army into Argos, depose Eurystheus, and rule it as their own kingdom.

Hercules shakes his head. He doesn't see himself as a king: too much work. Xena persists, now mixing seduction with persuasion: he is a titan and a leader, born to rule. Hercules protests: Eurystheus is his master and benefactor. Eurystheus has made him rich. Why would he want to overthrow him?

Xena looks up at Hercules: this isn't about one king, but about the future, their future. She sees them as more than just mercenaries... but Hercules cannot extend his vision that far.

Xena and Hercules's conversation becomes charged with her challenges and flattery -- and his lust for her. The scene quickly becomes the foreplay of two people who crave domination over one another.

6 **EXT. HERCULES'S ARMY CAMP -- HERCULES'S TENT -- NIGHT** 6

Xena and Hercules tumble into the tent, unable to keep their hands off one another: two beautiful and athletic warriors, their shared lust fueled by the rush of recent battle and the desire for mutual conquest. Their relationship may be a complicated dance of power and manipulation, but it's also -- quite clearly -- a romance (even if it's pretty twisted at that).

7 **INT. HERCULES'S ARMY CAMP -- XENA'S TENT -- NIGHT** 7

Leaving Hercules passed out in bed, Xena returns to her tent... only to realize that she is not alone. There are two ASSASSINS hiding there -- waiting to attack.

Cleverly turning the tables on her would-be killers, Xena quickly snuffs them both... then suits up with her armor and weapons, and exits her tent to warn Hercules...

8 **EXT. HERCULES'S ARMY CAMP -- XENA'S TENT -- CONTINUOUS** 8

Only to find the rest of the army MOVING IN TO CONFRONT HER, weapons at the ready... and standing in front of the gathered men? Hercules.

END OF ACT ONE**ACT TWO**9 **EXT. HERCULES'S ARMY CAMP -- NIGHT** 9

Xena and Hercules face off. Hercules tells her that she would have been better off quietly killed in her sleep by the assassins. Xena can't believe it: how could he do this to her? Someone who has fought by his side and helped him to countless victories?

Hercules shakes his head, she did it to herself. A woman who plots against a King could just as easily plot against her commander, even if he is her lover.

Xena levels a look at Hercules that speaks to the depth of his betrayal, and tells him that she would have never plotted against a man who had her back in battle. Lust and attraction are one thing, but they are warriors, and she expected him to at least be loyal to that.

Hercules steps back and orders the men to seize her: telling them that she is an ambitious, power-hungry woman who is plotting against their King and is not to be trusted, a traitor who would sacrifice any of them to get what she wants.

Xena draws her sword and Chakram. One of the toughest of the mercenaries steps up. Xena cuts him down with one strike.

Who's next?

NIGHT TURNS TO DAY as Xena's rescuer bandages her, starts a fire, and gets her cart in order... but as she prepares to take Xena to safety, a group of SLAVERS enters the road.

The slavers are eager to capture the women and sell them. Xena stirs, but her rescuer tells her to lay back: she is in no shape to fight.

Xena's rescuer stands up to the slavers -- pointing to the road rash on Xena's skin and convincing them that she has leprosy, that she is taking her to a leper colony, and that if they come any closer, they will be infected.

It is clear that this young woman has an impressive command of language -- and speaks multiple tongues -- and an ability to spin a yarn that convinces even these hard men. The slavers believe her and leave, convinced that they will die from leprosy otherwise.

Once they are gone, Xena, finally able to put words together, looks up at her and asks "who are you?" Her rescuer smiles beatifically:

"My name is Gabrielle."

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

12

EXT. SCYTHIAN VILLAGE -- NOMADIC HOMESTEAD -- DAY

12

After a lengthy journey, Gabrielle brings Xena to her home: a gathering of tents, makeshift farms, and animal pens.

Gabrielle's people, the Scythians all have bright red hair, blue eyes, and tattoos of varying levels of intricacy depending on their level of influence in their society. Like some Native Americans, the Scythians are nomadic: they follow the seasons as they hunt and gather, putting down stakes for months at a time in one location.

Also like Native Americans, each Scythian settlement is a village, but also part of a greater nation, ruled by a CHIEFTAIN. The Scythians are outside of the rule of King Eurystheus, and fiercely proud of their heritage.

Gabrielle's dad, HERODOTUS is a blacksmith and armorer. He's also a single father raising both Gabrielle and her sister LILA (15). Gabrielle -- who was out in the country foraging for minerals for her father's workshop -- shows them the woman she rescued instead.

Lila is frightened by Gabrielle bringing a stranger and outsider home. Herodotus agrees: they don't know who this woman is, and their settlement is a small community working at a subsistence level. Outsiders are dangerous.

Gabrielle stares down her father: is he suggesting that she go back and leave this sick woman to die or be abducted by slavers? That's not who Herodotus and Gabrielle's late mother raised her to be.

Herodotus recognizes that he has raised a headstrong daughter who has thoroughly taken in her mother's lessons on always doing the right thing for the greater good... and grudgingly agrees to take Xena in.

13

INT. HOMESTEAD -- BEDROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

13

Gabrielle tenderly lies Xena down to rest and heal. Weary and wounded, Xena tells Gabrielle that her family is right: she is a dangerous person. Moreover, Xena asks, why is Gabrielle sticking her neck out for a complete stranger who has no wealth or power to pay her back? Gabrielle feels bad that Xena can't understand simple kindness.

Xena confesses that she cannot understand it -- and wants to know what Gabrielle truly wants in exchange for this. Shaking her head, Gabrielle explains that her tribe are nomads -- they have no set home, no permanent property, and they follow the seasons -- all they have is one another.

Gabrielle then tells Xena that her mother was a wise woman -- a true believer in always doing the right thing for the greater Good. One of the lessons she taught Gabrielle before she died was that for her people to leave someone behind to die is a sin: like cutting off a part of one's own body.

Xena admits to Gabrielle that she has committed many sins far worse than that -- and that she has never, ever done anything for the "greater good". In Xena's experience, the world is a mean and brutal place where people only do what's best for them. Gabrielle replies that if the world were truly like that, then Xena would be dead on the road.

Gabrielle regards Xena's wounds and tells her that it's going to take her months to heal... and weeks before she can even get on her feet again. Xena will have some time to think through her life choices.

As Xena falls asleep...

TRANSITION TO A MONTAGE

14 **INT. SCYTHIAN VILLAGE -- VARIOUS -- MONTAGE** 14

-- Xena HEALS in Gabrielle's village. Gabrielle helps her get up from bed and take her first steps...

-- Xena impresses Herodotus in the smithy, forging herself a new sword, even as Lila looks at her with suspicion...

-- as MONTHS GO BY, Xena teaches Gabrielle how to fight, trying first with a sword, and then with a quarterstaff... the two of them clearly bonding...

-- Xena realizes that Gabrielle is getting better and better with the staff, and she's proud... Gabrielle pulls a move on Xena (who is not yet back at 100%) and knocks her feet out from under her...

-- and as Xena and Gabrielle lock eyes, and smile at one another...

TIME CUT TO

THREE MONTHS LATER

15 **EXT. CITY OF ARGOS -- NIGHT -- ESTABLISHING** 15

The might of one of the largest of the city-states of Ancient Greece sprawls in all its glory...

And somewhere in this vast city...

16 **INT. ARGOSIAN HOUSE OF ILL-REPUTE -- NIGHT** 16

Hercules's men -- flush with wealth from their many adventures -- party their gains away in debauchery.

Hercules ENTERS the place, full of purpose and ignoring all of the women who throw themselves at him. He finds a drunken Iolaus and tells him to get the men together: the king has a mission for them.

Iolaus looks at his master: another treasure to steal? Hercules shakes his head no: the King has given him a lot of money, weapons, and horses... and trusted him with a new mission. They are riding north and east, across Thrace, to rid the countryside of a series of nomadic tribes that have begun incursions into the land. If they clean the countryside, the king will make Hercules and his men rich enough to live the rest of their lives in luxury.

Iolaus raises a flagon and calls the men: time to go back to war! And as Hercules's army gathers once more...

17

EXT. SCYTHIAN COUNTRYSIDE -- DAY

17

Xena and Gabrielle finish training and make their way home. Xena is almost fully healed from her wounds. Xena has told Gabrielle very little about how she wound up half-dead and wandering the countryside, but Gabrielle knows that Xena is training for something.

Xena finally confides that she intends to go on a mission of vengeance. A man took everything from her and left her for dead. Now that man has to die. Gabrielle: and then what? What kind of life will she have if all she lives for is revenge? What kind of good can she do?

Xena rolls her eyes. Gabrielle has repeatedly told her all about her plans to leave the nomadic life of her people, to travel to the great city-states of the southwest, and eventually settle at a Lyceum where she can train to be a bard. Xena: maybe Gabrielle hasn't been paying attention, but they live in an atavistic warrior culture. Men rule this land -- men with swords, not quills.

Gabrielle shakes her head, believing solidly that words and ideas -- and not violence -- are what will change the world for the better. The two go through this argument as if they have done it a million times (which we can totally tell they have)...

But this time is different, Gabrielle finally confides that she is afraid that when Xena goes off to her vendetta, she will never come back.

Xena and Gabrielle lock eyes. "Come back?" Asks Xena.

Xena has not had place to come home to since her village was sacked when she was a child. Xena was then sold to slavers, and eventually escaped to apprentice herself to soldiers and pirates. She has spent her life hardening herself, closing off the possibility of a permanent place to stay and people to care for because of the defining tragedy of her childhood, and now Gabrielle appears to be offering her a place to call home.

Xena looks at Gabrielle: what about her plans to leave and become a bard? As Xena asks the question, it becomes clear that the possibility of finding a home here has occurred to Xena... but not without Gabrielle.

It's a charged moment: a powerful, shared acknowledgement of mutual attraction, of what these two women have come to mean to one another over the many months one has nursed -- and one has trained -- the other.

Neyar's daughter -- a legendarily beautiful princess -- had been promised in marriage to the prince of a horse clan with whom Neyar's tribe has squabbled for a long time. The members of the horse clan are terrible savages, but they command a vast army.

This union is crucial both for peace among the Scythian tribes, but also for their survival as a people -- as there have been reports of a vast army razing Scythian villages across the borderlands.

The problem is that Neyar's daughter, the princess, has run away: unwilling to be traded off for a political alliance. Neyar has had his men search far and wide for the missing princess to no avail... and then for someone who resembles the princess enough to double for her.

That someone is Gabrielle.

Will Gabrielle do a service for her king? Will she sacrifice herself and pass for the missing princess to save herself and her people?

22

INT. HOMESTEAD -- SMITHY -- LATER

22

Neyar's men wait outside. Lila is thrilled -- her sister is going to be a Princess. Xena is furious and cannot believe that Gabrielle is about to go through with this. What about her dreams of becoming a bard? Going to a lyceum? The world changed by stories and not by force?

Gabrielle is shocked that Xena cares about her dreams -- which she had previously dismissed. Xena looks at Gabrielle: she does care, and she has been listening... maybe Xena is a badass who doesn't fully understand Gabrielle's ambitions, but she doesn't want her -- a good person who showed her kindness and gave her a place to heal -- to be traded off like a brood mare.

Xena explains that Gabrielle deserves to lead her own life, whatever that is, and -- in an uncharacteristic moment of self-revelation -- makes it clear that she herself never had a chance to choose what she would become. Xena wants that for the person who saved her life.

Gabrielle tells Xena that what she is about to do will serve the greater good. If Gabrielle wants to serve "the greater good," Xena shoots back, she should start by thinking about herself.

Gabrielle tells Xena to look over to Herodotus and Lila: that's the "greater good," home and family -- the people whom she loves and who love her -- can't Xena understand that?

Xena looks away: for the first time she can, even if she can't bring herself to admit it.

Gabrielle tells Xena that she has made up her mind, she is going with the King's men.

23 **EXT. HOMESTEAD -- DAY**

23

Gabrielle leaves her home and family with Neyar's men -- leaving Xena behind... but not before beseeching her to not go forward in her life in anger.

Watching Gabrielle go, Xena takes her sword and leaves the homestead: chiding Herodotus for essentially selling his daughter, and Lila for thinking it's a good thing.

24 **EXT. COUNTRYSIDE/NEYAR'S HEADQUARTERS -- MONTAGE**

24

-- Xena walks from the Scythian village...

-- Gabrielle is taken to ZARANA -- a massive tent city and the capital of the Scythian tribe -- where Chief Neyar keeps his stronghold...

-- In her new quarters, Gabrielle is made over as the Princess. Gabrielle's body is TATTOOED to match the royal markings that were once exclusive to the Princess...

-- As Gabrielle goes through this painful process...

-- Xena gets further and further away... and finds herself spotting a large army in the distance...

-- She then comes closer to see something that chills her...

This army marches under the snarling lion's head banner of Hercules.

25 **EXT. SCYTHIAN COUNTRYSIDE -- FORWARD GUARD POST -- NIGHT**

25

Xena AMBUSHES two of the advancing forward guards of Hercules's new army.

As you may remember from watching the classic *Xena: Warrior Princess* television series, Xena has a foolproof interrogation technique... the ability to do a pressure point strike on an opponent -- closing their airway and giving them thirty seconds to live.

Xena does her pressure point strike on the guards, and demands to know what Hercules is doing here with this army.

The guard spills: Hercules's army has been marching across the land, destroying Scythian outposts, and is now headed for the capital city of Zarana for a major offensive.

This is Xena's moment of truth -- kill Hercules or go back to Zarana and warn Gabrielle and her people of the coming attack?

Xena could sneak back in, infiltrate the army, and do exactly what she healed herself to: kill the man who took everything from her. But then what? This army is vast -- could she escape after killing its master? Would the army still march on Zarana without Hercules, killing thousands of Gabrielle's people?

What will it be?

Xena lets the guards pass out, steals one of their horses... and heads back across the land toward Gabrielle!

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

26

INT. NEYAR'S CASTLE -- GABRIELLE'S QUARTERS -- NIGHT

26

Still recovering from the pain of her ordeal under the tattooist's needle, and now covered in markings that make her instantly recognizable as a Scythian princess, Gabrielle enters her quarters, surrounded by HANDLERS... but sends them away when she sees Xena, hiding in the shadows, waiting to rescue her.

Gabrielle is in no mood to have this conversation again -- her mind is made up -- but Xena tells her that the conversation has changed, Hercules and his army are coming to sack the city. There's no political alliance that can save this settlement. Gabrielle needs to come with her now, get her parents, and escape.

Gabrielle looks at Xena in amazement -- is she committing a selfless act? Did she turn her back on vengeance to warn her and her people of an impending attack?

Xena nods, the two lock eyes, and for the first time, they kiss.

But the moment is short-lived. Neyar's guards enter to spirit Gabrielle away: the city is under attack by an army bearing a snarling lion sigil. The Princess must be taken to safety! Gabrielle insists that Xena come along.

ACT SIX

30

EXT. TENT CITY OF ZARANA -- CENTER -- DAWN

30

The city lies in charred ruins in the aftermath of Hercules's raid. Neyar has been horribly wounded. The Princess/Gabrielle has been kidnapped. Xena goes to Neyar -- bandaged and carried by his men in a litter -- and introduces herself.

Neyar recognizes Xena from her past as a warrior, pirate, and mercenary. He even knows Xena's nickname from that life: "Destroyer of Nations."

Xena tells Neyar that she knows Hercules -- and most likely, he is taking Gabrielle back to Argos as a prize. Gabrielle will be turned given to Eurystheus as a gift and kept in his harem in a final, humiliating indignity.

Neyar wants to summon all his remaining soldiers and go after Hercules. Xena confronts him: he just got his ass handed to him and his city is in ruins. Without his Princess -- without his military alliance -- all he will do by attacking Hercules and Argos is seal the doom of his people.

Xena offers Neyar a deal: give her arms, a horse, and gold, and she will follow Hercules's Army all the way back to Argos if necessary. She will come back with Gabrielle and Hercules's head if it's the last thing she does.

Neyar understands that there is no one better to go on a single-handed mission of mayhem and agrees to her terms: but her time will be limited, once he has healed, he will muster his forces and attack...

And Xena had better not be caught on the wrong side when he goes on the warpath.

IN A FINAL MONTAGE

In an epic, Rambo-like sequence, Xena suits up in new armor, gathers the finest weapons provided by the King of Scythia, and mounts a new horse.

And as she leaves the smouldering ruins of Zarana behind: hellbent on rescuing Gabrielle... and making Hercules pay...

END OF PILOT