

SHIPPER SEASON TEN

“The Dark Ages”

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Logline

In search of answers to troubling dreams, Eve finds herself thrust into a life that is no longer her own. What she learns could determine her fate--and much more.

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TEASER

FADE IN

[film de-colored, almost in black/white]

Night. About a dozen soldiers dressed in black leather make their way down a forest trail.

Leading them is a woman dressed in similar attire with dark black hair. On her breastplate is a golden design depicting two crossed arrows, a half-moon, and a laurel branch. It's the symbol of Artemis.

Suddenly the woman stops dead in her tracks and holds up her hands to bring the men to a halt.

SOLDIER #1 (whispering):
What is it, Maera?

MAERA (scanning the trees, to the soldiers):
Draw your weapons.

The camera pans up to the trees as a shadowy figure leaps across the branches. Suddenly a loud bird cry is heard in the distance, as dark figures are seen leaping down from the trees to surround the soldiers. The figures are Amazon-like, but there are some men in the mix. The soldiers hold tight to their swords as they are surrounded by the twenty figures that are advancing on them.

The figures quickly attack them, and as the camera pans around we notice one of the women leading the attack: it's Eve. Her hair is shorter and she is wearing a short black leather outfit, a shield in one hand and a katana in the other. She is fighting fiercely against Maera.

The camera then pans over to a young man with sandy blonde hair, probably only 17 or 18 years old, fighting off one of the soldiers. He seems to be fighting with a pair of sais, and it isn't long before he cuts the soldier down. Behind him a blonde-haired woman runs a soldier through, and then side kicks another that is charging towards her.

Artemis' soldiers don't seem to have a chance. As Maera and Eve continue to duke it out, an arrow flies in and strikes one of the Amazon-like figures as they are about to kill one of the soldiers.

The camera pulls around to the blonde woman as an arrow is seen flying towards her, a hand reaches out and catches the arrow, inches from the woman's face. The camera pans back to show that it's the man that was fighting with the sais.

BLONDE WOMAN:

Good catch.

The man drops the arrow and then looks in the distance to see themselves being surrounded by archers.

YOUNG MAN:

It was a trap.

The camera pulls on Eve, her sword clashed with Maera. Maera begins to laugh.

MAERA (sinisterly):

Artemis has been waiting a long time for your blood to be spilled on her altar.

Eve lets out a roar and pushes Maera back. Suddenly she spins around and catches an arrow that is flying towards her in the distance, but before she can react another strikes her in the stomach. Her eyes go wide.

BLONDE WOMAN (shouting):

EVE!

Eve crumbles to her knees.

SMASH CUT TO

Eve is lying down with her eyes closed. She looks dead. She is being shaken by an old woman.

OLD WOMAN (fearfully):

My queen...My queen...

Suddenly Eve's eyes shoot open and she gasps for air. Blood begins to drip from her mouth. Her long hair is draping over her normal Amazon outfit--a red leather one-piece outfit different from the one she used to wear that was similar to Varia's--much different from her appearance in the previous scene.

OLD WOMAN:

I had to bring you out of it. I thought it was going to kill you.

The camera pans on the old woman's worried expression. We quickly realize that it is Alcinoe, from the Season 8 episode "Three Way Split." She was the Amazon shamaness that Eve asked to perform a ritual to rid her of memories as Livia.

Candles illuminate Alcinoe's hut, as a spilled cup of what appears to be blood is sitting at Eve's side. It seems as though they were performing some Northern Amazon ritual.

EVE (softly):

I saw so much that time. (to Alcinoe) We need to try again.

ALCINOE (grabbing the cup, forcefully):

No! It nearly killed you this time, my queen!

EVE:

I'm not seeing the past anymore, Alcinoe. I am seeing the future. These nightmares, these dreams, these visions--they are all connected.

ALCINOE (shaking her head):

You've done enough already.

Alcinoe gets up and begins carrying away some strange herbs and tiny bottles.

EVE (standing up):

I need to know what my purpose is in the Twilight this time around. Alcinoe, please. I need answers.

Alcinoe turns to look at her. She has a conflicted expression on her face.

ALCINOE (softly):

Then you'll have to find them somewhere else.

Close-up on Eve's defeated expression.

CUT TO

Night. A forest trail is shown, looking very similar to the trail in the opening scene.

Present Eve can be seen walking along the trail. She is draped in a dark cloak. The camera pulls close to her face as she scans the area. Suddenly there is a flash of light as she has a vision:

SMASH CUT TO

[film de-colored, almost in black/white]

It is a continuation of the previous scene. Eve has been struck with the arrow and crumbles to the ground. Maera advances on her and lifts her sword. A whipping sound is heard as the blunt end of a sai strikes her in the back of the head. She falls over.

The young man grabs the sai, as the blonde woman rushes over to Eve's side.

BLONDE WOMAN (to the man):

Hurry, we have to get her out of here.

Arrows fly towards them as they lift Eve up off the ground and begin to carry her off into the forest.

FLASH TO

[film in full color]

Present. Eve holds her head in pain as she scans the forest, and then heads in a similar direction. The screen flashes white as another vision is shown:

SMASH CUT TO

[film de-colored, almost in black/white]

The blonde woman looks nervously behind them, as they are carrying off the injured Eve. Eve groans in pain. The camera pulls around to show an old stone temple in front of them.

YOUNG MAN (indicating the temple):

Hurry, let's get her in there.

SMASH CUT TO

[film in full color]

Present. Eve makes her way to a similar clearing with the stone temple in front of her. She heads towards the entrance.

CUT TO

Inside the temple. The doors slowly open as Eve enters. A smoky fog covers the floor, as Eve scans the strange place.

Three cloaked figures are seen weaving away at the Loom of Life. It's the Fates.

CLOTHO:

Roman warrior--

LACHESIS:

--Messenger of Peace--

ATROPOS:

--Amazon Queen--

CLOTHO:

--To what do we owe this pleasure?

EVE (nonchalantly):

I was in the neighborhood.

LACHESIS:

Welcome, child.

ATROPOS:

Your existence has caused us many frequent visits, more than any other life thread.

EVE (irritated):

Well, it seems as though you ladies have done quite a bit of talking behind my back lately.

The Fates remain silent.

CLOTHO:

What is it that you want to know?

EVE (looking at the dissolving Loom):

I want to know everything about the Twilight. And don't give me any cryptic messages, 'cause that's how rumors get started. Then before you know it, people will start believing that a god dies every time I forget to wash my hands.

LACHESIS:

Our messages hold truth, Eve.

EVE (losing it):

You said my birth would bring about the death of the gods! And for twenty-five years they continued their reign while I was raised as a murderer!

ATROPOS:

The gods were killed by your mother's hand.

EVE:

...and then we brought them back, only to find out it was just going to happen all over again.

CLOTHO:

A long and difficult storm lies upon your path...

LACHESIS:

...the future is plagued with...

ATROPOS:

...death, destruction, and suffering.

There is a long silence as she watches the Fates weaving the Loom. Their eyes are weary, their faces pale.

EVE:

And that's all you can tell me? Nothing but horrible things lie ahead? And there's nothing I can do to change it?

LACHESIS:

Maybe--

CLOTHO:

--you can.

ATROPOS:

Knowledge—

CLOTHO:

--is power.

Suddenly Eve looks down at her hands as her body begins to glow in a white fiery flame. The Fates pay no attention to her. They only focus on the Loom.

Eve suddenly screams out in pain as the flame fills her entire body, and then dematerializes.

SMASH CUT TO

[film de-colored, almost in black/white]

A continuation of the previous scenes. The blonde haired woman lays Eve's body down on the temple floor. She grabs onto the arrow lodged in Eve's stomach and pulls it out quickly. The unconscious Eve gives a small gasp. A bright white fiery light fills her body as the wound begins to heal itself.

BLONDE WOMAN (to young man):

Darion!

The young man, Darion, looks over to see the glow in Eve's body beginning to fade.

The words "SEVEN YEARS LATER" appear across the screen.

Close-up on Eve's face as her eyes flash open.

FADE OUT

ACT ONE

FADE IN

Eve sits up, gasping for air. Her hair is shorter and she is wearing a black leather outfit. She begins looking around in panic.

EVE:

Where am I?

BLONDE WOMAN (softly, touching her shoulder):

Eve, it's me, Klymene.

Eve looks confused, as she looks over the much older Klymene.

KLYMENE (motioning to Darion):

Darion, get me some water.

EVE (glancing at the older Darion):

I'm in the future.

Darion grabs the water canteen and hands it to Klymene.

DARION (sighing):

Must be delirious.

EVE (to Klymene):

Do you remember when Scyleia's baby was born? (Klymene nods) How long ago was that?

KLYMENE (frowns, baffled by the question):

About seven years ago.

EVE (whispering):

Seven years...

DARION (whispering to Klymene):

Sounds like some kind of memory loss.

KLYMENE (looking at Eve):

Her wound has completely healed.

DARION (smiling):

It's a miracle from God.

KLYMENE (rolling her eyes):

Don't talk about that Eli garbage in front of me.

DARION:

Do you have a better explanation?

Eve stands up, looking a little dazed.

EVE (to Darion and Klymene):

Whether you believe me or not, I need some answers.

KLYMENE (nodding):

We'll have to head out through the river. Artemis' scum will be scouting the area.

CUT TO

Montage of shots:

- Three people running through the shallow river.
- Klymene scouting ahead.
- The sun rising over the hills.

DISSOLVE TO

Morning. A small cave. Darion and Klymene are sitting on one side, and Eve is kneeling down on the other.

KLYMENE:

So the Fates sent you into the future?

EVE (confused):

I'm not sure. It felt like something...stronger.

KLYMENE (sarcastically):

Like Eli's god?

Darion ignores the insult.

EVE (softly):

Maybe.

DARION (confused):

So you don't remember anything of the last seven years?

EVE (shaking her head):

No. When I left the Amazon village, it had only been a month or so since Virgil arrived--

Darion and Klymene share a worried glance. Eve picks up on it.

EVE (concerned):

What is it?

Darion looks away, and Klymene looks saddened.

KLYMENE (softly):

Eve... (Eve shakes her head) Virgil's dead. He was killed about six years ago.

EVE (holding back):

How did it happen?

KLYMENE (eyes filling with tears):

The war against Artemis. It has taken so much from us.

EVE (holding back tears):

I...I'll be back.

She rises abruptly and stalks out. Klymene sighs and wipes away tears.

DARION (whispering, looking down sadly):
What I wouldn't give to go back seven years.

Klymene puts a comforting arm around Darion.

CUT TO

Eve wanders through the forest, tears streaming down her face. She comes to the edge of a hill, overlooking the area. Below she notices a village in the distance, with an army of soldiers stationed outside.

EVE (whispering):
Artemis.

She reaches and finds the katana on her back, and then she races down the hill.

CUT TO

Darion and Klymene wandering through the forest.

DARION (shouting):
Eve!

Klymene reaches the edge of the hill and notices Eve running towards the village.

KLYMENE (confused):
What is she doing?

CUT TO

An army of rag-tag soldiers roams the streets of a now abandoned village. One of the men, who appears to be a general, approaches a group of soldiers.

GENERAL:
Get some oil and torches. Set fire to the temple.

CUT TO

Eve sneaks her way between two buildings. She peeks her head out to see the groups of villagers shackled together in chains. In the distance she sees the back of a woman wearing a black cape, giving orders to a group of soldiers.

Eve reaches down and grabs a small dagger by her side; she then makes her way back down the alley.

CUT TO

An old man in shackles is holding a small figurine in his hands, with his eyes closed. He is muttering a prayer. Suddenly we see the back of the woman wearing the black cape step in front of him. She knocks the statue out of his hands. It falls to the ground and shatters.

OLD MAN (shouting at the woman):

We will never join you.

CUT TO

Eve makes her way through the village and sees the woman standing in front of the old man as she draws her sword.

CUT TO

OLD MAN (shouting):

We won't abandon our faith!

The camera pulls around the man to show the woman's face. It's Xena.

XENA (sinisterly):

Then you can continue your worship of Artemis. In Hell.

Xena raises her sword as a whipping sound is heard, she quickly turns around and deflects the dagger that was flying straight towards her.

The camera pulls around to show Eve, with a startled look on her face as she lowers her hand.

EVE (shocked):

Mother?

Xena has a puzzled look on her face. Suddenly Eve is charged by a group of soldiers. She stands there in shock as one of them throws her to the ground.

XENA (shouting):

Back off!

The soldiers step back. Xena steps forward. She is wearing dark silver armor and chainmail, with a black cape and her sword on her back. Her chakram still rests at her side.

XENA (kneels down, sincere):

Eve...what's going on?

EVE (disbelief):

What are you doing to these people?

Xena looks confused.

XENA:

This was part of the plan. We were going to meet up with you at the rendezvous point.

Eve looks troubled, as she glances over to see the villagers in shackles. She makes eye contact with the old, the women, the children.

Suddenly a black horse gallops into the village square. The rider is wearing dark black armor and chainmail, his long, black curly hair resting on his shoulders. It's Ares. He jumps off the horse and walks over to Xena who is getting up off the ground.

ARES (glancing at Eve):
What is she doing here?

Xena turns to Ares.

XENA:
Order them to take the prisoners outside the village gates. I'm gonna take Eve back to our tent, and I'll meet up with you there.

Ares nods. Xena looks down at Eve, who is still lying on the ground trying to comprehend what is going on. Xena extends her hand. Eve looks up at it for a moment, and then grabs onto her hand as Xena pulls her to her feet.

CUT TO

Tent. A wooden table sits in the center with a series of maps sprawled out on it. Xena walks around the table.

XENA:
So I haven't seen you in a month, and then I have a dagger hurled at me for a hello.

The camera pulls around to show Eve, who has just entered the tent.

EVE (lost for words):
I...I didn't know it was you.

Xena chuckles as she unfastens her breastplate.

EVE:
What are you doing with those villagers?

XENA (shrugs):
What we always do. They have a choice--to join our rebellion against Artemis, or be killed.

EVE (stares in shock):
That's a choice?!

Xena quickly draws her sword and points it at Eve.

XENA:
What the hell is going on?

Close-up on Eve. She swallows, her mother's sword at her neck.

XENA:

We've been doing this for years. What's gotten into you?

Eve searches for words.

EVE (finally blurts out):

I don't know anything about the last seven years. (off Xena's shocked and baffled look) I--I come from the past.

Close-up on Xena, who frowns suspiciously at Eve.

XENA:

Have you been taking those herbs again?

Eve shakes her head.

EVE (vehemently):

Mother--I know this sounds incredible, but you've *got* to believe me. The Fates sent me into the future. The last thing I know is that you and Gabrielle got safely back from Jerusalem.

Xena begins to lower her sword.

XENA (in a near-whisper):

Back from Jerusalem... (pauses) You wouldn't make up such a story...not about this. (speaks up) If you are telling me the truth, then maybe there is hope.

Eve watches as her mother paces back and forth, thinking to herself.

EVE (softly):

Where is Gabrielle?

Xena stops and turns her head towards Eve. There is a pained look on her face; she struggles to get out the words.

XENA (finally speaks):

Eve... Gabrielle has been dead for almost seven years.

Eve stares at her in shock.

XENA (continues):

Artemis killed her. Soon after we returned from Jerusalem.

Eve shakes her head, too overcome to speak.

KLYMENE (off-camera):

There you are.

Klymene and Darion enter the tent. Eve turns to see them.

KLYMENE (in a motherly way, to Eve):

You can't just run off like that.

DARION (smiling):
Hello, Xena.

A slight hint of happiness shows through in Xena's sorrowful expression.

XENA:
It's good to see you, Darion.

Klymene quickly breaks the reunion, and walks over to the wooden table. She points to an area on the map.

KLYMENE (to Xena):
Artemis has got a group of soldiers stationed here.

XENA:
How many?

KLYMENE:
Fifty, tops. (pointing to another area) A small group of us were scouting over in this area when they ambushed us.

XENA:
We ran into a group of her warriors back in Athens. She knows we're about to make a move against her.

Eve watches as Klymene, the young Amazon she adopted as her own, makes battle arrangements with her mother.

The camera then spins around as Ares enters the tent.

ARES:
Only twenty. Twenty people of the entire village were willing to pledge their loyalty to the rebellion.

XENA (disbelief):
Twenty?

ARES:
The rest would rather die. (mockingly) "May the goddess protect our souls."

Xena pounds her fist on the table.

KLYMENE:
The further north you go, the more devoted they become.

XENA (to Ares):
If any of the new soldiers are even heard muttering the name Artemis--kill 'em.

Ares nods. He then turns to see Darion standing in the corner. He pats him on the back.

ARES (smiling, almost like his normal self):
It's good to see you, kid.

DARION (with mock indignation but grinning a little):

Don't call me a kid, Ares! I'm almost eighteen.

ARES (chuckling):

Yeah, yeah. Let's see some hair on your chest, then we'll talk.

Darion looks down, blushing a little. The camera pans to Eve, as she approaches Xena and Klymene.

EVE:

So, you and Ares are leading the rebellion against Artemis.

XENA:

One of the three rebel armies. We're all that stands between Artemis and total domination.

EVE:

What about the other gods?

XENA:

All dead. Some died in the Twilight. Others, Artemis killed and gathered their powers into herself. Zeus, Hera, Athena--Athena was the only one that tried to fight her.

EVE:

She could rule the world forever.

XENA:

Yes. Which is why we all need to stop reliving the past and find a way to stop her from controlling the future.

KLYMENE (nodding):

That's right. The past, whether you lived it or not, is behind us.

EVE (shakes her head):

If I understand the past, maybe I'll be able to understand the future as well.

DISSOLVE TO

Outside the village. Xena and Ares' soldiers are packing up, preparing to leave the village. The camera pulls to show Eve, Darion, and Klymene off to the side, each now with their own horse. They are all wearing dark brown travel cloaks. Xena (also cloaked) and Ares stand in the distance, overlooking the entire scene.

ARES (to Xena):

You honestly believe that the Fates sent her from the past?

XENA (watching Eve):

In the past seven years I've lost a lot of things. Faith was one of them. (softly) Maybe I just want to believe it, but if there is even the slightest chance that we can go back to the way things were--I gotta do something.

ARES:

So what if she goes back in time, changes the past, and nothing changes for us?

Xena doesn't say anything.

ARES:

Xena, we've been fighting Artemis for years. We are finally at the point where we might have the opportunity to take her down. (getting frustrated) I would hate to lose it all because you chose to pursue your daughter's delusions.

Xena pauses, before changing the subject.

XENA:

The plan is still the same. We'll meet up with you and the others at the rendezvous point. From there, we will fight Artemis. (reassuring Ares) I've come too far and I've gone through too much to let it all end here.

He looks at her, still unsure if it's a good idea or not.

XENA:

I'll see you soon.

She begins to walk away.

ARES:

Hey. (she turns around) I love you.

She walks up to him and embraces him with a kiss.

XENA (softly):

I love you, too.

She begins walking towards Eve, Klymene, and Darion.

ARES (shouting):

Be careful!

The camera follows Xena as she approaches Eve, Klymene, and Darion, leading her own brown horse behind her. Darion and Klymene are mounted; Eve holds the reins of a grey mottled horse.

KLYMENE (curious):

Why aren't we going with the army?

XENA:

We're going to make a quick stop, and then we'll meet up with them before we head to Rome.

Xena and Eve mount their horses as they speak.

EVE:

Rome? Why Rome?

XENA:

Rome is where Artemis resides. From there she controls the entire Roman Empire.

DISSOLVE TO

Overview shot of the city of Rome.

DISSOLVE TO

The arena. It's packed full of people shouting and screaming at the battle going down below. The camera pulls down to show a strong, shirtless man covered in blood. He slowly raises his head, and we recognize the man as Hercules, with shaggy hair and a beard. He groans in pain as he begins to pick himself off the ground.

The camera pulls around to show Artemis, her red hair hanging over her Hera-esque dark dress. She spins around and side smacks him across the face, and the godly force sends him to the ground. Artemis' red hair flows in the wind as she pulls back her foot and kicks him in the side, causing him to scream out in pain.

The crowd cheers. She picks up a spiked club off the ground.

ARTEMIS (softly):

It's sad to see one of the world's greatest demigods reduced to a worthless, pathetic mortal.

Hercules looks up at her and groans, unable to move. She kneels down next to him, the spiked club still in her hand. She softly caresses his hair.

ARTEMIS (whispering):

Say hello to the family for me, will you, brother?

She lifts up the spiked club in the air, and then glances over. The camera pulls up to show the balcony and a fist extended out towards the crowd. The crowd chants "Kill! Kill! Kill!"

The camera focuses on a purple robe and an extended fist, as the thumb goes up into the air.

The camera pulls back on Artemis as she raises the club in the air and gives a loud battle cry as she strikes it down. The crowd shouts in triumph.

The camera then pulls back to the balcony as the thumb is lowered. The camera pulls around to show a woman dressed in purple and blue robes as she sits down in a throne overlooking the stadium. We quickly recognize the woman wearing the laurel crown. It's Valeria Sabina.

FADE OUT

ACT TWO

FADE IN

Medium shot of a small cottage at the edge of a village, near a forest. Klymene ties the horses to a tree outside as Xena, Darion, and Eve approach the cottage.

XENA (to Eve):

Maybe you can find some answers here. (She pauses a moment) Look, before we go in, there's something I haven't--

She is interrupted by the door swinging open and Aphrodite, in peasant dress, coming out on the porch.

APHRODITE (beams):

Warrior Babe!

She comes toward Xena and embraces her in a hug.

APHRODITE (shouting inside):

Come on out, kids! We got company!

A boy about seven years old, with sandy blonde hair and bright blue eyes, runs outside.

SAMUEL (joyfully):

Darion!

Darion laughs and picks up Samuel in a giant bear hug.

DARION (smiling):

I've missed you, kiddo.

Klymene approaches the cottage and gives a warm smile at seeing Darion and Samuel together. Darion sets down Samuel, who immediately wraps his arms around Xena's legs.

Zoom in on Eve, who looks on, puzzled.

KLYMENE (noticing Eve's confused expression):

This is Samuel. Gabrielle's son.

Close-up on Eve as understanding dawns on her face. Then, the camera pans back on Samuel as Xena squats down and hugs him.

SAMUEL:

Are you going to take me fishing again?

XENA (smiling):

We're only going to be here for a little bit.

APHRODITE (looks out at the sky, then at Xena):

Don't be ridiculous, it'll be dark in a few hours. Where are you going to go? At least stay the night with us.

SAMUEL:

Please, Aunt Xena!

Xena rises to her feet.

XENA:

All right, if you're sure there's enough room for us all.

APHRODITE (smiles):

For you, Warrior Babe--always.

XENA:

Where's Arielle?

APHRODITE (shouts):

Arielle! Come on over! Your mommy's here!

Close-up on Eve as she stares at Xena in shock.

EVE (whispers):

Mommy...?

Pan to Xena as she nods, a small, tender smile appearing on her face, her eyes blurring a bit with tears.

XENA (softly):

Arielle was born four years ago. Just as the rebellion took off.

A dark-haired girl in a blue dress wanders out of the cottage and stops on the porch. She stands still, staring at Xena.

XENA (softly):

Arielle.

ARIELLE (gravely):

Hi, Mommy.

She comes slowly toward Xena as Aphrodite and Eve look on. Xena's face is suffused with tenderness and she is clearly fighting back tears as she bends down and sweeps Arielle up in her arms.

(In the background during this conversation, we see Klymene and Darion talking to Samuel; they show him some combat moves which he tries to imitate.)

XENA (smiling):

How's my girl?

ARIELLE:

Good. (proudly) Guess what happened to me last week!

XENA (a little concerned):

What's that?

ARIELLE:

I turned four!

Xena's face is shadowed by sadness.

XENA:

I'm so sorry I couldn't be here for your birthday, baby. (she kisses Arielle)

APHRODITE (trying to cheer her up):

Aw--all you missed was the worst birthday cake ever baked.

ARIELLE (nods):

Uh-huh, it was.

APHRODITE (pretends to be affronted):

Hey!

XENA:

I've got a present for you.

Holding up Arielle with one arm, she opens her cloak, takes something off her belt and hands it to the little girl, who takes the object and examines it with curiosity. The camera zooms in to show that it's Ares' dagger pendant.

XENA:

It's from your daddy.

ARIELLE (looks up at her):

When is daddy coming?

Xena looks guilty.

XENA:

Soon, sweetheart. Soon, we'll all be together again. I promise.

She strokes the girl's hair. Arielle throws her arms around Xena's neck, pressing her cheek to her mother's face.

Pan to Eve, who looks away, obviously struggling with emotion.

XENA (with somewhat forced cheer):

Oof--you're getting big and heavy! (She puts Arielle down.)

ARIELLE:

When I'm *really* big, are you and daddy going to teach me how to be a warrior?

Xena frowns a little.

SAMUEL (in the background):

Alalalala-CHEE-YAH!

Xena glances over at Samuel, who assumes a fighting stance as the camera focuses on him.

XENA (continues):

Right now, we're all going fishing.

Samuel and Arielle jump up and down, almost squealing with joy.

CROSS-FADE TO

An exterior shot of the cottage at nightfall.

DISSOLVE TO

A small room inside the cottage. Aphrodite (holding a candle) and Xena, now without the cloak, stand over a small bed in which Arielle is asleep. Samuel is sleeping on a cot on the other side of the room. In the dim candlelight, we see a portrait of Gabrielle on the wall.

XENA (quietly):

She's beautiful... (smiles) She has his eyes, you know.

APHRODITE (chuckles):

And your strength. Try prying some nasty old stick from these little hands when she's got her mind set on using it as a sword.

XENA:

She must be a handful.

APHRODITE:

Is she ever! But hey--I'm not complaining. (She gives Xena a nudge) Come on, or we'll wake them up.

CUT TO

The kitchen in the cottage. Xena and Aphrodite are at the table eating a meat pie while Eve and Darion are cleaning up.

XENA (with restrained but heartfelt emotion):

Thank you so much for taking care of them, Aphrodite. I can't think of anyone I'd rather want for the job.

APHRODITE (smiles):

Well, I always did want another shot at the whole mommy gig. (she takes a bite of the pie and winces) It's just too bad they didn't teach cooking on Olympus.

XENA:

Hey, you couldn't do worse than me.

There is a brief silence, then Aphrodite speaks up again.

APHRODITE (concerned):

I worry about you and bro, Warrior Babe. How's the rebellion?

XENA:

It's--going all right. (cutting the conversation) So, Samuel's in school now?

Aphrodite smiles.

APHRODITE:

Yeah, and doing great. The teacher says he's a better writer than kids twice his age.

Xena gives a warm smile. There is another brief silence. Eve and Darion turn, listening.

APHRODITE (softly):

We talk about her every day, Xena. He always wants me to read him her scrolls.

Xena looks away for a moment, her face grim, then looks at Aphrodite again.

XENA:

Speaking of Gabrielle's scrolls... (close-up on her face, now hard and set) we need to see them.

CUT TO

A bedroom. Xena and Eve are sitting on the floor by an open chest looking through some scrolls; a bed and a night table with a lamp on it are visible in the background.

EVE:

So Gabrielle had her baby while you were in Jerusalem?

XENA (quietly and curtly):

Yes.

EVE (already knowing the answer):

And Haimon?

XENA:

Dead.

Eve looks as if she wants to say something else but just then Xena unravels one of the scrolls and holds it up.

XENA (quickly):

Here it is.

She hands the scroll to Eve.

XENA:

This was the last scroll she wrote, before she died. (softly) She never finished it.

Eve takes the scroll, her eyes meeting Xena's, and nods, deeply moved.

DISSOLVE TO

Early morning. Outside the cottage. Eve is sitting on the some grass, her back against a tree, reading Gabrielle's scroll. Close-up on her face as we hear Gabrielle's voice.

GABRIELLE (voice-over):

I cradled Samuel in my arms and looked at the great temple of Artemis...

Fade to a shot of the temple.

GABRIELLE (voice-over):

Down below, the streets were filled with the blood of Elijans and others who had refused to worship her. As the sun set on the great city, I watched the Warrior Princess prepare herself.

Fade to Xena walking down a street with several bodies lying on the ground. She looks grim.

GABRIELLE (voice-over):

For years it felt as though the sun had never set, that the twilight lingered on longer than it should.

Fade back to Eve's face.

GABRIELLE (voice-over):

We had one last move to make, and our only hope was that the sun would finally rise and a new day would begin...for all of us.

Eve rests the scroll on her lap.

EVE:

It still might, Gabrielle. For *all* of us, if I have any say in things.

CROSS-FADE TO

The sky and the bright morning sun.

DISSOLVE TO

Xena walks through the forest. She bends down to pick a yellow flower for the small bunch of wildflowers and leaves she has already collected. She sniffs at it.

Close up on her face, as she smiles sadly.

XENA:

When you told me I should stop and smell the flowers more often, I don't think you had this in mind, did you?

CUT TO

A small clearing with a view of the village in the background. A round wooden board, carved with a flower in the center and a few Greek letters at the base, is set into the dirt in front of a small pile of rocks. This is Gabrielle's grave.

Xena steps out from the trees into the clearing and stands in front of the tombstone, before kneeling and propping her bunch of flowers against the stone. She remains kneeling.

XENA:

You're missing a beautiful sunrise, you know. I brought you some nice spring flowers, I hope you like them.

She reaches out and touches the carving on the stone.

XENA:

Aphrodite's taking good care of Samuel for you, and she says he's already the best writer in his school--I wonder where he gets that from. You would be proud of him. (pause) The rebellion is--going. Sometimes I wonder if it's just a way of giving people false hope...does it really make any difference to them if Artemis kills them or if we do? (sigh) I wish you were here to tell me if we're doing the right thing...

She shakes her head and blinks a couple of times.

XENA:

Ares keeps telling me we're doing the only thing we can, and he's right. But there's always another way, and you were the only person who could have seen it.

Close-up on her face as she struggles to hold back tears.

XENA:

I miss you.

VOICE (off-camera):

Xena.

It sounds very much like Gabrielle's voice. Xena's eyes widen and she whips around towards the trees she had appeared from. Samuel is standing there, with some flowers of his own.

As she stands up, he walks over to the grave.

XENA (snaps at him from surprise and her emotional state):

Did Aphrodite say you could follow me here? Does she know you came?

SAMUEL (defensively):

I snuck out so she wouldn't wake up. She worries that I'll get lost even though (petulant) I *know* the way.

XENA:

You should do what she tells you. She wants to take care of you.

Samuel bends down and puts his flowers next to Xena's.

SAMUEL:

But I want to be with Darion and Ares and you. I want to tell stories like my mom did.

XENA (trying to be cheerful):

There's plenty of time for that--later.

SAMUEL (earnestly):

You've got to take me with you!

Shocked, Xena reaches out to touch his shoulder. She looks conflicted, but then shakes her head.

XENA (firmly):

I can't, Samuel. (close-up on her anguished face as she continues, sounding more emotional) I can't. This is the safest place for you right now.

Samuel's face falls as he nods.

XENA (gently):

Come on, let's go back.

SAMUEL (sighs):

All right.

He starts to walk toward the trees. Xena follows him; as she walks, she turns back to the gravestone.

XENA:

I told you you'd be proud of him.

A wide shot of the clearing, now flooded with sunlight, as Xena slowly walks away into the trees with Samuel ahead of her.

CROSS-FADE TO

Outside the cottage. Aphrodite is standing in the doorway. Darion, Eve and Klymene (now wearing their travel cloaks) are now mounted on their horses. Xena, also in her cloak, is sitting on her haunches with her arms around Arielle and Samuel.

XENA (hugs the children tight):

Ooh--I'll miss you both.

ARIELLE:

We'll miss you too.

SAMUEL:

Come back soon, okay?

XENA:

Promise.

She kisses them, then gets up.

XENA (to Aphrodite, her voice tight with restrained emotion):

Thanks again.

APHRODITE (sincerely):

You guys be careful.

Xena nods and mounts her horse.

SAMUEL (waves to all them):

See you soon! (to Eve) Hey, be careful with my mom's scroll!

EVE (smiling):

I will be.

Xena, Eve, Darion and Klyemene ride off as Samuel, Arielle and Aphrodite wave them goodbye.

DISSOLVE TO

Montage of Xena, Eve, Darion and Klymene riding fast along country roads and through forests.

CROSS-FADE TO

The four riding along a country road and approaching a curve. Suddenly, Xena slows down and holds out her hand, signaling the rest to stop.

XENA (mutters):

Damn it.

A group of seven people appear from around the curve in the road. Three of them are Roman soldiers and four are female archers in the garb of Artemis' temple warriors. One Roman, an officer, and the head archer are on horseback.

ROMAN OFFICER:

And where are you good folks headed?

XENA:

To Melios, sir. For my niece's wedding.

HEAD ARCHER:

Well, then I hope you won't mind taking a little detour to make a sacrifice at the temple of Artemis, just down the road--so that your niece and her young man will always have the protection of the goddess.

There is a tense pause. Eve, Klymene and Darion cast uneasy glances at Xena. The camera zooms in on Xena as she stares at the archer.

XENA (through clenched teeth):

Sacrifice this.

With a swift motion, she throws open her cloak, whips out a crossbow and shoots the head archer before she can say another word. The woman sways in the saddle and falls dead. The camera pans over the faces of the other arches, twisted with rage.

ARCHER #2:

No! (draws her bow) Fire!

The other archers take aim. Zoom in on Xena's face as she sneers.

XENA:

Yah!

She throws her chakram. Two of the archers fall dead; the third releases an arrow which grazes Xena's arm as she catches the chakram.

ROMAN OFFICER (yells, sword drawn):

Get her!

In the same instant, he collapses with an arrow in his chest. The camera pulls back to show Klymene holding a bow and smiling.

The other two Romans and the remaining archer exchange a panicked look, then turn to run. Xena raises the crossbow and shoots the archer in the back. She falls with a cry.

Pan to Eve, who looks shocked.

EVE:

Mother!

Quick pan to Darion, who looks down.

Xena hooks the crossbow to her belt and gallops after the two running soldiers; as she rides, she yanks the chakram apart into two blades. With a piercing war cry, she launches herself off her horse and somersaults in the air.

XENA:

A-la-la-la-la--CHEE-yah!

Slow motion. The Roman soldiers turn and scream "NO!" in unison as she hurtles down, plunging the chakram blades into their chests.

Xena turns toward her companions, the bloodied blades in her hands, as the two Romans collapse, dead.

Pan to Eve (resuming normal speed), who looks on in shock as Xena walks toward her horse and mounts it. She joins the chakram blades together and hooks the chakram to her belt, then frowns and examines the scratch on her arm.

Eve, Klymene and Darion catch up with Xena.

DARION (points to her arm):

Are you all right?

XENA:

Just a scratch.

EVE (vehemently):

Mother--they were running!

Xena turns her head sharply and nails her with a hard stare.

XENA:

And they would have put others on our trail. We're at war, Eve. Every fight is a fight to the death.

EVE:

And that means there's no place for honor--for mercy?

XENA (grimly):

It's seven years too late for that. (Her voice softens) I know you're new to all this. Get used to it.

Medium close-up on Eve and Darion as they exchange a troubled look. The camera pulls back for a wide shot, panning over the dead bodies on the ground as Xena and her companions ride off.

DISSOLVE TO

Xena riding at a slow trot along a forest trail, with Darion a few paces behind her, and Eve and Klymene riding behind him side by side. Xena looks troubled and lost in thought.

Pan back to Eve and Klymene.

EVE (to Klymene):

So where is this meeting place, anyway?

KLYMENE:

We should be there by nightfall. It's safest to enter the caves at night, so there's no chance of being spotted.

EVE:

Caves?

KLYMENE:

We discovered some old catacombs several years ago, and we set up a base camp there once we were sure Artemis didn't know about them. The nearest entrance is in a cave just outside Rome. It used to be a hiding place for the Elijans, back in... (she glances uncomfortably at Eve) the old days.

EVE (remembers):

The catacombs! Back when I was with the Elijans--that's where I hid from Caligula... (pauses) I had no idea they extended outside the city.

DARION (glances back at the women):

There are a couple of tunnels that lead right into Rome, underneath the main streets. But we don't go in unless we really *have to*. (he pauses) Some of us believe it was a miracle that Eli opened up the entrances for us, so we could keep fighting to protect his followers.

KLYMENE (sharply):

If Eli's as powerful as that, you'd think he could give us a little more than some empty old caves. Like, I don't know...a way to kill that bitch Artemis?

DARION (irritated):

You really think it was just a coincidence? There just happened to be a small earthquake that didn't hurt anyone but exposed the entrance to the caves--when we were there to find it?

KLYMENE:

I just don't think every little thing that works in our favor ought to be called a miracle, that's all.

DARION:

Maybe the miracle is that we're still here.

CUT TO

The exterior of a cave in a wooded area. Xena, Eve, Klymene and Darion ride inside.

CUT TO

Inside the cave. Klymene, holding a torch, stands by a pile of rocks. Xena pushes the rocks aside to reveal the entrance into a tunnel.

XENA (to Eve):

Careful on the way down.

Klymene bends down and goes into the tunnel, torch in hand. Eve follows.

CUT TO

A much bigger cave, with some tents pitched. It is a military camp and there are people moving everywhere. Several passages branch off from the main cave, with people coming and going through them. We see the sky through a couple of air holes, which offer enough natural light to see by.

Klymene emerges from one of the passages, still holding the torch. She is followed by Eve, then Xena and Darion.

KLYMENE:

Home sweet home, at least until we defeat Artemis...if we ever do.

DARION:

With Eli's help, of course we will.

KLYMENE (rolls her eyes):

So you keep telling me...

XENA (interrupts her, sharply):

All right, that's enough chitchat. If we don't start doing our jobs, none of us will live long enough for Eli to help. Klymene, you're going on a raid tonight, so start planning it. (to Eve) Eve--you go help her.

Eve opens her mouth to protest but Xena cuts her off.

XENA (frostily):

Eve, I am in charge here. People do as I say. Go.

She turns and walks away from a shocked Eve.

CUT TO

Inside a tent. Eve and Klymene are talking, next to a table with a map on it.

KLYMENE:

Everyone knows this rebellion is our only real hope, Eve. Xena is the best person to lead it ...someone has to take charge. And let's put it this way--I'd much rather take orders from Xena than from Artemis.

EVE:

It's just that... I feel like I hardly know her anymore.

Both women look up at the sound of someone entering. It is Lykia.

LYKIA:

Xena says you need help with a food raid on the city?

KLYMENE (smiles briefly at Lykia):

Yep--going for take-out. We're going to hit this warehouse. (she indicates the street map) It's very close to the tunnel entrance. It's well-guarded, though.

LYKIA:

So you need a distraction.

Eve is looking at the map, her brow furrowed.

EVE:

There used to be trees only a short distance from that building. Are they still there?

LYKIA:

Yeah.

EVE:

Then why not use the Amazons?

Lykia gapes at Eve; Klymene looks down sadly.

LYKIA:

What Amazons?

EVE (not understanding):

Our Amazons, of course.

KLYMENE (sigh):

I should have told you.

EVE:

Told me what? Don't tell me they chose to fight for Artemis.

Lykia looks incredulous.

KLYMENE (before Lykia can speak):

They didn't.

She pauses, Eve looking at her expectantly.

KLYMENE (continues):

And ... she killed them all.

Eve gasps.

KLYMENE (continues):

Lykia and I weren't there, we and a couple of others had already left to fight for Xena. With you.

Eve looks bewildered. So does Lykia.

LYKIA:

Why are you telling her this? Is this some kind of sick joke?

KLYMENE:

Uhhh...it's complicated. (to Eve) Artemis came with her temple army and told Cyane to join her or die. When Cyane refused, Artemis used her powers to set the village aflame...

As she speaks, we cut to

[FLASHBACK]

Artemis extend her hands launches two large fireballs, hitting some huts which instantly go up in flames. The flame sweeps across the village. Artemis throws her head back and laughs.

KLYMENE (continues, in voice-over):

-- and her archers surrounded it and killed anyone who managed to get out.

We see two women running out of the burning village. Artemis' archers fire and the women fall.

[END OF FLASHBACK]

DISSOLVE TO

Close-up on Eve, her face full of anguish.

EVE:

So Cyane, Nari, Othila...

KLYMENE:

They're all dead.

CUT TO

Close-up of another map, this one showing the entire Italian peninsula. A finger traces one of the roads leading to Rome from the north.

Pull back to see Xena studying the map inside a simply furnished tent. Her armor is off and she wears a simple leather undergarment. She doesn't look happy.

Ares enters the tent, and as he reaches her, she turns around.

XENA (smiles):

Hey.

ARES (glances at the map):

There's no use staring at that every spare moment you get. It won't make a difference.

Xena sighs. She sits down on a couch.

XENA (bitterly):

What happened to "there's always a way out, Xena, we just have to find it"?

Ares sits next to her and puts his arm around her.

ARES:

Oh, I never said there was no way out...just that you probably won't find it on the map. (Xena gives him "the look"; he grins back) You shouldn't worry so much.

XENA:

I worry all the time. Ares--we have *nothing* here. No food, one little stream for water, fewer warriors every day. (pause) And most of the ones that are still here think we can't win this fight.

ARES:

Well, we must be doing *something* right. We're still here.

XENA (closes her eyes):

Not *all* of us. (She opens her eyes and shakes her head) Gabrielle wouldn't think we were doing the right thing. But I can't see any other choices. Except to get beaten slowly or surrender immediately.

ARES:

There *are* no other choices.

He puts an arm around her shoulders. As Xena leans against him, he notices the scratch and dried blood on her upper arm and frowns.

ARES:

Run into some trouble on the way?

XENA (chuckles):

You *do* know there's a war going on, right? Trouble is a way of life. (off his questioning look) One of Artemis' road patrols.

ARES:

What happened?

Xena picks up a wineskin and takes a drink.

XENA (with gusto):
Seven down, zero to go.

ARES:
Damn it, Xena--

XENA (teasing):
Worried you're missing out on the fun?

ARES (serious):
Worried I won't be there when you need me.

XENA (with mock indignation):
What are you implying? That I can't take care of myself?

ARES:
Just don't take any extra chances. (changing the subject and trying to be lighthearted). So, how's my sister? Her usual perky self?

XENA (carefully):
She's fine.

Ares nods slowly, meeting her eyes.

ARES (quietly):
How's Arielle?

Xena's eyes reflect a bittersweet wistfulness.

XENA:
She's beautiful. (shakes head) I can't believe how quickly time passes... (after a pause) She loved her present. And she was asking about you.

Ares looks away. Xena looks down, the sadness returning to her face. After a moment she stands, walking over to the side of the tent. Ares watches her, then stands up and moves toward her. He rests a comforting hand on her shoulder and she turns around. She's fighting back tears again.

XENA:
No matter what happens, these are four years of her life we are never going to get back. (resentful and hurting) Once again, I've had to give up the chance to raise my own child. (looks down, fighting emotion) If we had stopped Artemis in time--then everything would have been different. (her voice almost breaking) If Gabrielle... (she trails off, blinking away tears)

Ares touches her face and brushes away a tear with his thumb.

ARES (gently):
You know we can't dwell on that. (he touches her cheek with his hand and she closes her eyes, letting his fingers graze her skin) Even with everything against us--we had this child. (Xena looks at him) That's gotta count for something, right?

Xena looks down. Ares watches her for a long moment, then touches her cheek, raising her chin so that she's looking into his eyes.

ARES:

And if all goes as planned, we'll have her with us...very soon.

Ares leans forward and kisses her lightly, her cheek still wet from her tears. She winds her fingers through his long, curly hair as she pulls him closer, deepening the kiss.

Finally, she pulls back.

XENA (sincere):

Thank you.

ARES:

For what?

XENA:

For being here.

She rests her head on his shoulder and he puts an arm around her.

CROSS-FADE TO

The arena in Rome (the sound of cheers from the crowd fading in along with the image and growing louder). Artemis is now sitting next to Sabina. Pan for a wide shot of the arena, where the sand is stained with blood.

Sabina makes an imperious gesture, silencing the crowd. The noise gradually dies down.

SABINA (shouting to the crowd):

Now, as an example of the fate that awaits those few who still oppose the goddess (pauses) --and me--I offer you a dozen members of (scornful) the *cult of Eli*.

The crowd roars as guards roughly haul a group of Elijans onto the sand.

Zoom in on Artemis' face. Her eyes glitter and the corner of her mouth twitches in a small, sadistic smile. The camera pulls back to show Sabina; unnoticed, she gives Artemis a slightly contemptuous look.

SABINA:

My goddess.

ARTEMIS (raises her voice):

Bring on the lions!

Pan down to the arena. The Elijans kneel on the bloodstained sand and begin to pray. Their clothes are torn and many look like they have been beaten.

Pan to Sabina, who looks aloof and rather bored. She glances down at the Elijans. The camera pans back to them and zooms in on one Elijan woman, who raises her head as she chants a prayer with the others. We recognize her as Siran.

Pan back to Sabina, who momentarily looks shocked; her face reflects a struggle. Then, she rises and holds out her hand, stilling the crowd. Artemis glances at her in surprise.

SABINA:

The goddess is terrible in her wrath--but she can also be merciful. She chooses to spare one of these deluded criminals and give her another chance.

The camera pulls back to show Sabina pointing to Siran and giving orders to a Praetorian guard standing next to her. He walks down to the arena as some people in the crowd applaud and others murmur in displeasure. The camera pulls in on one spectator, a middle-aged, portly Roman in a toga.

SPECTATOR (yells out as he gives a thumb-down gesture):

No mercy! No mercy for the criminals! Let them all die for the glory of Artemis!

Sabina fixes him with a glare.

SABINA:

Are you questioning the goddess?

Pan to the spectator, who turns pale and stammers.

SPECTATOR:

N-no, Empress--I j-just--m-meant that they're--they're all t-traitors to Rome and--and to the goddess--

As he speaks, the camera pans away for a long shot of the arena. We see the Praetorian grab Siran and drag her away as she struggles; her shout, "I want to die with them!" can be heard in the distance. Then pan back to Sabina, who looks on, her face inscrutable. She turns to look once again at the spectator who questioned her. There is a small, cruel grin on her face.

SABINA:

You'll take her place.

Long shot of the spectators' rows. Two guards drag the man off his seat as he screams.

The crowd roars its approval.

Pan down to the arena, for a close-up of the Elijans praying; then, to the other end of the arena where several lions are released.

Close-up on a lion roaring, its teeth bared.

Close-up on Artemis, a look of pleasure on her face.

CUT TO

Ares and Xena's tent. Eve is now with Xena and Ares.

EVE:

So we're stocking up on supplies while we have the chance? (looks at Xena) Why, what are you going to do? You must have some plan...I don't know how much longer this undercover war can last.

XENA:

At this rate, not long at all. And yes, we do have a plan, but we need some reinforcements before we can go ahead with it. (off Eve's look) We're going to take Rome.

FADE OUT

ACT THREE

FADE IN

Close-up on Eve (continuing from the end of Act II).

Pan to Xena and Ares, who exchange a meaningful look that Eve, still digesting the announcement, does not notice.

EVE (dryly):

Well, there goes the undercover part.

ARES:

No kidding. We're definitely overdue for a change of scenery.

EVE:

So where are the reinforcements?

A tall, dark figure enters the tent. He looks like Ares, though he is not as bulky. He wears his hair short, and is dressed in functional, well-made armor. The camera zooms in on him to show that it's Evander.

EVANDER:

On their way. At least, my soldiers are.

Ares gets up and he and Evander shake hands, unsmiling. Xena and Evander also shake hands. Then, Evander turns to Eve; a small smile appears on his face.

EVANDER:

Eve. Good to see you.

He takes her in his arms and pulls her into a kiss. Eve makes a muffled sound of shock and pulls back.

EVE:

What--

EVANDER (frowns):
What's wrong?

Xena clears her throat. Eve looks from her to Evander, obviously debating with herself whether to tell him the truth. Then she sighs and musters a warm smile.

EVE:
Sorry. I was just...a little taken aback to see you here.

EVANDER:
You didn't get my message?

XENA:
She's been--away for a while. (She comes up to him.) Evander--thanks for the support.

EVANDER:
Well, it's not like I'm going to sell you all out to Auntie Artemis, am I? (rolls eyes) Took a while for my army to get here from Brundisium after we landed--it's not an easy task for over a thousand men to move across the countryside without catching attention. But here we are. The men are camped in the hills south of the city, waiting for the signal.

Ares nods.

EVE:
Over a thousand men...and that's all the reinforcements?

ARES (wry grin):
Oh no. We've got allies coming in from the north as well.

FLASH TO

An army marching through mountainous terrain. It is the Goths. The camera pans along their ranks to show, from the back, a tall warrior on a black horse wearing a plumed helmet.

DISSOLVE TO

A wide shot of the city of Rome. It is broad daylight but it seems strangely and almost eerily quiet.

DISSOLVE TO

A line of nervous-looking people standing on the steps of a Roman temple. Some of the people are holding offerings. The camera pans along the line, up the steps, to a portico with a semicircle of columns, flowers, statues of Artemis, an altar, and an ornate empty throne behind it. A doe, its legs bound, lies on the altar next to which Sabina stands, sword in hand.

The camera zooms in for a medium close-up on a kneeling couple in front of the crowd. The man is holding a beautiful ring. The woman is heavily pregnant.

KNEELING MAN (timidly):
Goddess, please accept as our offering this precious ring which was once my mother's. Please spare my wife pain during childbirth and let our baby be born healthy.

The camera pans to another kneeling woman, further in the back.

KNEELING WOMAN:

Please, goddess, heal my nephew, who has been badly injured in a fire.

Pan to another kneeling man, holding a golden statuette.

KNEELING MAN No. 2:

Great goddess, I had this statue of you made as a token of my devotion. Please accept it as an offering and grant safe passage to my shipment of goods.

Pan to Sabina as she holds up her hand, silencing the others with an imperious gesture.

SABINA (raises her voice):

Magnificent goddess! As Empress and High Priestess of Rome, it is my request that you honor this sacrifice with your presence!

There is a flash of greenish-gold light around the throne as the worshipers gasp and bow their heads. Sabina, too, inclines her head but only slightly.

Artemis materializes in the throne. Her expression is arrogant, malicious, and slightly displeased, as if she were somewhat unimpressed by the sacrifices.

ARTEMIS (haughtily):

Proceed.

Pan back to Sabina, in medium close-up, as she raises her sword and brings it down.

Pan to Artemis as her face is sprayed with blood. She throws her head back slightly and half-closes her eyes, which begin to glow faintly with a green light.

VOICES FROM THE CROWD:

--Glory to the goddess!

--Pray to the One Goddess!

--Artemis, protect us!

--Save us!

Artemis sways a little, with an almost orgasmic look on her face.

Pan to Sabina as she casts a glance at Artemis. Her expression is hostile, almost contemptuous. Meanwhile, the prayers from the crowd turn into a chant:

CROWD:

Protect us, Great Goddess Artemis! Protect us, Great Goddess Artemis! Protect us, Great Goddess Artemis!

Artemis sits up abruptly and open her eyes. An awed hush falls over the crowd.

ARTEMIS (almost brusquely):

Your prayers will be answered. Leave your offerings at the altar. Then go.

The camera pulls back as the worshipers rise from their knees and start approaching the altar with their offerings.

CROSS-FADE TO

Some time later. The last of the worshipers are leaving. There is a pile of offerings on the altar.

Artemis rises slowly from the throne, walks over to the altar and begins to inspect the offerings.

SABINA (dryly):

I hope the goddess is pleased.

ARTEMIS (points to a painted ceramic jug and an ornate goblet left on the altar):

Pour me some wine.

Sabina bristles visibly, but pours some wine from the jug into the goblet and hands it to Artemis, who takes a few sips and puts the goblet down, glancing maliciously at Sabina.

ARTEMIS (taunting):

What's the matter? Serving your goddess is beneath you, hmm?

SABINA (inclines her head, a faint touch of sarcasm in her voice):

I live to serve my goddess.

ARTEMIS:

Good. (She caresses Sabina's cheek in an almost sensuous gesture, then turns Sabina's face toward her and continues, with a deceptive gentleness.) Now, tell me--why did you have that girl released?

Sabina flinches slightly.

ARTEMIS (continues):

You know perfectly well that I gave no such order.

SABINA:

I thought that showing mercy could only make you look more powerful.

ARTEMIS (scoffs):

I *have* all the power, Sabina. I don't *need* to look more powerful. (she pauses) Who was that girl? Don't tell me you don't know her because I'll know you're lying.... Friend of yours?

SABINA (quietly):

She was--years ago.

Artemis lowers her hand and contemplates Sabina for a moment.

ARTEMIS:

And if I told you to bring her to this altar and kill her--what would you do then?

Anger flares in Sabina's eyes.

SABINA (harshly):

Don't push me, Artemis. I still have some free will.

ARTEMIS (laughs):

Really? And what would you do with it? Join Xena and my brother in their little rebellion?

SABINA:

I'd think you would know better than to underestimate anything Xena does.

ARTEMIS:

Oh, Xena may be a great warrior. But she's chosen the wrong side in this war, and she knows it. So does Ares--but their ego won't let them admit defeat. (She sips some more wine and smiles.) It won't be long before we crush them once and for all. And then--it's over. Who else would be strong enough to challenge me? (she laughs lightly) Or crazy enough?

SABINA:

You've been saying that for years. Yet they're still alive.

ARTEMIS:

They'll be dead soon enough. (She looks darkly at Sabina, no longer smiling) And so will you--if you defy me. Remember that.

Sabina steps up to her so that they are face to face.

SABINA (her voice calm but hard as steel):

And you'd do well to remember that I don't like being threatened or bullied. I'm the Empress of Rome, not your puppet.

ARTEMIS (haughtily):

I *made* you Empress of Rome!

SABINA (scoffs):

You think I couldn't have taken out that pompous fool Titus without you? You may have helped me gain the Empire--but I delivered it to *you*. How many Romans would worship you without me?

Artemis gives an exclamation that is almost a snarl, her face twisted with rage.

SABINA (continues):

Besides, I know how Xena fights. I know how she thinks.

Artemis is still glowering but Sabina's words have obviously had an effect.

SABINA (continues):

You need me, Artemis. Don't even try to pretend otherwise.

Artemis scowls at her and vanishes in a flash of green-and-gold light.

Sabina remains standing by the altar, staring at the place where she vanished. The anger in her face is visible, yet she is obviously pondering something.

She raises her sword and, with a frustrated gesture, knocks over the wine jug. The wine spills over the altar, like a pool of blood.

DISSOLVE TO

The full moon above Rome.

CUT TO

A wooded area near Rome. In a clearing, the goths are setting up an improvised camp. We see their leader, facing away from the camera, stroll through their ranks.

GOTH LEADER (speaks in a half-whisper; it is a female voice that may sound vaguely familiar):

No fires--too easy to spot.

She walks on, then addresses one of the Goths.

GOTH LEADER:

Stay here--I'll go ahead to the rendezvous point.

GOTH SOLDIER:

Yes, my queen.

CUT TO

The rebel base in the catacombs. Eve is spreading out some furs in a tent to make a bed. When she finishes, she removes her sword from the scabbard on her back and picks a sharpening stone out of her pack.

She hears a noise and instantly raises her sword, now alert.

A young soldier hesitantly enters the tent, clearly no match for Eve.

EVE (guardedly):

What do you need? It's late.

SOLDIER (nervous):

I'm guarding the passage that leads to the northern entrance. I heard footsteps and--you were the closest for me to warn. Someone found out how to get into our camp.

EVE (lowers her sword):

How many do you think are there?

SOLDIER:

I only heard one.

EVE:

Let's go and see...the further away we catch them, the better.

CUT TO

Eve and the soldier walk along the dark passage. Eve is carrying a torch. Both have swords out and are looking around for any signs of the intruder. They round a bend.

Close-up on Eve's wary face.

Suddenly, there is a movement in the shadows and we see a figure walking towards Eve and the young soldier. It's the Goth leader.

GOTH LEADER (mockingly):

How kind of you to come and meet me in person, Livia. Afraid I'd get lost?

Eve raises her sword again and pushes the young soldier behind her.

The woman walks forward into the torchlight. The camera zooms in on her face. It's Zenobia.

Pan to Eve, who stares at her in shock.

EVE (astonished):

You! ... You're alive.

Zenobia laughs unpleasantly and steps even closer to Eve.

ZENOBIA:

How perceptive.

EVE:

What are you doing here?

ZENOBIA:

For starters--this.

Without warning, she knocks Eve's sword arm away with one hand and punches Eve in the face with the other. The momentum makes Eve stagger and she almost falls over. The soldier catches her and grabs the torch, which she has almost dropped.

ZENOBIA (sneers):

Just had to get that out of my system.

Eve rubs her jaw and glares at Zenobia.

EVE (angry):

For the second time, what are you doing here, and at this time of night?

ZENOBIA (raises an eyebrow):

You really don't know.

EVE (snaps, pointing her sword at Zenobia):

I'm not going to ask you again.

ZENOBIA (shrugs):

Fine. If you put it that way. I'm here with my army to help you against Artemis. Xena sent for me. (she grins) I'm *shocked* no one has told you.

EVE (scowls):

Maybe that's because it's not true.

ZENOBIA (laughs):

Oh, Livia, I'm sure you'd like to think so. But no such luck. Maybe they just didn't trust you to know.

EVE (lowers the sword):

Why would you want to fight alongside my mother and Ares?

ZENOBIA:

And their pathetic excuse for an army? I don't. I want to fight against Rome, and this looks like the best shot we have of defeating Artemis--and Sabina. (shrugs again) So, I'm in.

Zenobia tries to walk past Eve, towards the rebel camp, but Eve blocks her way.

ZENOBIA (annoyed, reaches for her sword):

You're in my way, Livia.

EVE (to the young soldier, who has been keeping out of the way):

Go and wake up my mother. Tell her we have a problem.

The boy nods and turns to go. Just then, Xena appears from around the bend behind Eve, in armor, torch in hand.

XENA (calmly):

No need.

She walks past Eve, who watches in surprise. Xena motions to the boy to leave, and he runs off back to camp.

XENA (coldly):

Hello, Zenobia.

ZENOBIA:

Nice timing, Xena. I don't think your daughter is too pleased to see me. (sighs) But--here I am. Just thought I'd stop in and say hello before the battle.

XENA:

How considerate.

ZENOBIA (sarcastically):

Oh, don't worry, I'm not going to camp with you. (glances at Eve) I wouldn't want to be in Livia's way.

XENA:

Your army's here?

ZENOBIA:

Three thousand men, camped just outside the city.

XENA (businesslike):

Ready for some action? (Off Zenobia's nod) Good. We attack at noon tomorrow.

ZENOBIA:

We'll be watching. I've won rebellions against the Romans before, Xena...save your strength to worry about Livia.

Eve glares at her but says nothing.

XENA (ignores the taunts against Eve; levelly):

Good luck.

Zenobia is silent, but nods and turns abruptly, leaving the way she came in.

Xena turns to Eve, who looks furious, and holds up one hand to stop her from speaking.

XENA:

Come on. We're heading back to camp.

CUT TO

Xena and Eve walking down a passage. Other passages break off from the one they're on.

EVE:

I still can't believe you're going to trust her.

XENA:

Her army is the most powerful one around, and we don't have enough men *not* to trust her. They've been raiding and stealing from Artemis for several years-- (ironic) not to mention anyone else with some extra cash lying around. Besides, she hates Rome.

EVE (bitterly):

She hates *me*.

XENA:

Look, Eve, she's on our side whether you like it or not. We don't have any better options. That doesn't mean she's a long-term ally. If she gives us any trouble, we can always deal with her after we've beaten Artemis.

EVE:

There has to be another way.

XENA (firmly):

Believe me, I have looked for it--there is *no other way*. (pause) Go back to camp; I have to check up on the other guards.

She points the way for Eve and then disappears down one of the side passages. Eve stares after her.

EVE (mutters):
I can't believe this.

CUT TO

The interior of Ares and Xena's tent from Act II. Ares is lying on some furs, dozing. There is a noise, and he stirs and sits up. Pan to Eve, who has entered the tent.

ARES:
Xena isn't here.

EVE (wryly):
I know, I just saw her. (she pauses) The other reinforcements have arrived.

ARES:
Zenobia? (Off Eve's nod of assent; businesslike) Then we attack tomorrow.

EVE (carefully):
Ares, what exactly are you and Xena trying to do? You know as well as I do that there aren't enough soldiers here to capture Rome, reinforcements or not.

ARES (unsurprised):
Have you been talking to Xena about it?

EVE (bitter):
Talk to her? She's too busy trying to order me around.

ARES (snorts):
What a surprise.

He rises to his feet and approaches Eve. He stares at her for a moment, as if trying to figure something out.

ARES (quietly):
Are you really here from the past?

Eve nods gravely.

ARES:
Then you should know that she's...not the same. (looks down) I suppose none of us are.

EVE (awkwardly):
I'm glad...I'm glad she still has you.

ARES (abruptly):
We've got our own soldiers, plus the other two armies. That's almost seven thousand. Evander and his men attack from the southern gate, Zenobia and the Goths from the north--and we're going to hit the Forum and the Capitoline Hill.

EVE (nods slowly):
How many troops are stationed in Rome?

ARES:

One legion of the Roman army--

EVE (encouraged):

Only one?

ARES:

--and twenty thousand of Artemis' best temple warriors.

EVE (gasps):

Thirty thousand? Can we count on some of the Romans to switch sides?

ARES:

No. The plan's different.

He paces a few times around the tent, then stops in front of Eve, looking straight at her.

ARES (continues):

For the past six months, we've been planting Greek fire in hiding places all over Rome. It's enough to burn the city to the ground.

EVE (shocked):

You're going to destroy Rome? (off his silent look of assent, gasping in realization) So that was the real purpose of the food raids?

ARES (nods):

Well--that and the food.

EVE (thinking this over):

But wait...if you set the city ablaze, how can you be sure you and your soldiers will be able to get out in time?

Extreme close-up on Ares. He looks at her hard before responding, his expression grim.

ARES:

We're not.

Close-up on Eve, who looks shocked.

EVE:

You mean--this is a suicide mission?

ARES (raises his finger in mock warning):

Ah--don't use the S-word. (with a crooked, bitter grin) Bad for morale.

He sits down on a stool, picks up a wineskin and takes a swig, then looks up at Eve, holding out the wineskin to her. She shakes her head no.

ARES:

We've got a path of retreat mapped out. But once all hell breaks loose...anything could happen. (He takes another swig of wine.) It's not going to be pretty, I can tell you that.

EVE (incredulous):

You mean, you--*and my mother*--are planning to burn a city full of people to the ground--including women and children? With your own soldiers in it, and no sure way of escape?

ARES:

Yep--that pretty much sums it up. (He pauses and sips from the wineskin) Eve, we have no choice. If we burn down the city and its temples, Artemis loses her main base of worship.

EVE:

What about her temple in Ephesus?

Ares is silent for a moment, his face darkening. Then he speaks.

ARES:

That one is being taken care of. (He pauses) A lot of people are going to die. Look--as long as Artemis goes down, it's a victory.

There is a brief silence. Then Eve speaks.

EVE:

I need to talk to Xena.

ARES:

And tell her what?

EVE (sighs):

Years ago, my mother made a promise to Gabrielle--that if something happened to her, if Gabrielle was killed, she would not turn into a monster. I need to--

Ares rises abruptly to his feet and grabs Eve's shoulders. The look on his face is hard and filled with controlled anger.

ARES:

Don't even think about it. We've come too far to turn back.

Eve stares at him, taken aback. Ares lets go of her.

ARES (continues):

Besides, Xena would tell you this is for the greater good.

EVE (pointedly):

But would Gabrielle?

ARES:

Well--Gabrielle isn't here. And right now, our priority is to *not* join her tomorrow.

Close-up on Ares, then Eve as they exchange a grim look.

CUT TO

Close-up of a target. An arrow flies into it, making a whooshing noise, and hits the center.

The camera pulls back to show Klymene holding her bow. She is in a small cave, lit with two torches. She picks another arrow out of the quiver on her back and prepares to shoot.

Darion comes into view and speaks just as Klymene releases the arrow.

DARION:

I thought you'd be asleep by now.

Somehow, miraculously, Klymene's arrow hits her target despite her sudden distraction.

KLYMENE (startled):

Just getting in some practice...I wasn't tired.

DARION:

It's not like you need it .

Klymene shrugs and lines up a third arrow.

KLYMENE:

Never hurts.

DARION (a little sheepish) :

Look, I...I just wanted to...say good night and wish you luck--in case we get separated tomorrow.

Klymene lowers her bow and looks directly at him.

KLYMENE:

You too. (pause) Be careful.

DARION (hesitantly):

You know...this could be it. I mean, for all of us. If something doesn't go right tomorrow--

KLYMENE (reassuring):

Xena will come up with something.

DARION:

Just in case--watch out for yourself.

KLYMENE:

Oh, Darion. Don't worry about me so much. (she touches his arm; softly) Don't you do anything risky. (grins, teasing) It's not like Eli's going to protect you.

DARION (annoyed, but trying not to grin back):

Are you ever going to stop talking about Eli like that?

Klymene impishly sticks out her tongue.

Darion starts to laugh; so does Klymene. They lean in at the same moment and end up kissing. Darion pulls back, looking surprised, but Klymene smiles at him and they kiss again.

CUT TO

Eve walking through the caves. The look on her face is a mix of shock and hesitation.

EVE (thinking out loud):

Gabrielle *isn't* here...but there may still be a way to stop this.

EVANDER (off-camera):

Eve. There you are.

She turns to see him.

EVANDER:

Come on over here. I've been looking for you.

He takes her arm and pulls her into a tent.

CUT TO

Inside the tent. Evander sits down on a pile of bedding, drawing Eve down with him.

EVANDER:

You know, this is our last chance to spend some time together before--well, before the main event.

Before she can say anything, he pulls her into a passionate kiss.

After a moment Eve pulls away.

EVE:

Evander, I--

EVANDER (looks hurt):

What's going on with you, Eve? We haven't seen each other in three months--and now you act like the last two years never happened. Are you upset with me about something?

EVE (not sure what to tell him):

Well, the truth is--

EVANDER (looks at her):

Wait. It's the Ephesus plan, isn't that right? You don't like what we're about to do in Ephesus. That's it, isn't it?

EVE:

N-no, I--I don't know anything about the Ephesus plan. (she looks at him warily) What are you going to do?

EVANDER (hesitates):

If Xena and Ares haven't told you--

EVE (insistent):

Evander. I have to know. (lowering her voice) We--we shouldn't have any secrets between us, should we?

EVANDER (sighs):

All right. Once the battle starts--if we succeed in setting the fires--I give the signal to my second-in-command in Ephesus to launch the attack on the temple. (Off Eve's uncomprehending look) I can use my powers to do it. It's not easy at this distance, and it will deplete my powers for a while--but it's worth it. That way, we coordinate the attacks. If Artemis loses her temples in Rome *and* the Ephesus temple at the same time, and her Ephesus cult--it will be the end of her.

EVE (struggling to digest all this):

The Ephesus cult?

EVANDER (nods):

Ten thousand hardcore zealots--true fanatics, the worst of the worst. (his face hardens) We've got someone on the inside who'll lure them all into the temple. Then we lock the doors and set it on fire.

Eve stares at him in shock.

EVE (quietly):

What?

EVANDER:

Eve, I know this is a terrible--cruel thing to do. But the cult--

EVE (interrupts):

My mother knows about this?

EVANDER:

You think we'd make a major move like this without her approval?

Eve shakes her head.

EVANDER:

Come on, Eve. This is war. People die--and kill. You know that.

EVE:

All too well. (She rises abruptly) I'm sorry. I--have to do something.

She heads for the exit.

EVANDER:

Eve!

She runs out. Evander punches his knee in frustration.

CUT TO

Eve striding through a tunnel, carrying a small lantern. There is a look of resolution on her face.

GABRIELLE'S VOICE (in voice-over, from *Callisto*):

No, you promise me. If something happens to me, you will not become a monster.

CUT TO

Montage:

* Eve climbing out of a hole in the side of a hill in Rome and walking out into the moonlit night.

* Eve walking down the streets of Rome.

* The imperial palace.

* Eve lurks at the corner of a staircase. A guard passes by. She taps his shoulder; he turns around and she knocks him out with a punch to the face, with a muttered "Sorry."

* Eve removes the guard's helmet and starts taking off his leather armor.

* Now dressed in the guard's uniform and helmet, Eve walks down the hallway of the palace.

DISSOLVE TO

A luxurious bedchamber seen through the doorway. A dark-haired woman is asleep on the fur-lined bed, facing away from the door.

A shot of Eve watching the figure from the doorway, a dagger in her hand. She creeps into the room. When she reaches the bed, she leans over and whispers into the woman's ear, at the same time as she holds the knife over the woman's throat.

We see that the figure is Sabina.

EVE (whispering):

Don't move a muscle. I came to talk...but I'm not planning on staying, so don't get any ideas.

The words and the pressure from the knife wake Sabina, whose eyes widen from shock.

Eve relaxes the knife enough for Sabina to nod slightly.

Eve allows Sabina to sit up and face her, but holds her knife ready, just in case.

EVE:

Let me get to the point. Artemis has a stranglehold on most of the Mediterranean, and I assume you're tagging along. (Off Sabina's unapologetic look) Well, I have a better offer for you.

SABINA (coldly):

It would have to be a *very* good offer.

EVE (earnestly):

What have you *really* gained by siding with Artemis?

SABINA (bluntly):

Rome.

EVE:

And what good is it doing you? You may be the Empress--but you're under her thumb.

(passionately) Sabina, come with me now. Help me find a way to defeat Artemis without destroying the city. And then--

SABINA:

And then what? I rule the empire? (scoffs) We both know mommy dearest would rather die than allow that to happen.

EVE:

Sabina...the times change people. Xena is so determined to defeat Artemis, she'd ally herself with the snake-haired Gorgon if she had to.

SABINA (wryly):

Thanks for the compliment.

Sabina looks thoughtfully at Eve, considering her words.

SABINA:

You said "destroying the city." What is Xena up to?

Eve is slightly taken aback, then rallies herself.

EVE:

It doesn't matter. If you agree to help us, you can change everything. (she pauses) Don't tell me you're happy with the way Artemis runs things.

SABINA (after a pause):

I'm not.

EVE (persuasively):

Then help us beat her, Sabina. (She pauses, then continues softly.) Maybe being Empress of Rome isn't all it's cracked up to be.

As Sabina listens to Eve, she seems to be relenting. Then, suddenly, she bolts up from the bed, catching Eve unaware, and brings her down, knocking the dagger from her hand and pinning her to the floor.

SABINA:

It's good enough for me. And I'm not going to let you destroy it because Xena doesn't approve. Artemis might have a screw loose--but I sure don't. (She raises her voice, shouting) Guards!

Close-up on Eve's horrified face as she squirms under Sabina's weight, as we:

FADE OUT

ACT FOUR

FADE IN

Ares and Xena's tent, where Ares and Xena are sleeping; his arm is draped loosely over her.

DARION'S VOICE (off-camera):

Xena. Xena!

Xena and Ares both jerk awake and sit up. (He is bare-chested, she is wearing only her leather tunic.)

XENA:

Come in.

Darion enters, looking troubled.

ARES:

What's going on?

DARION:

It's Eve. She's--gone.

XENA:

What?

DARION:

She--she went into the city.

Xena rises abruptly to her feet.

DARION (continues):

She took the tunnel that leads to the Palatine hill.

XENA:

And the guard let her through?

DARION:

She said she was going on your orders.

XENA:

Did he ask her for the password?

DARION (hesitates):

Well--she *is* your daughter...

XENA (curtly):

Who's the guard on that post?

DARION (intimidated):

Severus.

Ares gives Xena an uneasy look and rises to his feet.

XENA (thinks a moment):

He's a good warrior. Lucky for him we need all the manpower we can get right now, or else he'd pay for this.

Quick pan to Ares as he lowers his eyes, looking relieved.

DARION:

But why would Eve go into the city? I don't get it.

ARES (sarcastic):

I assume it wasn't for fresh air.

Xena gives him a probing look, as if suspecting something.

XENA:

Did you tell her what we were planning to do?

ARES:

I did.

XENA:

Damn it! I wasn't going to tell her until after the battle had started. (frustrated) I can't trust anyone, not even you!

ARES (touches her arm):

You don't really mean that.

XENA (sighs, placing her hand over his):

You shouldn't have told her. (after a brief pause) I bet she decided to be a hero, talk some sense into Sabina and save the day. (to Darion) How long has she been gone?

DARION:

Almost five hours.

XENA (scoffs):

Well, then--obviously, Sabina wasn't interested in a deal. Stupid girl--I could have told her it was pointless.

She closes her eyes for a moment, thinking, then opens them.

XENA(continues, abruptly):

All right--we're moving up the attack. (off Ares' inquiring look) With Eve in Sabina's hands, we can't wait and run the risk of our plan being found out. (to Darion) Alert the camp. And send a message to Zenobia. We move at daybreak.

DARION (taken aback):

But that's an hour from now.

XENA:

Exactly.

She brusquely motions with her head to the tent exit. Darion leaves.

Xena walks over to the table, unfolds the map and almost mechanically traces her hand over it. Ares walks over to her and puts his hands on her shoulder, then leans forward to kiss her neck.

ARES (in a low voice):

Okay, I screwed up.

XENA (harshly):

Eve screwed up.

ARES:

Well, so much for her going back into the past and changing things for the better.

She turns around to face Ares. There is a look of quiet anguish on her face.

XENA (softly):

I guess a part of me was hoping she might. (she sighs) Stupid, huh?

Ares shakes his head. She looks away.

ARES:

So--what's the plan?

XENA:

She's probably in the dungeons under the palace. Which means that if we can't get her out before the explosions start... (she trails off, looking at Ares, her face unreadable)

ARES:

We'll get her out.

XENA:

How? You and I are going to have our hands full leading the charge against the temple warriors. (Her face hardens) Remember, none of them must get out alive. The more worshipers Artemis loses--

ARES:

Then send Evander.

Xena shakes her head.

XENA:

His troops have to engage the warriors from the temple on the north side. Besides, he needs to save his strength--you know that.

ARES:

Right. (He pauses and gives Xena a heavy look) Funny--twelve years ago, you killed the Olympian gods to protect your daughter. Now, you'd sacrifice Eve to take down Artemis.

Xena stares at him mutely, stricken. Ares takes her hands in his.

ARES (continues):

You lead the charge against the temple warriors. I'll take a dozen men and go after Eve.

Xena stares at him thoughtfully.

XENA:

You mean...we get separated.

ARES:

We'll be fine.

They hug each other tightly.

XENA (murmurs):

Ares... Be careful. I love you.

ARES (tender):

Just don't do anything too heroic. We have enough problems. (he kisses her briefly) I love you, too.

They hug again, their eyes closed.

CUT TO

A montage:

-- Dawn breaking out over Rome

-- Xena's troops preparing for battle: one man pulls on his armor, another sharpens his sword, a woman slides a knife into the side of her boot.

-- Evander rides over a hilly area, a grim look on his face.

-- Klymene loads up her quiver with arrows. We see that she also carries a sword.

-- Darion surveys a group of armed men.

CUT TO

A cell in a dungeon. Eve in inside, sitting on a bench. Sabina is on the other side of the bars, looking at her with a wry smile on her face.

SABINA:

You know, so far, I've played nice. I haven't even told Artemis I've got you here. I bet she'd have some interesting ideas about what to do with you.

EVE:

Are you finished with the threats?

SABINA (chuckles):

Oh, I've barely begun. You know, it would be a lot easier for both of us if you just told me what Xena and Ares are planning. (She looks thoughtfully at Eve) Whatever it is--I know it's something you

don't like. Otherwise you wouldn't have come here. (She clicks her tongue in mock sympathy) You still have that sentimental side, don't you? How inconvenient. Xena lost hers years ago.

Eve scowls at her.

EVE:

You're wasting your time.

SABINA:

I'll be back at noon. By then--you'd better have some answers. Remember, I *don't* have a sentimental side.

She turns around and walks away. Eve leans against the wall with a frustrated sigh.

CROSS-FADE TO

Evander's army charging toward one of the gates of Rome.

CUT TO

Sabina walking down a hallway in the palace.

CUT TO

Two of Evander's archers fire at sentries at the top of the wall. They fall to their deaths.

CUT TO

Roman soldiers start to bring down the gate but a battering ram smashes into it.

CUT TO

Sabina sits down at a desk and reaches for some scrolls.

CUT TO

Evander's forces pour into the city as people run in terror, screaming.

CUT TO

A group of male and female warriors in the outfits of Artemis' temple army--silver, with a laurel branch embroidered on the chest and a crescent moon on the headdress--run down the street, some carrying bows, some spears or swords.

CUT TO

Evander on his horse. An arrow flies toward him; he holds out his hand, using his powers to divert it and turn it around. The arrow flies at the female archers who fired it and strikes her down as she screams.

CUT TO

A montage of Evander's men fighting the temple warriors. We see several temple warriors cut down, one by one.

CUT TO

A Roman soldier running down a hallway of the palace.

CUT TO

EVANDER (yells):

Cut them off at the crossroads! Drive them toward the temple!

Evander's men start pushing the temple warriors back.

CUT TO

Sabina in her study. There is a frantic knock on the door.

SABINA (raises her voice):

Come in!

The door opens. It's the soldier we saw running down the hallway before.

SOLDIER (out of breath):

Empress--an attack on the northern gate!

SABINA (leaps to her feet):

It's started more quickly than I thought.

CUT TO

A wide shot of the forum, which is erupting in pandemonium as Xena and Ares' troops attack, running down the side of a hill.

CUT TO

The battle on the forum. Xena and Ares are fighting together. She is sword-fighting two men at the same time; as a third opponent approaches her from behind, she side kicks one man to the ground, grabs the second one's free arm and swings his body into the path of the third man's weapon. As the second man falls over, dead, Xena picks up his sword and kills the third man too. Pan to Ares, who twirls his sword and kills a Roman soldier with a backward thrust while downing another soldier in front of him with a powerful kick. He swings his sword just in time to bring down another Roman who is coming at him.

Pan to Darion and Klymene, fighting back to back. Darion's opponent raises his sword arm to strike, but Darion drops his weight and uses one leg to sweep the man's legs from under him. Darion jumps back as he falls, then runs him through as he tries to rise. Klymene cuts down another Roman.

The camera pulls back to show the ground littered with dead and wounded Roman soldiers.

XENA:

All right--the way's clear. We're headed toward the temple to take on Artemis' warriors. (She nods, pointing to the left.) You go for the palace.

They briefly clasp hands, staring into each other's eyes. For a moment they look as if they were about to kiss, but then Xena nods briefly and pulls her hand away. She turns to Darion, who is breathing hard as he looks at his bloodied sword.

XENA:

You okay?

DARION (nods):

Fine. Am I going with you?

XENA:

No. (she pauses) Half an hour from now--start lighting the fires.

Darion nods grimly, pursing his lips.

FLASH TO

Sabina, in full armor, riding out of the palace with a cohort of Roman soldiers behind her.

FLASH TO

The Goths, led by Zenobia, ride through the streets of Rome.

FLASH TO

Ares and a small group of men run up the hill toward the palace.

FLASH TO

In another part of the forum, Xena and her army are fighting Artemis' temple warriors. Xena now has a small cut on her face and another on her upper arm. The temple of Artemis we saw in Act 3 is visible in the background.

A female temple warrior falls, struck down by an arrow.

Pan up to show Klymene in the opening of a wall, with a bow and arrow. She grins gleefully, then levels another arrow and shoots it at another one of Artemis' warriors, killing her.

FLASH TO

Ares and his men fighting some Roman soldiers at the palace entrance. Ares picks up a sword dropped by a fallen guard, then uses both swords to kill two soldiers. The surviving soldiers turn and run.

ARES:

Come on.

CUT TO

Eve, still in the dungeon, hears a noise and leaps to her feet, gripping the bars. Two prison guards come into view. They look alarmed.

PRISON GUARD #1:

Hey, what's going on?

They draw their swords.

Ares and five other warriors burst into the dungeon and charge the guards, holding them at swordpoint. The guards drop their swords.

ARES (points to Eve, breathing heavily):

Open this cell. Now.

PRISON GUARD #2:

I can't. Not without orders from--

Ares drives his sword into the man's gut. The guard's eyes bulge, blood running from his mouth. He falls down.

ARES (turns to the other guard):

You.

PRISON GUARD (panicking):

Yes, sir.

He bends down and, with shaking hands, takes a bunch of keys off the dead guard's belt, then fumbles for the right key and opens the door.

ARES:

Good for you. (he lowers his sword) All right, get out of here.

The prison guard backs away with a sigh of relief.

PRISON GUARD (mutters):

Praise Artemis!

The prison guard is now behind Ares, who is facing the camera. Ares' face hardens. Without another word, he thrusts his sword backwards, running the guard through. The guard collapses with a strangled cry. Eve gasps.

ARES (to Eve):

Get moving. We have to get out of here before this whole place goes up in flames.

Eve comes out of the cell.

EVE:

Ares--

ARES:

Save the thank-yous for later. *Come on!*

He grabs her arm and they run toward the exit.

CUT TO

A wide shot of the forum. Roman soldiers are running through the forum, some of them clashing with the rebels.

An explosion rocks one of the buildings. Fire erupts. This is followed by another explosion.

CUT TO

A tight shot of the forum. Two Roman soldiers fly through the air, thrown by the force of the explosion.

Ares and Eve come into view, running. Three Romans charge them; Ares spars with two of them. Eve has no weapons, but she blocks the Roman's sword strike at her head with one arm, then grabs his wrist and twists his body around to meet her vicious kick. As he falls, she slams her elbow up into his chin.

Ares, who has just dispatched both of his opponents, looks at her with grudging respect.

ARES:

Not bad.

EVE:

One down--how many more to go?

ARES:

Come on, let's find Xena.

They run toward the other end of the forum. As they run, more Romans run toward them. Ares yanks at Eve's arm and they dive away as another explosion goes off, almost under their feet. In slow motion, the debris from the explosion settles and the flames start to spread. As we return to normal motion, Ares and Eve scramble to their feet. The Romans lie on the ground, their bodies now engulfed in flames.

Eve turns to look at the palace. It is now in flames.

CUT TO

Near the temple of Artemis. Xena's troops are pushing Artemis' temple warriors back toward the temple. Sabina and her troops ride up and engage the rebels. As the battle rages, we see some of the rebels fall.

Pan to Klymene on the wall, taking aim at Sabina and releasing the arrow.

Pan to Sabina as she and her horse go down, the horse neighing loudly.

Pan to Klymene, who pumps her fist in the air.

Pan back to the battle as Sabina rises to her feet, unhurt.

Pan back to Klymene, who scowls, disappointed.

CUT TO

Ares and Eve still running toward the battle scene.

CUT TO

Xena fighting on the temple steps. She cuts down two of Artemis' temple warriors.

SABINA (off-camera):

Xena. (Pan to Sabina to show her standing a few feet away, sword drawn.) We meet again. I guess it was meant to be, huh?

XENA:

Please spare me the platitudes.

SABINA:

Gladly.

They start fighting. Both women are hurting, Sabina from her fall and Xena from assorted scratches and bruises covering her body. But the battle is spirited. Sabina strikes Xena with a side kick and a backfist at the same time, but Xena dances out of the way of the fist and grabs Sabina's extended leg. She pulls hard and Sabina loses her balance but rolls out of Xena's range.

Sabina leaps to her feet and advances again, driving Xena back toward the top of the steps.

Pan to Eve and Ares, who are now at the bottom of the steps. Ares looks tense and jumpy as he watches Xena.

Xena has taken control of the fight and with a strong series of punches, front kicks and sword blows, she drives Sabina back toward the columns of the portico.

ARES (yells):

Xena! Get back *now*!

Xena turns and looks over at Ares. They make eye contact for a second; her expression is one of tenderness and regret.

ARES:

No.

He starts running toward the steps, pushing his way past the rebels and the Roman forces (soldiers and temple warriors) who are still fighting.

Suddenly, everything happens at once:

A Roman appears out of nowhere and knocks Eve to the ground while she is distracted watching the fight.

Ares is running towards Xena and Sabina.

From Eve's perspective, we watch in slow motion as Sabina uses Xena's focus on Ares to attack her. Xena stumbles but remains standing.

A huge explosion rocks the stairs, flames and smoke shooting out. There are loud screams.

As the explosion settles, there is no sign of Xena, Ares, or Sabina.

Eve screams, horrified. The Roman soldier raises his sword over her--

SMASH CUT TO

[film in full color]

The Fates' Loom, as we hear Eve screaming. She is lying on the floor of the temple in the same position as she was in the Forum, flat on her back, arms outstretched, eyes open but unfocused. She still has a couple of scratches she got during the battle.

The Fates watch her impassively. Lachesis is holding a length of thick black thread, which Atropos' scissors are poised to cut. They watch Eve scream, and finally Atropos nods decisively, as if to say, "that's enough." She cuts the thread clean in two.

Eve immediately snaps awake. She is disorientated and looks around for a second before remembering where she is.

She looks at the Fates.

EVE (incredulous):

What was that? Are you telling me that's the future we're all facing?

CLOTHO:

Perhaps. But mortals...

LACHESIS:

...always have the power...

ATROPOS:

...to alter Fate.

Atropos lifts up the length of thread she just cut. We follow its path down to the floor and across to Eve's black cloak. She tugs it and Eve feels the motion of the fabric.

EVE (slowly but firmly):

So, if we don't stop Artemis now, that's the future. (shakes her head) But it's not inevitable. (to the Fates) Is it?

CLOTHO (raises an eyebrow):

Is it?

Close-up on Eve's pale but determined face as we:

FADE OUT

THE END

[The future was harmed, though perhaps not permanently, during the production of this motion picture.]