

SHIPPER SEASON SEVEN

“Last Hope”

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Logline

When Pericles dies, he calls upon Xena to take control of Athens and its army in an attempt to defeat the Spartans who they have been at war with for a year.

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TEASER

FADE IN

Under the hot, midday sun, heat seems to rise from the ground inside the stone walls of Athens. Flies are buzzing all around landing on fruit and meat that lie on the ground, rotting in the heat. The streets are almost empty, and the people who walk around are dressed in tattered, dingy clothes that look like they haven't been washed for some time. There are dead bodies lying on the ground, as well as sick people who have collapsed and are too weak to walk. The sound of moaning from the sick is heard all over the city.

In the center of the city, there is a large, palatial stone building--it's the hall of the city government. A healthy looking man in a white toga walks toward the building's wooden doors and opens them. He walks into a large room, continues down a long hall and then climbs a winding stairway before entering another room. The walls of the room he enters has scattered candles in the walls and no windows. Several women servants hover around a bed that sits in the center of the room.

MAN (clears throat):

Ahem.

The women look at the man in white. He ushers for them to leave and they bow instantly, obeying. The women leave the room and the man walks up to the bed. On it lays a middle-aged man with a long beard. He looks deathly ill with red spots all over his skin and sweat dripping from his forehead.

The man in white looks down at him and the man in bed slowly turns his head to look at the man above him.

MAN:

You sent for me, Pericles?

PERICLES (weakly and shallow breaths):

Yes. As you can see...I'm dying.

The man goes to speak but Pericles raises his hand, stopping him.

PERICLES:

There's nothing you can do to help me. My illness is too severe.

MAN:

What have you called me here for?

PERICLES:

The people of Athens are dying. (coughs) I won't...be here much longer to guide...the armies of Athens against Sparta. If Sparta wins this battle, Athens will fall. We need someone to lead...Athens.

Pericles reaches to a table next to the bed and retrieves a rolled up scroll. He hands it to the man who looks at him curiously.

PERICLES:

Have you heard of Xena?

MAN:

Yes. Everyone in Athens knows the Warrior Princess.

PERICLES (breaths become scattered, wheezing):

Take this to Xena. She...is the only one who... (begins a coughing fit)

The man puts his hand on Pericles' chest, finally quieting down.

PERICLES:

Find Xena before...all Athens is lost.

Pericles convulses, finally falling limp. He's dead. The man pulls the sheets of the bed over Pericles' head, stuffs the scroll in his toga and walks out of the room as we:

FADE OUT

ACT ONE

FADE IN

The night is very dark; the moon is hidden behind a cloud. Xena is sitting by a campfire sharpening her sword. Gabrielle and Eve are sitting next to her, finishing off the last of the fish they'd had for dinner.

GABRIELLE (looks at Xena):

So, where are we headed tomorrow? I was thinking we could take a few days off to visit my sister in Potidaea. It's not too far from here and I'd like to catch up with her and Sarah.

XENA (stops sharpening her sword, looks at her friend):

I guess we could. It *would* be nice to get a home cooked meal and a warm bed for a few nights. (smiles)

GABRIELLE:

Great! (smiles and goes back to her meal)

Xena goes back to sharpening her sword. Then, there's a rustling sound in the forest. Xena looks up and hears it again, this time louder. She stands up and surveys the scenery. Gabrielle too stands, unsheathing her sais.

EVE (stands, somewhat cautious):

What was that?

Xena walks over to a bush and points her sword at it.

XENA:

You'd better come out unless you want a taste of my sword!

MAN'S VOICE (pleading):

No! Please don't!

A man walks out from behind the bush, the look of fear on his face. It's the same man from Athens. Seeing him, Xena puts her sword down and Gabrielle behind her too puts her weapons away.

MAN:

I'm not here to harm you.

XENA (looks him up and down, cracks a grin):

You got *that* right.

Gabrielle and Eve walk up next to Xena.

XENA:

Who are you and why were you sneaking around?

MAN:

My name is Delemus, are you Xena?

XENA:

Yes.

DELEMUS:

I have a message for you from Pericles.

XENA:

Pericles, the ruler of Athens?

Gabrielle touches Xena's arm.

GABRIELLE:

You know him?

XENA (looks at her):

By reputation. I know that he is a good, wise, honest man.

DELEMUS:

Was.

EVE:

What?

DELEMUS:

He's dead.

Xena, Gabrielle and Eve look at each other and then at Delemus.

XENA:

How did that happen? He isn't a very old man and he's always been in good health.

DELEMUS:

The plague that has struck all of Athens killed him.

EVE:

A plague has struck Athens? That's terrible.

DELEMUS (reaches into his toga, retrieving the scroll, looks at Xena):

He wanted me to give this to you.

Xena takes the scroll, opens it and reads. Her face looks troubled.

XENA:

Gabrielle. Eve. We have to go to Athens as soon as possible. With Pericles gone, he's asked me to take over control of the Athenian military. Otherwise, Sparta will destroy Athens.

GABRIELLE:

Sparta?

DELEMUS:

Yes. A war between Sparta and Athens has been going on for around a year now.

XENA:

We spend a little time away from Greece and look what happens. (looks at Delemus) Thank you. We'll leave right away.

Delemus nods his head. Xena, Gabrielle, and Eve start packing up camp as they prepare to head to Athens with Delemus.

CUT TO

Early in the morning as the sun comes up, Delemus, Xena, Gabrielle and Eve walk through the city gates of Athens. They stop and wince at the smell of sickness and death that hits their nostrils and the sight of dead and dying people in the streets.

EVE:

Isn't there anything that can be done to help these poor people? They're suffering so much.

DELEMUS:

We would if we could. There are too many severely sick, and not enough healers in the city to try and treat them. And what's even worse is that, with the war going on, we cannot bring in any medics from the outside. The body count is growing so fast that if this keeps up, Athens will be depopulated.

GABRIELLE:

No...that can't be.

XENA (grimly):

Maybe we'll be able to find a way to help, Gabrielle. But first let's take care of the war, or there won't be an Athens left to save.

GABRIELLE:

You're right.

DELEMUS:

Come, I'll take you to the hall of the city government.

The four of them continue through the streets. Suddenly, Gabrielle stops and looks back at something that has caught her eye. Standing by a small house of wood and mud is Virgil. He is leaning against the side, his head hanging down.

GABRIELLE:

Virgil? (running toward him) Virgil!

Virgil looks up, seeing Gabrielle running toward him. His eyes are glistening with tears. Hearing his name, Xena and Eve look back and follow Gabrielle while Delemus waits for them.

VIRGIL:

Ga-Gabrielle? I can't believe you're here.

GABRIELLE (smiles, hugs him):

It's been a long time, Virgil.

VIRGIL (rubs his eyes briefly, smiles half-heartedly):
How've you been? Kept busy?

GABRIELLE (smiles back):
You have no idea. (she pauses and then adds, concerned) Virgil...is everything all right?

VIRGIL (looks down sadly):
I wish I had good news, Gabrielle. My mother got the plague a few weeks ago. I did everything I could but...she didn't make it.

XENA (walking up to him):
Meg's dead? (Virgil nods) I'm sorry.

VIRGIL:
And now, my younger brother and sister are both showing symptoms. They aren't that ill yet, but I fear they'll get worse. I don't know what to do; I'm the only one they've got now.

EVE (walks up to him, lays a hand on his shoulder):
Virgil...I'd like to help you take care of them, at least while we're in Athens.

XENA:
You think there's something you can do, Eve?

EVE:
Yes, Mother. I learned a little about medicine when I was traveling through Chin and Indus. I want to help. Besides (looks at Virgil) I have reason to help you. I still feel guilty for... (looks down, ashamed, and then looks up) I can't bear the thought of you losing any more of your family if there is anything I can do. Maybe I can make up for... (her voice breaks off)

XENA:
Okay, Eve. You do what you can. Come on, Gabrielle, we have a city to run and a war to stop.

GABRIELLE (nods):
All right. (looks at Virgil) Virgil, I hope everything works out.

VIRGIL:
Thanks.

Gabrielle smiles at him and then she and Xena go to catch up with Delemus as we:

FADE OUT

ACT TWO

FADE IN

Virgil walks into the small house and Eve follows him. They enter into a room with a fireplace right of the door, a kettle sitting next to it. In the next room are two beds and a window next to them, a

tattered piece of cloth hanging across it. In one bed lies a young girl and in the other, a young boy. They don't look that sick except for a few red spots on their skin.

Eve's face grows sad as she walks slowly over to the sick children. Virgil stays behind, watching, apparently still a little wary of her. The children are asleep and Eve kneels down between the two beds and puts her hands on both children, careful not to wake them. She sighs quietly and closes her eyes, mumbling under her breath.

Virgil watches from a distance as she prays. A few moments pass and finally he decides to join Eve in prayer. He kneels down next to her and she briefly opens her eyes, glancing at him--a slight hint of surprise on her face. He puts a gentle hand on her shoulder and smiles, showing that he trusts her. She smiles back and they close their eyes once more. When they finish praying, they stand.

EVE:

Virgil, I'll need some water now to make an herbal tonic. It's something that I learned during my travels in Indus and Chin. I have some pouches of herbs here-- (points to her satchel)

VIRGIL (surprised):

It can cure the plague?

EVE:

No, but it will help keep down the fever and help with some of the other symptoms--help them make it through the illness until the worst is over. I'll need some time to prepare it and let it settle, though. Until then, Eli will take care of them.

VIRGIL:

I'm glad.

Virgil and Eve start to leave the room when they hear the voice of the little girl.

GIRL (sleepily):

Virgil?

VIRGIL:

Yeah, Kara?

KARA:

I'm hungry.

BOY (yawns):

Yeah, me too.

VIRGIL (in an anguished voice):

I'm sorry...we don't have much food to spare. With the war, food has been hard to come by. What we have, we may need to stretch over weeks to come.

EVE:

Wait. (reaches into the satchel that she is carrying and takes out two pears and two small pieces of bread) Here. (hands them to the children) You need these more than I do. You need to keep your strength up if you hope to get better.

The two children take them and begin to eat. Eve walks closer to the beds. The boy looks up.

BOY:

Thank you for the food, miss.

EVE:

You're welcome. What's your name?

BOY:

Theon.

EVE:

Well, Theon, you and your sister are very lucky to have a big brother like Virgil. He's acted like a father to you and I hope you know how much he cares for you, (looks at Kara, smiles) both of you.

Theon smiles and then starts to cough. Eve reaches to feel his forehead.

EVE:

You feel warm. Virgil, why don't you get a wet cloth to put on his head?

Virgil nods and heads out the door. Eve rubs the children's faces gently and smiles. Virgil soon comes back with a wet cloth and Eve puts it on Theon's head.

EVE:

There you go. We'll be in the next room if you need anything.

Virgil and Eve walk out of the room. Eve goes to sit down at a table but Virgil grabs her arm. She glances back.

VIRGIL:

Eve, I just want you to know...that I've forgiven you for what you did. I know that, at the time, it wasn't the real you. Now, I've seen the real you and I know that you would never do something like that.

EVE:

You don't have to say that. You were right to be angry with me, enough to want me dead. I caused you a lot of pain and I will go to my grave regretting what I did.

VIRGIL:

Well...I'm glad you're here now. Thank you.

EVE:

Anytime.

A little tearfully, they smile at each other.

CUT TO

Xena and Gabrielle are standing in the city government building, in a room with many windows. In the center of the room is a large table with a very detailed three-dimensional terrain map. Cleon, second in command in the army of Athens, stands next to it.

XENA:

So, this is a map of Athens?

CLEON:

And its territories all over Greece. The Spartans are here (points to a large open field to the west of Athens). They are led by a general named Brasidas, who is said to be a great and ruthless warrior. They plan to attack any day now. We have to be prepared.

XENA:

What are their numbers?

CLEON:

The Spartan army has about ten thousand men. We started out with the same numbers, but we have lost many men to the plague and more when we suffered a terrible defeat in the battle at Peloponnese.

GABRIELLE:

How did the war start?

CLEON:

Athens was trying to make agreements for seagoing trade with Corinth and Megara, Sparta's allies. The Spartans wanted to stop these deals from being made, and so the war erupted. They began to attack and pillage the land around Athens, destroying crops and devastating the land, forcing villagers to leave their fields and stay inside the city walls for protection, and disrupting our contacts with our trading partners.

XENA (points to a spot north of Athens):

Why is this town circled in red?

CLEON (looks at map):

It's the only one outside of Athens where the plague has spread. It was besieged by the Spartans, and when we sent our soldiers there to break the siege, the plague spread to the town itself. Thankfully, no other Greek city has suffered yet because of the lack of contact.

XENA (shocked):

But that's--

GABRIELLE (gasps):

Potidaea. Lila and Sarah are there. I have to go there to make sure they're all right. (to Cleon) Is the town still under siege?

CLEON:

The siege has been broken but the town is now sealed off because of the plague. It might be hard to get in.

GABRIELLE:

I have to make sure they're okay. I'll find a way.

XENA:

I'm sure you will, Gabrielle. But please be careful.

CLEON:

We can give you a fresh horse from the city stables of Athens if you like.

GABRIELLE (nods to Cleon):

Thanks. (to Xena) Xena...you don't mind my leaving you on your own to deal with the war, do you? I just have to make sure Lila and Sarah are all right.

XENA (hugs her):

I'll be all right, Gabrielle...good luck. I'll meet you there as soon as I can.

Gabrielle nods and walks out. We see her leave the city gates and gallop off for Potidaea as we:

FADE OUT

ACT THREE

FADE IN

The sun is going down. Eve and Virgil are sitting at a table in front of the fireplace, fire flickering inside it. A large pot in which Eve has mixed the herbal is on the table. Coughing is heard from the bedroom. Eve and Virgil get up quickly to check on Kara and Theon. Virgil goes to the beds. Theon and Kara both look worse than they had before. They seem feverish.

THEON (groans):

Ohhh.

VIRGIL:

Eve, they're getting worse. I thought you said Eli would help them?

EVE (winces, realizing that her prayers did not have the desired effect):

I don't always understand why he does what he does, but we have to have faith. The herbal should be ready now--can you please go and get that pot, Virgil?

VIRGIL:

All right.

He leaves the room and then comes back carrying the pot. Eve takes it from him and carefully feeds some of the medicine to each child with a spoon, then gives the pot back to Virgil, who has been standing quietly, watching her.

EVE:

As I told you, Virgil, this isn't a cure but it should help bring their fever down and make them feel a little better--help them make it through the worst of the illness. All we can do now is hope that, with this medicine and with Eli's help, they'll get better. Give them more of this every few hours. And take good care of them.

VIRGIL:

Again, thanks.

EVE:

I think I should go check on my mother... Is that all right?

VIRGIL:

Yes, go. You've helped enough here.

EVE:

Goodbye, Virgil.

She reaches out to shake hands with him and then pulls her hand back and looks down, embarrassed, obviously overcome by the awareness that she killed Virgil's father. Virgil reaches out, takes her hand and shakes it. Their eyes meet. Then, slowly, Eve walks out the door.

CUT TO

The hall of the city government, lit with candles now that it's dark outside. Xena is still looking over the map with Cleon, trying to decide the best place to attack.

XENA:

If we want to defeat the Spartan army, we'll have to use tactics that they won't expect. But remember that the Spartans are superb fighters; we'll have to be sneaky. What we must do is split our troops in three parts. The first will confront the Spartans in open field, and then pretend to run. The Spartans will give chase, and then we will lure them here (points to the map) where the two other parts of our troops will be waiting on both sides of the pass to attack--so that the Spartan army will be trapped.

CLEON:

That sounds like a good plan. I'll go tell the troops and get them ready for battle tomorrow. Our scouts have told us that Sparta is preparing an attack on Athens' west gate very soon.

XENA:

All right.

Cleon looks again at the map and then leaves. Xena sighs and then walks over to the window behind her, looking out into the night. There is a flash of blue light behind Xena.

ARES (claps sarcastically three time):

Well, if it isn't Xena, the ruler of Athens. Xena at the head of an army... I've waited so long for this day to come. (he cocks his head in mock surprise, pretending to suddenly remember something) Wait a minute--I think I distinctly remember someone telling me that she had no desire to ever lead an army or rule people again...

Xena quickly turns around, shifting her eyes.

XENA:

Well, these are special circumstances.

ARES (saunters toward her):

You know, Xena (lowers his voice seductively), maybe everything is special when it comes to you. (he reaches out to touch her face and she turns away) Whatever the circumstances--you do it well.

XENA:

What do you want anyway, Ares? Here for the cheap thrills? Except that I wouldn't call it cheap...Sparta and Athens, the two most powerful cities in Greece, going to war for the right to rule--you must be thrilled.

ARES (grins):

Actually, I'm here to help.

XENA (whips around):

What? Did you just say what I think you said--you want to *help*?

ARES:

That's right.

XENA (sarcastically):

Right. Ares, you've never helped anyone but yourself.

ARES:

Now, Xena, you of all people should know that's not true. Or maybe you should ask Gabrielle and Eve to remind you?

XENA (slightly embarrassed):

Yeah...that was different.

ARES:

How? (in a challenging way)

XENA:

Well...it just was.

ARES:

So you still don't trust me.

XENA:

Come on, Ares. What have you got up your sleeve? (he sarcastically raises his bare arms and she snorts impatiently) What's the game plan?

ARES:

See, Xena, if Sparta wins, then my greatest temples, here in Athens and in all the territories that Athens controls right now, are going to be destroyed. I'm going to lose a lot of my worshippers.

XENA (shakes her head):

I should have seen that one coming--Ares out for himself again.

ARES (grins cunningly):

What can I say? I'm not a god without my temples *or* my worshippers.

Xena gives him a curious, skeptical look, narrowing her eyes.

XENA:

Why should the Spartans destroy your temples? Conquest is their main business. I'd think they would be pretty big on the God of War.

ARES:

Oh, things have gone kinda sour between us ever since the Spartans lost a couple of wars even though they prayed for my help. Unfortunately, at the time, I was a little busy being mortal, you know? So now, they've got a grudge against me. You know, Xena, it's taken me long enough to rebuild my power base as a god after I spent all that time as a mortal. I can't afford such a setback.

XENA (in a mock whine):

Oh, I feel so bad for you.

She walks over to the terrain map again; Ares follows her and surveys the map.

ARES:

So, you plan to lure the Spartans into a trap here in this valley and attack them from the sides? That's good; it should work as long as they don't see it coming.

XENA:

Well, I hope so. (pause) I guess I don't really need your help then, do I, Ares?

ARES:

You never know.

He's gone in a flash of light. She looks at the place where he was standing and then sees her daughter walk into the room.

EVE:

Mother? Are you alone? I thought you were talking to someone.

XENA:

No, it was no one. How are Virgil's brother and sister?

EVE (sadly):

They're ill, Mother. I made them an herbal from a recipe I picked up in Indus; I'm hoping it will help...

XENA:

I sure hope so, Eve. It's so good of you to help take care of them. (she smiles encouragingly and puts her hand around Eve as they walk to the window)

EVE:

Where's Gabrielle?

XENA:

She went to Potidaea to make sure that her family is all right. The plague struck there too. I hope we can go out to meet up with her as soon as the battle is over tomorrow.

EVE:

Battle?

XENA:

Yes, Sparta plans to attack so we are going to be ready for them. I'll be leaving early in the morning, Eve. But if my plan works, tomorrow's battle should be the end of the war.

EVE:

All right, Mother. Just be careful... I couldn't bear to lose you...again.

XENA:

I will. I promise.

They smile at each other; Eve rests her head against her mother, staring into the night as we:

FADE OUT

ACT FOUR

FADE IN

Hard and fast Gabrielle rides until she finally reaches Potidaea the next morning. Four guards with spears stand in front of Potidaea's gates, allowing no one to pass. Through the trees, Gabrielle can see them. She dismounts the horse and draws her sais. But she does not believe that she will need to fight anyone, for she knows a secret entrance into the city having lived there for a huge part of her life.

Stealthily, she creeps through the forest, past the guards and around the first length of wall. She walks up to it and places herself firmly against the side, listening to other guards talking on top of the city's watch posts on the wall.

Gabrielle continues down the wall, where no guards are, until she comes to a brick in the wall that is slightly pushed further into the wall. It is a fairly large stone brick. Gabrielle pushes on it until it falls through to the other side, leaving an open spot in the wall. Gabrielle squeezes through it and into the city.

GABRIELLE (sighs in exhaustion but tries to be humorous):

I used to fit through there a lot better when I was a child.

She walks through the city streets, people going about their lives as usual. Most of them seem completely healthy.

Finally Gabrielle comes to a small cottage surrounded by a wooden fence. She opens the gate, walks toward the house, and knocks on the door. After a moment it opens, her sister standing in front of her.

LILA (excitedly):

Gabrielle! Oh, it is so good to see you.

GABRIELLE:

It's good to see you too, Lila.

They hug and then look at each other again.

GABRIELLE:

How have you been? I was so worried about you--I heard about the plague...

LILA:

Oh, Gabrielle--Sarah got it a couple of months ago...

GABRIELLE (turns pale):

What?

LILA:

But she's all right now...she was among the lucky ones who recovered. (sadly) We have lost a lot of people, Gabrielle--but I think the epidemic has run its course in Potidaea. There have been no new cases of illness reported in over a week.

GABRIELLE (breathing a sigh of relief):

Thank the heavens!

LILA:

We're fine now. Come on in, we have a lot of catching up to do.

They smile and enter the house.

CUT TO

Xena is mounted atop of Argo, Cleon next to her, atop his own horse. They're in a valley surrounded by two hills of forest.

CLEON:

The troops are ready, Xena. They are positioned just as planned.

XENA:

Good. (reaches down into the saddlebag and retrieves a telescope, looks through to see the Spartan army in hot pursuit of the Athenian detachments that served as a decoy) The Spartans are about half a mile away and approaching fast. I'll give you the signal when it's time to attack.

CLEON:

All right.

Cleon gallops off toward the troops on the east hill. Xena gallops to the troops on the west hill and waits there until the Spartans arrive.

Soon, Xena sees the Spartan army coming toward them. She draws her sword and looks across the hill to see Cleon and his army ready. When the Spartans come through the valley, she raises her sword and swings it, signaling to Cleon that it's time. Cleon raises his hand and his troops begin the descent down the hill; Xena does the same, both troops coming down toward the Spartan army. The sounds of war cries fill the air. Cleon and Xena gallop down the hills behind their troops.

The Athenians attack and battle the Spartans. The Spartans are taken by surprise at first. Their leader Brasidas, mounted atop a black steed, gallops about the battlefield rallying his troops and mounting a counterattack.

CLEON (galloping toward him, sword raised high):
Brasidas!

BRASIDAS:

Well, if it isn't Cleon, my most revered enemy. Have you come to meet your fate?

CLEON:

No, you've come to meet yours!

Cleon and Brasidas battle on horseback while Xena is leading the Athenians against the Spartans. The Spartans's numerical advantage, however, is too strong and they soon begin to gain the upper hand. Cleon and Brasidas continue to fight until Brasidas is able to gain the advantage and he stabs Cleon in the heart.

XENA (screams):
Cleon!

Just then, two warriors on horseback come charging at her. She leaps up in the air, doing a back flip, and knocks them out with powerful kicks to the face, then lands on her feet and runs over to Cleon just in time to catch him as he falls off his horse. Meanwhile, a laughing Brasidas gallops back into the heat of battle, leading his troops and mowing down the Athenian soldiers.

XENA (runs up to Cleon and kneels, holding his head):
Cleon.

CLEON (gasps, blood drips from his nose and mouth):
Xena, we're losing. I don't see how...Athens can win...

XENA:

We'll find a way. There's *always* a way.

CLEON:

Xena... (coughs) ...you must kill...Brasidas. It's the only way to defeat his army and...Sparta. If he's gone, Athens will surely...win...the...war. (exhales, falls limp)

Xena lays him down on the ground, stands up and whistles. Argo comes toward her, she mounts and gallops back toward the thick of the battle, letting out a war cry so piercing that for a moment the sounds of combat are stilled as the warriors of both armies turn around to look at the Warrior Princess.

XENA (yelling):

Brasidas! I'm coming for you!

BRASIDAS (laughs mockingly):

I don't know who you are but this will be the last battle you'll ever see!

Galloping toward her, Brasidas reaches behind his back and grabs a crossbow, shooting two arrows at her. Xena catches one but the other embeds itself into her left shoulder.

Stunned, she totters back and falls off Argo. She breaks the tip of the arrow and pulls it out of her shoulder, gritting her teeth in agony and nearly crying out.

Meanwhile, Brasidas gallops toward her and then all around her many of the Athenians start retreating, thinking that there is no chance of winning and the Spartans have carried the day.

Brasidas raises his sword over Xena and, still in shock from her wound; she is not quick enough to react. It seems that she's about to be struck down. But just then Brasidas' sword seems to run into some invisible obstacle in the air, delaying the blow for a second. Brasidas frowns in puzzlement; meanwhile, the brief reprieve is enough time for Xena to collect herself. Thrusting her sword upward, she runs him through. A look of shock on his face, he slides off his horse and falls, dead.

The Spartans are obviously shaken by the death of their leader, while the Athenians are heartened. Taking advantage of the moment, Xena mounts Argo again, still wincing from the pain in her shoulder.

XENA:

Attack!

She charges forward, leading the Athenians in their charge. Stunned, the Spartans begin to retreat, while the Athenians cheer and holler at their win.

Xena, breathing hard and still wincing a little from the pain in her shoulder, hangs back a little as the troops celebrate, then lifts her head, tensing a little, and looks around.

XENA:

Ares?

The God of War materializes next to her. He looks emotionless, his arms folded on his chest.

XENA:

You... Did you deflect that blow?

ARES:

I told you I wanted to help you fight the Spartans. Don't look so shocked.

XENA:

Ares...

ARES:

Oh, there's no need to thank me. I told you why I was doing this. Like I said--what's a god without temples? (he winks at her and disappears)

XENA:

Hmm.

She stands quiet for a moment, looking thoughtfully at the spot where he vanished, and then mounts Argo, careful not to use her wounded left arm. Then, she raises her sword in her hand.

XENA:

Warriors of Athens! We have suffered many losses but we have defeated the enemy. We can go home.

The troops cheer and follow her as she gallops off to Athens.

CUT TO

Back in Athens, Xena enters the hall of the city government to meet Delemus, who is waiting for her. Eve is there as well; they both rise to their feet to greet Xena.

EVE:

Mother, we've already heard the news--you won!

XENA:

Yes, we won. We lost a lot of men...Cleon is dead. (Delemus looks down, dejected) But Sparta is beaten. The war should be over now; their leader is dead and they are in retreat.

DELEMUS (looks at her arm):

You're wounded!

EVE:

Here, let me dress that for you. (she starts to bandage Xena's wound) And, Mother, I have some more wonderful news--Virgil's brother and sister are feeling better! Their fever broke today. I think the herbal worked.

DELEMUS:

Herbal? You gave them something that helped them recover from the plague?

EVE (a little uncertain):

I think our prayers may have helped too. But yes, I gave them an herbal that I made. It's not a cure, but it eases the suffering of the sick and strengthens the body so that it can fight off the disease better.

XENA:

What was in that herbal, Eve?

EVE:

It was herbs I brought back with me from Indus...but I don't have much left.

Having finished dressing the wound, she takes two pouches out of her satchel and hands them to Xena. Xena opens them, shakes the contents out on a table and begins to examine the herbs.

XENA:

Eve, do you have the recipe for making this tonic?

EVE:

Yes, I do...but where can we get more of the herbs?

XENA:

Delemus. There are herbs that grow around Athens that have the same medicinal properties. I'll tell your people where to find them. Let Eve show your healers how to make this herbal.

DELEMUS (to a servant):

Kyniros, quick--take this young woman to our chief medic.

Eve picks up the contents of the pouches and heads toward the door with the servant.

XENA:

I'll see you soon, Eve--we'll be heading back to Potidaea first thing tomorrow morning.

After Eve and the servant leave, Xena turns to Delemus again.

XENA (shuffles her feet and looks down, reluctantly):

Delemus...uh...I have to tell you that I had some help. You might want to go to the temples of Ares and offer thanks.

DELEMUS:

Temples? But, Xena, there is only one small temple to Ares in all of Athens.

XENA (gives him a startled look):

Huh?

DELEMUS:

Xena, didn't you know? Our patron deity was always Athena, the Goddess of Wisdom and Warfare. (he averts his eyes a little awkwardly, remembering that Athena met her death at Xena's hands) As you know, she was never one especially good with Ares, so the God of War never had a lot of worshippers here.

XENA (frowns, pondering what happened):

Oh...well, never mind, then.

CUT TO

The next morning. Xena approaches Virgil's house and knocks on the door. Eve opens it.

EVE:

Mother. How is everything?

XENA:

Great. (smiles warmly) We're all ready to go. I was able to explain to the medics where to find the herbs they need to make a tonic similar to what you made. It may just be the turning point in this epidemic. Good work. (she proudly pats Eve's shoulder)

Virgil walks out of the house.

XENA:

Hey, Virgil. I hear your brother and sister are doing much better.

VIRGIL:

Yes, Xena--thanks to Eve. (looks at Eve) So, I guess you'll be leaving with Xena.

EVE:

Yeah. You take care of these kids, okay?

VIRGIL:

I will.

They hug briefly, a little awkwardly, and then Eve looks at Xena.

EVE:

Well, Mother, are we ready to go?

XENA:

Yeah. We've got to catch up to Gabrielle.

Xena mounts Argo and helps Eve up before taking off for Potidaea.

CUT TO

When they finally reach Potidaea, the siege has been lifted and they are free to enter. Xena and Eve go to Gabrielle's house and find Gabrielle talking to Lila and Sarah outside.

XENA:

I see that everyone is all right.

GABRIELLE:

Yeah.

XENA (looks at Sarah, smiling):

Sarah.

SARAH:

It's good to see you again.

Xena sighs and walks over to Lila, Sarah, and Gabrielle. Eve follows her and Xena puts her arms around all of them.

XENA:

Gabrielle, remember when you said you wanted to stay here for a few days just relaxing?

GABRIELLE (looks at her):

Yeah.

XENA:

Well, I don't see why we still can't do that. I'm still in the mood for a good meal and a warm bed. (smiles at them)

GABRIELLE:

Still sounds like a plan to me.

She puts her arm around Xena and the five of them head into the house as we:

FADE OUT

THE END

[No temples of Ares were harmed during the production of this motion picture.]