

SHIPPER SEASON SEVEN



Production #XWP143/SS09
Episode #7.09

Story By: Tango
Written By: Tango
Collage By: Aurora
Images Gathered By: Aurora

Disclaimer

All characters and storylines that have appeared in the syndicated series Xena: Warrior Princess are a copyright and trademark of Universal and Renaissance Pictures. No infringement was intended during the writing of this script. All original characters and storylines are a copyright of the respective authors and of the Shipper Seasons. No script may be reproduced on a website elsewhere without the author's consent.

Logline

When Eve tries to teach her message to the people of Andros Island, she is met with unexpected resistance, forcing her to confront the darker side of her beliefs.

Airdate

January 5, 2002

TEASER

FADE IN

Heaven. An airy white room with a round wooden table in the center. Three archangels, Michael, Raphael and Uriel, are seated around it in carved high-backed chairs. Michael and Raphael are clearly in the middle of an argument; Uriel is placidly filing his nails, ignoring them.

MICHAEL:

Now's not a good time to get cold feet, Raphael. Olympus will fall within the year; trust me.

RAPHAEL:

That is far too long. (frowns) These plans of yours are too complicated.



MICHAEL (calmly):

Nothing worth doing is ever simple.

URIEL (without looking up from his nails):

In my experience, the simple are definitely worth doing. They don't make a scene when they notice the wings. (folds and unfolds his perfectly trimmed bluish-black iridescent wings)

RAPHAEL (scandalized):

Lust is a deadly sin. Be wary, Uriel. You don't want to follow in Lucifer's footsteps.

URIEL (shrugs):

The position of Ruler of Hell does have its attractions. But sentimental fool that I am, I prefer to remain in our Lord's favor. And He does love Michael so. (looks up at Michael) I'm afraid our dear Raphael is outnumbered. (to Raphael) I'm with Michael on this one. You have to admit, his plans do have a remarkable success rate.

MICHAEL:

You flatter me. The planning has been mine, true--but so far, the doing has been Xena's. The honor belongs to the Warrior Princess.

RAPHAEL (sourly):

You blackmailed her into serving our Lord! Using her maternal feelings to deliver Olympian power into His hands can hardly be called honorable.

Uriel rolls his eyes; obviously this isn't the first time Raphael has raised this objection. Michael makes a dismissive gesture.

MICHAEL:

Olympus would have fallen anyway. You know the time of the ancient gods is past. All we did was direct the fall to our Lord's advantage.

URIEL:

Didn't hurt us, either.

He returns to filing his nails. Raphael pushes his chair back, gets up and starts pacing.

RAPHAEL (pacing):

Our cause is just. The power that had been so badly misused by the Olympian gods should belong to our Lord. But why go about it in such an underhanded way? Surely if we had only been honest with the Warrior Princess, she would have gladly aided us. We would not have needed to give her a child...



URIEL:

True, that part could have been more fun. Like I always say, immaculate conception misses the whole point.

Michael comes up behind Raphael and puts his hands over Raphael's shoulders. Close-up of Raphael's worried face as Michael talks.

MICHAEL (almost gently):

Don't be naive, Raphael. This is the same woman who restored Ares and Aphrodite to Olympus, drawing on the power of the Norse gods. Do you honestly think she would have ended the reign of Olympus if she had not had, shall we say, a little...encouragement?



RAPHAEL:

Safeguarding the daughter we gave her. Blackmail.

MICHAEL:

The Olympians did have their rare flashes of insight. What was it Athena once said?

RAPHAEL (whispers):

The most dangerous animal on Earth...is a mother protecting her young.

MICHAEL:

Very good! And quite true. Little Eve was excellent encouragement for Xena to co-operate.

Michael releases Raphael's shoulders and returns to his seat, his manner businesslike. A moment later, Raphael follows.

MICHAEL:

So. We are very close to our goal. The power of the Olympians belongs to our Lord...

URIEL (waving his nail file in a wide arc):

With a few notable exceptions: Apollo, Hestia, Dionysus...

MICHAEL (claps his hands on the tabletop):

Exactly my point! Those exceptions must go--it's time we finalized our dealings with Olympus and moved on. Xena has served us well, but she was always too stubborn. Her daughter's devotion is far more to my taste. Eve will be perfect--

RAPHAEL:

No!! No, you promised! You said Eve was just insurance; just to make sure Xena completes her task!

MICHAEL:

And has she completed it?

Raphael is silent.

MICHAEL (satisfied):

Let's not lose sight of the objective, shall we? Xena is too much trouble. Eve will serve us better than her mother before her--and of her own free will. (to Raphael) That will please you, won't it?

RAPHAEL (reluctantly):

Yes.

URIEL (eagerly):

Are you planning to give her a bundle of joy, too? I'd be happy to volunteer my services.

Raphael cringes.

MICHAEL:

That won't be necessary. There are still a few Olympians clinging to power that should by rights have been our Lord's a long time ago. Apollo, Hestia--not many, but enough to try the girl. Then, she can move on.

URIEL:

Valhalla, India, the Nile delta--so many gods, so little time. (dreamy look) Egypt. Xena did say they're in need of a girl with a chakram.

He makes a chopping motion at his neck; he and Michael laugh, Raphael remains stone-faced.

RAPHAEL:

I hardly think this is a joke.

Michael stops laughing abruptly. Uriel continues laughing a second longer, catches himself and goes back to filing his nails.

MICHAEL:

Of course not, it's a serious matter. Our tools must be sharp and ready. (decisively) We need to test Eve's mettle before we proceed.

RAPHAEL:

Eve has done enough for us. Can't we just...let her be? There must be another way.

Michael looks at him until Raphael drops his eyes.

MICHAEL (pleasantly):

I recall another archangel who lost his share of our Lord's reward because he would not see the wisdom of my plan.

URIEL (jeering):

Be wary, Raphael. You don't want to follow in Lucifer's footsteps.

Raphael blanches.

MICHAEL:

Do not doubt me, Raphael.

RAPHAEL (quietly):

I don't.

MICHAEL (heartily):

Excellent! Then we're all in agreement.

He looks at Uriel, who grins and shrugs, then at Raphael. Raphael slowly nods.

MICHAEL:

When Eve proves her worth, the power to kill gods will be hers.

URIEL (admiring his finished manicure):

Any particular tests you have in mind?

MICHAEL (smiling):

I know one that will be perfect.

The three archangels rise from the table, open their wings and disappear in white light as we:

FADE OUT

ACT ONE

FADE IN

A beautiful sunny day at sea. The water is a vivid, glittering blue; an occasional gust of wind ripples the surface. The camera tracks right, bringing into view a small fishing vessel. We watch it for a moment.

CUT TO

The deck of the fishing boat. Nets, hooks, cables and other equipment are piled to one side. Xena and Gabrielle are leaning on the railing, looking out across the water. The wind is ruffling their hair.



The camera pans to show what they are looking at--a lush, green island up ahead. The headlands of a bay are visible; the ship has nearly reached its destination.

GABRIELLE (pointing):

Those cliffs... Beautiful, aren't they?

XENA:

Mm. If you're into rock formations.

GABRIELLE (storyteller voice):

They say that among those rocks, you can hear the cries of the mighty Titans, imprisoned deep within the Earth after they were vanquished by the Olympians. (normal voice) Do you suppose they're still there, in Tartarus? I mean, Zeus is dead, Hades is dead--what keeps them there?

XENA (strained):

I don't know, Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE (realizes she hit a sore spot):

Xena--I'm sorry. I didn't mean... I know the Twilight had to happen. (determined) The gods have caused enough suffering. Mankind no longer needs them.

Xena is silent, looking out across the bay.

GABRIELLE:

It's just that sometimes...I find it difficult to believe they're all gone, you know? Well, almost all. But it was the right thing to do.

XENA (quietly):

Was it?

GABRIELLE (surprised):

They wanted to kill Eve! You were protecting your daughter. There was no choice.



Close-up as Xena turns to Gabrielle.

XENA:

That's the worst kind of situation, Gabrielle. When there's no choice.

GABRIELLE (after a pause):

I'm glad it's behind us.

Footsteps approaching.

EVE:

What's behind us?

Zoom out to show Eve coming to stand near Xena. She looks radiant, her cheeks reddened by the wind. Xena and Gabrielle return her cheerful smile as she, too, leans on the railing to look towards the shore.

XENA:

The worst.

EVE:

The worst is behind us?

XENA:

Sure. (nods in the direction of the shore) We'll reach Andros soon.

GABRIELLE:

It'll be good to relax for a while.

The camera shows the island, much closer now.

EVE:

It looks lovely.

GABRIELLE:

It is.

EVE:

You've been there before?

XENA:

A long time ago, before you were born. There were pirates raiding their shore.

EVE (grins):

But not anymore. I bet they ran the moment they saw you on that island.

GABRIELLE (deadpan):

Xena has that effect on people.

XENA:

Hey!

Gabrielle laughs and ducks as Xena pretends to punch her.

As they struggle, everything seems to slow down, all sounds disappear and the deck of the ship is bathed in a white glow. Eve looks up in surprise. Michael is standing in the light; his wings open, smiling serenely. Soft heavenly music filters through the light. Eve's smile fades; she looks angry.

EVE:

Well, if it isn't the messenger of Heaven. What's the matter, Michael? Do you want to distinguish yourself before God by getting me to martyr some more innocents?

Michael continues to look unperturbed; Eve's voice loses some of its fire.

EVE:

Haven't you had your fill of messing with my life? Leave me alone.

She turns away.

MICHAEL:

Eve...

EVE (turning back):

Call me Livia! That's what you made me, wasn't it? Livia, the Bitch of Rome, the murderer of the followers of Eli. (voice breaking) My own people!

MICHAEL (regretfully):

There are so many things you don't yet understand...

EVE:

You're right, I *don't* understand. I don't understand why you let me become what I was. (looks down at her hands) Or why the God of Eli let you do it...

MICHAEL:

The ways of our Lord are subtle, Eve. It is not for us to question Him. I am only His messenger.

EVE (glares at him):

Forget it. I'm not your puppet, Michael. I won't do your dirty work, not anymore.

MICHAEL:

You won't listen to me? Fine. Then listen to the word of the God of Eli.

His voice becomes deep and somber; the white light becomes almost blinding in its intensity.

MICHAEL:

Thus speaks the Lord: Messenger of Eli! You have neglected your duties since I restored your mother's life. You have turned your face from me, and strayed from your path.

The light fades slightly, and the camera focuses on Eve's wide-eyed, terrified face. She kneels.

MICHAEL (in his normal voice, but very sure of himself now):

Tell me, how many people have heard your message in recent months? How many have accepted the God of Love into their lives?

EVE:

I don't... (raises her head) None.

MICHAEL (almost sympathetically):

You needed some time with your mother, of course. But you should not forget the importance of your message. It is good that you are headed for Andros. Teach your message to the people there.

EVE:

Is that my task?

MICHAEL:

No. But it's a start.

He takes Eve's hand and draws her to her feet. She tries to move away, but Michael doesn't release her hand.

MICHAEL:

It's your chance to prove yourself, Eve. Bring Andros to the God of Love, and He will reward you with a far more glorious task.

EVE:

I don't want glory. I will do it because I love the God of Eli.

MICHAEL:

Whatever.

EVE:

But not yet. I promised my mother and Gabrielle to spend a few days with them in Andros.

MICHAEL:

And delay our God's command for a family holiday? Of course you won't. You'll start your teaching the moment this ship drops anchor.

EVE (defiantly):

I don't break my promises.

There is a screeching noise, and the white light shatters, leaving Michael standing on the wooden deck in rather undignified surprise. Xena grabs Eve's shoulder and positions herself between Eve and Michael.

XENA (to Michael):

What do you *want*?

MICHAEL:

Do you always intrude on private conversations?

XENA:

Only when they involve some bastard with wings trying to force my daughter to do something she doesn't want to do. (lunges at Michael)

MICHAEL:

Hey, mind the wings!

EVE:

Mother, it's all right.

MICHAEL (petulantly straightening his wings):

I hate overprotective mothers. (to Eve) The God of Love is counting on you. Don't let Him down.

He disappears. Close-up of Gabrielle and Xena looking at Eve in concern.

XENA:

What's going on?

EVE:

Mother...I won't be able to spend much time with you in Andros.

GABRIELLE (worried):

Why not? Is something wrong?

EVE:

Please don't worry. It's just that I've been called back to my task--I have to teach the message of Eli.

XENA (incredulous):

In Andros?!

EVE (nods):

Yes. The truth is, I haven't done any teaching in months...

GABRIELLE:

Couldn't you wait a few more days?

EVE (shakes her head regretfully):

No. That's why Michael was here--to remind me of my task.

XENA:

I bet.

Eve gives her a pained look, upset by the venom in Xena's voice.

EVE:

Mother, please. Whatever you...we...think of Michael--he is still God's servant. We owe the God of Love our lives. Teaching his message is the least I can do.

Xena nods reluctantly.

XENA:

I understand.

EVE:

Thank you.

Voices off-camera, sailors bringing the ship into port. Xena, Gabrielle and Eve move aside as a mooring cable sails over their heads, uncoiling in the air. The ship jerks as it is moored to the pier. Pan back to show the ship's captain approaching.

CAPTAIN (passing by):

Welcome to Andros, ladies. Loveliest island in all of Greece. (to a sailor carrying a sack) Hey! Careful with that!

The captain disappears from view.

GABRIELLE (to Eve):

Where are you going to go?

EVE:

Where Eli's word is needed most. The God of Love will guide me. (smiles) I'll be all right; I'm a big girl.

XENA (hugs Eve):

I know.

EVE:

I'm sorry about the holiday.

GABRIELLE:

Some other time.

XENA:

Take care.

They begin to disembark.

CUT TO

A narrow lane, the buildings on each side occupied by shops. It's a busy market day, the lane is full of people buying, selling and gawking. Various merchants are plying their wares, calling out prices, trying to entice customers. Xena and Gabrielle make their way through the colorful crowd. A few traders try to get them to sample everything from cheese to silk, Gabrielle smiles at them, moving forward. Xena seems preoccupied.

GABRIELLE (to Xena):

Do you think the old bakery is still here? They used to make terrific nutbread... (considers) Of course, that *was* nearly thirty years ago...

XENA:

Uh-huh.

GABRIELLE:

Wasn't it around here somewhere?

She cranes her neck, trying to see over the heads of the people in front.

GABRIELLE:

You know, for all the years--this island hasn't changed much, has it? (turns to look on the other side of the lane) Finally, a place we can at least *recognize*.

Xena doesn't respond, looking around, her eyes narrowed.

GABRIELLE:

You haven't heard a word I said, have you?

XENA:

Sure I did. Nutbread.

GABRIELLE:

All right--*one* word.

The camera pans as Gabrielle turns to look at whatever has caught the warrior's attention. There's nothing there, just a blank wall. Gabrielle looks from the empty spot back to Xena.

GABRIELLE:

Great. Just great.

With an exasperated noise, Gabrielle reaches down for her sais and throws one at the spot where Xena was looking. The weapon whizzes through the air.

XENA:

Gabrielle!

A flash of blue light shatters as Ares appears, catching the sai a hair's breadth from his face.

ARES:

Whoa!



He lowers his hand and looks at the sai, then at Gabrielle and Xena--he had not intended to appear.

XENA:

I'll have to remember that one for next time.

Ares tosses the sai back to Gabrielle, who catches it.

ARES:

Okay, nice trick. It won't work again.

Gabrielle looks somewhat flattered; she sheathes the sai in her boot.



GABRIELLE:

So you do have some mortal instincts left, Ares. At least the instinct to save your own skin.

ARES:

Funny. And where would you be today if I hadn't saved yours?

GABRIELLE (half-joking):

Probably in Heaven.

XENA:

You and me both.

ARES:

Oh yeah. I can see this cozy little scene right now. You, her, Eve, Michael...

XENA (winces at the mention of Michael):

I guess I owe you for not letting *that* happen.

ARES:

Actually, (he walks forward) that's why I'm here. I need to talk to you. (he stares meaningfully at Gabrielle) In private, if possible.

XENA (scowls):

Calling in a favor, are you?

There is a pause as they look at each other.

ARES:

No.

CUT TO

A grassy hillside. Eve is standing in front of a small gathering of people, finishing a speech.



EVE:

Our lives don't belong to the gods; they are ours to control. If we can learn to treat one another with kindness, with love--our world will be Paradise.

WOMAN IN THE CROWD:

And your life?

EVE:

My life?

WOMAN:

Is it yours to control? Don't you serve *your* god?

EVE (after an awkward pause):

I serve...my conscience.

ANOTHER WOMAN IN THE CROWD (pleasantly):

That's true for everyone here. (murmurs of assent around her) But you're a good speaker.

LITTLE GIRL:

Are you a storyteller?

The people crowd around Eve.

EVE (to the little girl):

No...I'm sorry. I don't know any stories.

LITTLE GIRL:

Grandma does! Tell us a story, grandma?

All attention is immediately diverted from Eve to an old woman in the crowd.

OLD WOMAN:

Which one would you like to hear?

Children call out their choice of a story; people settle down on the grass. Eve keeps to the back of the crowd, as though trying to decide. After a pause, she also sits down, next to the little girl.

OLD WOMAN:

All right, all right...I'll tell you about the Titans. Let's see, now. A long, long time ago, when the Earth was still young...

The camera focuses on Eve, sitting cross-legged on the grass, then pans upwards. Michael, Raphael and Uriel are standing behind her as we:

FADE OUT

ACT TWO

FADE IN

A beautiful beach on the edge of town. In the distance are the rocky cliffs Gabrielle was admiring earlier. The camera tracks left to show the ruins of what had once been a temple colonnade. The steps lead directly into the sea; greenish tidemarks are visible on the marble.

Xena and Ares emerge from the market lane onto the beach; walk around the ruined temple and up the stairs. A few steps from the water level, they pause. The camera moves closer as Xena turns.

XENA:

Okay, Ares. This is private enough. You wanted to talk?

ARES (innocently):

Unless you have something else in mind?

XENA (smirks):

Don't count on it.

ARES:

Actually, it's about our mutual friend.

XENA (with disbelief):

Our mutual friend. Ares--we *have* no mutual friends.

ARES:

Well, you know--the enemy of my enemy--

XENA:

I'm not your enemy...

Ares pauses and looks at her slyly. Xena winces.

XENA:

All right, let's say that you're...not my enemy, either.

ARES:

For the purposes of this discussion?

XENA:

Something like that.

ARES:

Works for me. As I was saying, I have a feeling our friend Michael has something...unpleasant...in the works.

XENA:

Which is...?

ARES:

I don't know. But something doesn't feel right.

Xena gives him a skeptical look.



ARES:

It's in the ether, okay? This God of Love--or the angels--or whoever, they're doing something to it. It's like they're trying to tug at it.



XENA:

Tug at the ether? Next you'll be telling me the fabric of the universe shrinks in the wash?

ARES:

This is *not* a joke, Xena! They are trying to do something very ugly.

XENA:

And you know this how?

ARES:

What they're doing to the ether--it's like they are pulling the rug from under my feet. (exasperated)
I can feel it!

XENA (snorts):

Since when have you been so in touch with your feelings?

ARES (snapping):

Oh I don't know--maybe since the only other time I've felt this, when they gave you the power to kill my entire *family*?!

There's a too-silent pause; Ares' last words seem to hang in the air.

XENA (stonily):

I have to get back to Gabrielle. She's going to get worried.

She walks away briskly. Ares looks after her.

ARES (closes eyes briefly):

Damn.

CUT TO

On the hillside, the archangels stand behind Eve. She is oblivious to their presence--they are invisible. Michael and Raphael look at the storyteller. Uriel looks at the gathered crowd.

URIEL (to Michael):

I'm guessing we're not here to pick up chicks.

Raphael glares at him, Uriel grins.

MICHAEL (displeased that Eve isn't teaching):

What's going on? This wasn't part of the plan.

OLD WOMAN:

...The Titans were born from the Earth and Sky, twelve mighty children of Gaia and Uranus. More than anything in the world, old Uranus feared losing his power--and so, as each of his children was born, he chained them in the depths of Tartarus. Furious at the imprisonment of her children, Gaia descended into Tartarus and helped the youngest of the Titans, Cronus, to rise up against his father and defeat him.

URIEL (humming):

Mmm-hmmm... You say you want a revolution, we-ell, you knooooow... We all wanna change the world... (at Michael's scornful look) What? I'm just listening to the story.

OLD WOMAN:

And so that which old Uranus feared most indeed happened--he lost his power to his own children.

LITTLE GIRL BESIDE EVE:

But if he hadn't been mean to them, Gaia wouldn't have helped Cronus, right, grandma?

The old woman chuckles.

OLD WOMAN:

You're a clever girl, Androcleia. But listen to the story.

ANDROCLEIA:

Okay.

OLD WOMAN:

The Titans began to rule over the world. But Cronus was a tyrant, every bit as bad as the father he had killed. And just like Uranus, Cronus feared his own children. One by one, he devoured them all-- Hestia, Demeter, Hades, Poseidon, then Hera. Once again, it was up to Gaia to try to set things right. She helped Cronus's wife, Rhea, to hide her youngest child, Zeus, from her power-crazed husband.

ANDROCLEIA:

And then Zeus freed his brothers and sisters and fought the Titans, right?

OLD WOMAN:

Right. Just as Cronus had defeated Uranus, so did Zeus defeat Cronus, and imprison the other Titans in Tartarus.

RAPHAEL:

This is fascinating, Michael, but what does it have to do with us? Unless I'm much mistaken, *Eve* is supposed to be preaching to *them* and not the other way around?

URIEL (stifling a yawn):

All right, Eve failed the test. Her faith isn't strong enough, blah, blah. Let's get out of here and find someone else.

MICHAEL (to both of them):

We're not giving up that easily. I have an idea.

RAPHAEL (muttering):

Oh, goody. Who ends up in Hell this time?

MICHAEL:

What was that?

RAPHAEL:

Never mind.

Michael comes forward and lays his hands on the head of the little girl sitting next to Eve--Androcleia. A white light envelops her for an instant then fades. Michael steps back.

MICHAEL (to Raphael):

From the mouths of babes...

ANDROCLEIA (with a newfound hint of nastiness in her voice):

But that's not the end of the story, is it, grandma?

The old woman looks uncomfortable.

OLD WOMAN:

What do you mean, little one?

ANDROCLEIA:

Well, Uranus was scared of his kids, and tried to kill them--but he failed and Cronus won. Then Cronus tried the same thing, and Zeus won. So--go on! Zeus was afraid of another child, wasn't he? And he tried to kill her.

She gets up and points down to Eve. Startled, Eve looks up.

ANDROCLEIA:

It was her! Zeus was scared of her, and then he died...

OLD WOMAN:

Androcleia! Sit down this instant--you will offend our guest.

EVE:

No, no--it's all right...

She gets up and turns to the girl.

EVE:

It's not me that Zeus feared, Androcleia, but the God of Eli.

ANDROCLEIA:

Fine. So this new God then--he is more powerful than Zeus was, right?

EVE (uncomfortably):

Yes. But his power is different--He is the God of Love.

ANDROCLEIA:

Doesn't matter. Cronus killed Uranus. Zeus killed Cronus. This God of Love you follow killed Zeus. They're all as bad as each other, and you want us to follow this evil god of yours?!

There are murmurs in the crowd--Androcleia's words are making sense to some.

OLD WOMAN:

What's gotten into the child? Androcleia, stop this nonsense! You have to excuse her, Eve; she's tired...

ANDROCLEIA:

No! This woman wants us to follow her nasty god! She's bad! Bad, bad, bad!

Eve turns around frantically, trying to make herself heard over the chattering crowd.

EVE:

No, you don't understand--Eli's God is not evil. It's not like that...

ANDROCLEIA:

How *is* it then? Didn't you say he's all about-- (mockingly) *Peace and love*? Well, I don't think he's any different to those other gods!

OTHERS IN THE CROWD:

She's right!

Androcleia and the others are getting more and more excited. The old woman tries in vain to restore order. Eve looks around at the faces of the children and young people gathered around her, she is horrified.



EVE (softly):

God...is good. Please, believe me!

We cut back to the archangels watching this; Uriel pats Michael on the back.

URIEL:

Why, Michael--I'm impressed.

RAPHAEL (sourly):

You would be.

MICHAEL:

Nothing like a little attack on one's faith to banish doubts.

EVE (to the rowdy crowd):

Listen, please! Please!

No one listens. Sobbing, Eve pushes her way out of the crowd and runs.

The three archangels watch her leave.

RAPHAEL (to Michael):

Now look what you've done!

URIEL:

Somehow, I don't think this counts as an unqualified success.

MICHAEL (thoughtfully):

We'll see.

CUT TO

Back at the marketplace, Gabrielle is paying a merchant for some scrolls. She is holding a few wrapped parcels; quills are visible in one.

SALESMAN:

There you are, miss--your change.

GABRIELLE (smiling):

Thank you.

She looks up and sees Xena striding towards her, her face set. A few startled people move hastily out of her way.

GABRIELLE (scared):

Xena? What's wrong?

She touches Xena's arm, trying to look into her face.

GABRIELLE:

It's Ares, isn't it? What did he want from you? I knew I shouldn't have let you go alone!

XENA (jerking away):

Don't baby me, Gabrielle!

Gabrielle looks startled, then hurt. She clutches the parcels to her chest, looking squarely at Xena. After a moment, Xena's defensive stance eases a little.

XENA (sighs):

Let's just...get out of here, okay?

GABRIELLE:

And go where?

XENA:

Somewhere quiet.

GABRIELLE (after a pause):

All right. And you're going to tell me just what is going on.

XENA (smiles weakly):

Have you always been this bossy?

GABRIELLE:

Yep. And you love me for it.

XENA (laughs, rolling her eyes):

Sure...

She puts her arm around Gabrielle and they walk away from the market.

CUT TO

Forest. Eve is sitting on a fallen log. She is holding a long thin branch, swirling it absentmindedly in the fallen leaves at her feet. Finally, she drops the branch and looks up at the patches of sky visible through the canopy.

EVE:

Eli...I don't know if you can hear me. But--you've heard my prayers in the past... You helped to restore my mother's life, and gave me back my own life, when I was lost as Livia. For all of that and more, I can never be grateful enough. But--I can't do this anymore, Eli. I can't be your messenger. (she kneels) Forgive me.

MICHAEL'S VOICE OFF-CAMERA:

Eve, Eve, Eve... Why the melodrama? You were doing so well.

Eve raises her face to see Michael standing over her. She scrambles to her feet and takes a hurried step back.

EVE:

I was praying to *Eli*.



MICHAEL:

Eli has moved on, Eve. He is with God now, just as he wished. But his message lives, in you. Through you, it will live in the whole world. You are the Messenger.

EVE:

And what if I don't want to be the Messenger anymore?

MICHAEL (kindly):

Now, why might that be?

EVE (disconcerted by his unexpected warmth):

These people...they're happy as they are. They don't need my message, Michael.

MICHAEL (laughs dismissively):

Nonsense! Everyone needs your message. Who can afford to shun love and peace?

EVE:

They have *enough* love and peace! I'm only offending them by staying here. I feel like a hypocrite!

MICHAEL:

And what do you call that little scene back there? (he motions with his chin) Those people chased you out. Hardly peaceful.

EVE:

It would have been, if I hadn't tried to preach. (thoughtfully) They were just kids. And they had a point.

MICHAEL (worried and trying not to show it):

How so?

EVE:

Why did the Olympians have to be killed?

MICHAEL:

Well, now. You understand all that, don't you? They were scared of losing their power, so they tried to kill you. Your mother had no choice about their deaths--she was protecting you.

EVE:

Why couldn't *God* protect me?!

MICHAEL:

Don't be a fool, Eve. God did protect you. Through your mother. She was doing the will of God and she'll have her reward, just as you will.

EVE:

My mother will be rewarded for killing the Olympians?

MICHAEL:

Eve, the Olympian gods had great power, and they used it for terrible, wicked things. Our God is good, and just. He rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked.

EVE:

I don't want a reward for doing anyone's dirty work--and I'm sure my mother doesn't, either. Preaching here is *wrong*. And I won't do it.

MICHAEL:

Only God can decide what is or is not wrong. Humble yourself before the God of Love, Eve--before it is too late. Pride is a terrible sin.

XENA'S VOICE OFF-CAMERA:

If I didn't know better, Michael, I'd say you were trying to scare her.

Michael turns abruptly. Xena and Gabrielle come out from behind some trees.

MICHAEL:

Well, isn't it nice that you do know better than, Xena? Because if I didn't know better, I'd say you've forgotten the consequences of sin.

GABRIELLE (quietly):

Hell...

MICHAEL:

Ah, see--Gabrielle recalls.

Xena shudders slightly at the memories.

MICHAEL:

Now, unless you like the idea of Eve sharing the fate of the gods, I suggest you stop trying to prevent her from following her calling.

XENA:

The gods are in *Hell*?!

MICHAEL:

Of course.

He waves his arm and an undulating black window warps out of the air in front of them.



MICHAEL:

See for yourself.

FADE OUT

ACT THREE

FADE IN

Xena, Gabrielle and Eve watch in horrified fascination as Michael makes a motion with his hand. Ripples radiate from the center of the black window and it expands, filling the screen.

A dark, leaden river becomes visible. Translucent gray shadows are milling about on the far bank. A ferry moves noiselessly through the water without disturbing it.

MICHAEL (voice over):

The river Styx. Beyond it lies what you like to refer to as the Underworld.

As he speaks, the camera moves forward. We glide past the river and the shades of the dead, moving quickly over the desolate dark gray landscape. Occasionally, a face comes into view--invariably blank and expressionless.

MICHAEL (voice over):

This, Xena, is a vast domain. A labyrinth, if you will, that spirals deep into an eternity of darkness. The Underworld is merely the outermost circle. Beyond it lies Tartarus.

The view changes from flat rocky terrain to ragged peaks of bare black stone. We approach one such mountain, riddled with caverns. Heart-rending moans are coming from inside.

MICHAEL (voice over):

Watch.

Several gray shades approach the red-glowing mouth of a cavern. A whirlwind rises around them, and they are sucked into the opening.

Cut back to Xena and Gabrielle, watching the portal.

GABRIELLE:

What happened to them?!

MICHAEL:

They have moved down to Tartarus. Progressed, if you will.

XENA:

Like the purification ritual in Heaven, huh? Only instead of spiraling upwards towards the Light, they descend into Darkness. The Underworld, then Tartarus, then Hell...

MICHAEL:

Very good! You do catch on quickly, Warrior Princess. As you have figured out, there are only two ways out of this world--downwards, spiraling into Darkness--or upwards, towards the Light. (to Eve) Quite a simple choice, really.

EVE:

Is that what happened to Eli? He--ascended to the Light?

MICHAEL:

Indeed.

XENA:

I'd love to stay and talk philosophy, but I don't see the gods.

MICHAEL:

Patience, Xena.

We follow his gaze as he motions back to the portal. We're now inside the caves of Tartarus. The slimy walls glow red. It looks like the cave where Xena found Solan in "God Fearing Child". People forced to watch their earthly lives cry and moan in distress.

XENA (voice over):
Get to the point!

MICHAEL (voice over):
Just as you wish.

We whirl through more caverns so quickly that they seem barely a blur, then come to a sudden stop. Dark, almost growling, music sounds in the background. Here, everything is black with a tinge of blue. A massive gate rises up ahead, topped with flaming torches, smoking into the blackness above. Over the gate is an ornate rusty sign.

MICHAEL (voice over):
Behold, the gateway to the kingdom of Hell. My guess is that the dead gods are here--if they haven't already...progressed...beyond it.

GABRIELLE (voice over):
What does the sign say?

MICHAEL (voice over):
That depends entirely on you. I wouldn't recommend looking too closely.

GABRIELLE (voice over):
I want to see.

MICHAEL (voice over):
Suit yourself.

The camera focuses on the sign, panning across it slowly from left to right. It reads: "Abandon Hope, and you will enter here".



Cut back to Gabrielle's horrified face.

XENA:
What is it, Gabrielle?

Gabrielle looks at Michael for a moment; her face is pale and vulnerable, then turns around and flees into the forest. Michael looks after her with a touch of regret.

XENA:

Gabrielle!!! Where are you going?! (to Michael) What did you *show* her?

MICHAEL (shakes his head sadly):

There are horrors untold in Hell, Xena, and more horrors hidden deeper still, feeding on the demons inside every soul. Gabrielle has merely glimpsed the surface of her own fears.

EVE (interrupting with sudden determination):

Show me.

XENA:

Eve! No, you don't want... This is crazy!

EVE:

I need to know! (to Michael) Show me!!

MICHAEL:

Then look, Messenger of Eli.

The camera follows Eve's eyes as she looks at the sign. This time, it reads: "You shall honor your mother and father".

Cut to Eve's shocked face.

EVE:

My father?!

XENA:

What?!

MICHAEL:

He who placed Callisto's soul in your mother's body. Who gave you life. The God of Love is your father in everything but flesh, Eve. And you're betraying Him.

Eve shakes her head violently.

EVE (anguished):

You never stop, do you? It never stops!!

She runs away after Gabrielle.

XENA:

All right, that's it. This magical mystery tour is over--

Suddenly, a series of short, high-pitched shrieks come from the portal. Xena and Michael turn to look.

The gate has opened slightly. Three shades are dragged into the seething, boiling darkness beyond, shrieking in agony. They try to run back, but the ground beneath their feet carries them inexorably closer to the threshold of Hell. They continue to run uselessly and scream as the gates slam shut, cutting them off.

The air around the portal wavers and the window disappears. Cut back to Michael, lowering his hand. He looks at Xena.

XENA (shaking with rage):

Get out! Do you hear me--get away from me!

MICHAEL (winces):

I'm not deaf, Xena.

Xena draws her sword.

XENA:

No, only dumb.

MICHAEL:

Wouldn't you like a glimpse of *your* demons, Warrior Princess?

XENA (sneering):

I know the face of every one.

She points the tip of the sword to Michael's chest.

MICHAEL:

Are you absolutely sure of that?

White light pierces her eyes; Xena drops the sword and shields her face with her arm. When she looks up, Michael is gone.

Xena stamps on the hilt of the sword, flipping it back into her hand and whirls the weapon overhead. With a cry of anguished rage, she brings her whole body forward to drive the weapon into the ground.

There is a swish of light behind her.

ARES:

You *could* put that to better use. Like clipping some wings.

Xena straightens jerkily, but doesn't turn. Ares walks around to her. He gives the sword hilt a twist and pulls it free.

ARES:

You ought to take better care of that blade, you know--it's practically an antique.

He swings the weapon experimentally. Xena snatches it out of his grasp and returns it to the scabbard on her back.

XENA:

Oh, I think it's in perfect condition--given that it's spent twenty-five years of its life on ice! Thanks for reminding me to whom I owe *that*.

ARES:

It might sound a little crazy, Xena--but when someone you...care about...drinks poison and *dies*

before your eyes; you don't tend to think they're faking! It didn't have to *be* that way! If you'd have just trusted me, for once.

XENA:

Trusted you?! Trusted you with the life of my child, after everything you put me through?

ARES:

I was willing to protect you both!

XENA:

In return for what?! My body? My soul?

She draws her sword, advancing.

XENA:

My sword?

ARES:

Xena...it wasn't--

XENA:

You wanna tell me that none of it was your fault? Huh?

She swings the sword at him; he draws and parries the blow.

ARES:

I never said that!

XENA:

Say it, then...

Swords clash again.

XENA:

Go ahead!

She lunges again and again, Ares parrying each time, but not going on the offensive.



XENA:

What's the matter? Not in the mood?!

Screaming, she swings her sword again; it swishes past Ares' neck.

ARES (dodging the blade):

You're fighting the wrong god!

Xena holds the sword at Ares' neck, breathing hard. The camera pans around, showing Xena's face. Anger gives way to regret. At length, she lowers her sword.

ARES:

You wanna tell me what this is about?

Xena's face softens slightly.

XENA:

Other than you being a manipulative bastard?

ARES:

Other than that.

Xena sheathes her sword.

XENA:

Michael.

ARES:

Ah. So I'm not the only manipulative bastard around?

XENA:

Apparently not. (uncomfortably) Ares, about your family...

ARES (shrugs):

It's over now.

XENA:

That's just it. It's not.

She licks her dry lips.

XENA:

The gods...are in Hell.

The camera focuses on Ares' face for a moment.

CUT TO

Another part of the forest. Gabrielle is leaning against a tree, her eyes closed. A tear is rolling down her cheek. There is a rustling noise, Gabrielle's eyes fly open--it's Eve, walking up to her.

EVE:

Gabrielle--are you all right? What did the sign show you?

GABRIELLE (closes her eyes again):

The past.

EVE:

Can I ask you something?

Gabrielle opens her eyes.

GABRIELLE:

Sure.

EVE:

Was my mother surprised when she found out she was pregnant?

GABRIELLE (smiles despite herself):

I'd say. (lovingly) You were the best surprise she'd had in years. A beautiful little girl.

Her smile wavers and fades. Her voice becomes more wistful and pained, remembering.

GABRIELLE:

A beautiful, perfect little girl, to hold and cradle, and love... To watch her sigh in her sleep. To soothe her when she cries and see her smile at you so peacefully, and know that everything is all right in the world, and she is everything you need...

EVE:

You--had a child, too.

GABRIELLE (shaking her head):

No...

EVE:

What was her name?

GABRIELLE (whispers):

...Hope.

EVE:

Oh, Gabrielle... What happened to her?

GABRIELLE:

I killed her.

CUT TO

Ares and Xena. Ares nods, once.

ARES:

Hell. So that's where dead gods go.

XENA:

Yeah. (looks at Ares, shaking her head slightly) I'm sorry.

ARES (digesting this information):

Well... It's a god eat god world.

XENA:

Once, you told me this was *your* world. (shudders) When you were trying to warn me about Dahak and his cult.

ARES:

And you said that before that, it had belonged to the Titans, until Zeus chained them in Tartarus. That we deserved a taste of our own medicine.

Xena flinches.

XENA:

I'm not going to make the same mistake again. The gods were petty, and cruel...

ARES:

...and plagued mankind with suffering...

XENA (looking at him oddly):

You're not exactly helping your case here.

Ares gives her an innocent look; Xena shakes her head.

ARES (sighs):

Look, Xena--I know that we had our faults. But each of us had only our own slice of power. This God is gathering it all up--to himself.

XENA:

That's right... (thoughtfully) No one should control all the power of creation. There's no room in this world for one god.

ARES (grins):

I thought that was my line?

There is a slight pause--then Xena moves closer.

XENA (looking at him):

Maybe for once, our lines have crossed.

She holds Ares' gaze; close-up as he, too, moves towards her.

ARES (dropping his voice):

Stranger things have happened...

XENA:

Like someone tugging at the ether?

ARES (normal voice):

That, too.

XENA (with a little smile):

You were going to tell me about it.

CUT TO

Gabrielle and Eve, now sitting down by the tree.

EVE:

It must have been awful for you, thinking about her. Watching me.

GABRIELLE:

Hope wasn't...wasn't a child. She was never really mine--she belonged to her father. Dahak. But--yes. It was hard.

EVE:

I'm so sorry, Gabrielle. So sorry.

Gabrielle takes Eve's face in her hands. Close-up as she talks.

GABRIELLE:

You must promise me never to compare yourself with her, Eve. Never, do you understand? (harshly, but with determination) Hope was just a vessel for evil, nothing else. I know that. I don't blame Hope--she never had a choice. But you do. That's what makes all of us human. In your heart, you always know what's right, if you look deep enough.

She releases Eve. Eve sighs and looks down.

EVE:

When I was... When I still thought I was Livia, and I was about to kill my mother--the God of Eli stopped me. I felt such--peace. Love. It was real, and it... It changed me. (bitterly) And now, I find out that I was made as a pawn, so that my mother could kill the Olympian gods--made by the same god whose love I thought I felt then. How can that be, Gabrielle?

GABRIELLE (sincerely):

I don't know, Eve. But I'll tell you this: a man I once...knew...told me that when he had been about to kill a man, the same thing happened to him. His god revealed himself, and the man felt such love, that he knew that he would not kill. (she looks directly at Eve) That god was Dahak.

EVE:

Dahak?

GABRIELLE:

Yes. Love, Eve--it's in your heart. It doesn't come from above.

There is movement in the trees. Eve and Gabrielle jump up, Gabrielle drawing her sais. Something hits the tree behind them--a rock.

GABRIELLE:

Watch out!

She and Eve huddle near the tree, covering their heads with their arms, as they are pelted with stones from the bushes around them.

GABRIELLE (yells):

Who are you? What do you want?

A GIRL'S VOICE:

Hold it!

The attack stops. Gabrielle and Eve watch in astonishment as children step out of hiding spots. The camera pans around quickly--they are surrounded. A little girl holding a slingshot steps forward--it's Androclea.

ANDROCLEIA:

I'm Androclea, and we-- (she motions at the others) --want the woman who calls herself the Messenger to leave our island.

GABRIELLE:

What? Why?

ANDROCLEIA:

She's trying to get us to follow her evil god!

There are cries of agreement among the children.

EVE:

I'm really, really sorry--I didn't mean to hurt you...

The kids raise their slingshots threateningly.

ANDROCLEIA:

Unless you leave, Messenger--we mean to hurt *you*.

FADE OUT

ACT FOUR

FADE IN

Forest. Ares and Xena are still talking.

XENA (frowning):

So you're saying that this...disturbance you feel around Eve--you felt it when I was given power to kill gods?

ARES (nods):

Through the ether. Then, a ray of light--and zap! It's Xena, slayer of gods, harbinger of Twilight.

XENA (with mounting horror):

But if they're doing it to Eve... They're planning to use her, instead! (anxiously) I've got to find her.

ARES:

That shouldn't be hard.

He motions at something over Xena's shoulder. She turns. At that moment, screams and jeers come from beyond the trees--then, Eve and Gabrielle stumble out into the clearing, pursued by a crowd of rowdy children. Both women have livid marks on their arms and bodies; Gabrielle has a gash on her cheekbone.

XENA:

Gabrielle! Eve!!

With a battle cry, she somersaults through the air, landing between them and the pursuers, and draws her sword.

XENA:

All right, kids--game over.

The children look at her, then at each other, beginning to panic. Androcleia is the only one who seems unafraid.

Cut back to where Ares is still standing behind Eve and Gabrielle--he is looking at Androcleia. His expression becomes thoughtful--he glances over at Eve, then disappears.

Xena lets out another battle cry. Terrified, the children run, scattering into the forest. Androcleia pauses for an instant with a defiant look, then runs after the others.

Xena turns to Gabrielle and Eve.



XENA:

Are you two all right? What happened?

GABRIELLE:

Those kids decided to chase Eve off the island.

EVE:

It was my fault, Mother; I knew I shouldn't have tried to teach here.

Xena hugs her, then Gabrielle, before examining their bruises and cuts.

XENA:

They did this to you?!

GABRIELLE (shrugs):

Rocks. (rubbing her sore arm) They pack quite a punch.

XENA:

Why didn't you stop them?

EVE:

They're just *children*.

XENA:

Hm. Let's see what's going on, shall we?

The three of them walk back, towards the town. Pan back to show the archangels watching them walk away.

URIEL:

Looks like it's more than just her faith that was attacked.

MICHAEL (irritably):

The kid wasn't supposed to raise an army! Just...shout a bit.

URIEL:

I don't suppose she has an off switch? (at Michael's disgusted look) No, didn't think so.

RAPHAEL:

Accept it, Michael! Your plans aren't working; Eve is beyond our reach. It's gone too far. She will never serve our Lord now.

URIEL:

My point exactly. I say we cut our losses and move on. The little kid looks promising--I like her fire. Why don't we use her instead of Xena's whiny brat? (mocking) "Mommy, come save me!" (shudders) At least she had a nice easy name, though. Androcleia, on the other hand, is a bit of a mouthful. How about Andri? Or Cleia? No, wait--Rocky! How fitting.

MICHAEL (motions silence at him):

Perhaps you're both right. We are running out of time--we do need to move on. But not with Xena and her (smiles) --whiny brat--at our backs.

He and Uriel exchange a meaningful look. Raphael looks from one to the other in horror.

RAPHAEL:

You're both insane! I've had it up to here with your intrigues, Michael--this is called *murder*.

MICHAEL (calmly):

Let's not get overexcited. Death for the glory of our Lord is not murder.

RAPHAEL:

What *is* it, then?

URIEL:

Martyrdom. All the great martyrs were stoned. (to himself, grinning) May they be an example to us all.

RAPHAEL (clearly losing ground, with less conviction):

Call it what you will. I will not be a party to it.

MICHAEL (looking into Raphael's eyes):

Of course you will. The ways of the Lord, contrary to popular belief, are very simple. There are but two. Reward...

RAPHAEL (whispers):

...and punishment.

MICHAEL:

I won't have to remind you again, Raphael.

They open their wings and take off into gathering white light. The camera rises to follow them. When the light fades, we see Ares, standing quite comfortably on a wide branch of a tree overlooking the scene.

ARES (to himself):

Now, isn't this interesting?

CUT TO

The town square. There is a gathering of people in the center, where an important-looking man, presumably the town magistrate, is trying to speak over the noise. Xena, Gabrielle and Eve are standing beside him.

MAGISTRATE:

May I please have your attention again? Fellow citizens of Andros, your attention, please!

The noise dies down.

MAGISTRATE:

As we have just heard, a scandalous incident has taken place today that has blackened the name of our peaceful island. Our long-time friends and allies-- (indicates Xena and Gabrielle) --were attacked.

There are cries of indignant horror.

MAGISTRATE:

It is unthinkable, that the same people who drove the pirates from our shores should be chased forth from those same shores by our own children! I would like all of you to hear the matter. Bring forward the girl.

Androcleia is brought forward by her humiliated-looking parents. She stands upright with utter dignity.

MAGISTRATE:

What have you to say for yourself, Androcleia?

ANDROCLEIA (looking at Eve with contempt):

She calls herself the Messenger of the God of Love. But her god has nothing to do with love. She herself told us that he destroyed Olympus and ordered *her* (pointing to Xena) to kill the gods.

There are murmurs in the crowd. Xena remains expressionless; Eve and Gabrielle look uncomfortable.

MAGISTRATE (awkwardly):

We know something of that. Be that as it may, this woman did nothing to harm you. By attacking her, you are bringing dishonor to your family and our town.

ANDROCLEIA:

We want the Messenger of this evil god gone from our island. That's all.

MAGISTRATE:

What do you say to that, Eve?

Xena gives Eve an encouraging nod. Eve steps forward and looks at the people.

EVE:

My message was only that we should love and respect one another. When I arrived here, I had thought that I need not talk of harmony in this place--it had seemed so peaceful.

Approving sounds in the crowd.

EVE:

Now (looks at her bruises) I see that I was wrong. Peace is too easy to shatter, and much harder to restore. But I was also wrong to think that love and peace can come from above.

She smiles over at Gabrielle.

EVE:

They come only from our own hearts.

MAGISTRATE:

Can you promise, Eve, that you will not speak of this god again in Andros, nor try to gather followers?

EVE:

Yes. But my message will remain what it has always been--peace.

Someone begins to applaud, and before long, the whole crowd is cheering. Eve looks over at Xena and Gabrielle, who are beaming. She grins back.

MAGISTRATE:

And for your part, Androcleia, are you satisfied with that answer?

The girl looks at Eve steadily. Eve's smile falters and disappears beneath that look.

ANDROCLEIA:

Almost. (yells) *Now!!!*

Rocks pellet Eve, Xena and Gabrielle from all directions--the camera pans quickly around the square--the roof of every building is covered with children and teenagers, all armed with slingshots. Eve spins around, trying to avoid the rocks, but she's exposed--in the center of the crowd, she's an easy target; Gabrielle and Xena are faring no better. The adults in the crowd scatter, screaming.

CUT TO

Xena grabs her chakram and sends it flying at the roof of the nearest building. It loosens the ties holding its reeds together, and the roof collapses, sending the kids to the ground, into a pile of reeds and straw.

Suddenly, everything seems to slow down, then freeze. Rocks hang in mid-air. Gabrielle, Xena and Eve look up; all three have cuts and bruises on their faces and arms. The three archangels blaze onto the scene.

MICHAEL:

Such a shame it had to end this way, Eve. Xena. What a terrible waste.

Xena draws her sword and tries to run, but her feet are rooted to the ground, she can't move. Neither can the others. Xena's hand reaches automatically for the chakram--but it's frozen mid-flight to the next roof. It dissolves into thin air as we watch. Michael shakes his head in reproach.

MICHAEL:

Let's not make this any more unpleasant than it has to be. Just think--you and your daughter will die as martyrs. What could be more glorious?

URIEL (immediately):

You don't have to answer that.

XENA:

Isn't that sweet of you? And does God approve?

Michael turns his face to Xena; he looks every bit the heavenly messenger, his face simultaneously terrible and beautiful.

MICHAEL:

Know this, Warrior Princess: our task is to bring the power scattered in this world to our Lord. You cannot stand in His way.

EVE:

Will the God of Love then stand idly by and watch us be killed?

URIEL:

If you love something, let it go.

MICHAEL:

Do you stand idly by as one ant kills another? You were special once, Eve. You and your mother. The God of Love rewarded you with new lives, but you have betrayed him. You are special no longer. But God is merciful and just--you will have an honorable death.

XENA:

So you're here to gloat.

MICHAEL:

Hardly. (to Gabrielle) There is no need for the innocent to share the fate of the guilty.

He motions at Gabrielle, who takes a hesitant step forward--evidently, she is free to walk. She stops and glares at Michael.

GABRIELLE:

I'd rather die here!

MICHAEL (shrugs):

It's your choice.

Rahpael looks at Michael in revulsion.

A flash of silver-blue light reveals Ares, posed nonchalantly between the archangels and the three women.

ARES:

Choice, choice, choice... That's all I hear from you lot. Free choice, free will...

URIEL:

Free love...

ARES (mock fascination):

Really?

MICHAEL:

No. Get out of our way.



ARES (ignoring him):

Well--choice, and slaughter of the innocent. Not necessarily in that order.

MICHAEL:

I think you need to get with the program. We're here to get Gabrielle out--no slaughter of the innocent, as you so aptly put it.

ARES:

While I understand that the subject of Gabrielle's innocence could be an interesting point of debate-- (grins at Gabrielle) --that's not why I'm here.

He walks towards Michael, apparently at ease. Xena and the others watch him warily.

ARES:

You see, I don't recall being given much of a *choice* about our survival. Eve is born, everyone on Olympus dies. Simple, really. Trouble is-- (he makes a point of looking at Raphael) --from what I hear, that's against the rules. No choice about our fate.

MICHAEL:

And yet, you're still here.

ARES:

But for the grace of Xena and those golden apples of immortality... Your point was?

MICHAEL:

You *chose* to give up your godhood. The others did not.

ARES (makes air quotes):

"Free choice"? Like...let me see--"Your power or your life?"

MICHAEL (missing the irony):

Exactly.

ARES (again looking directly at Raphael):

So, actually, my *family* didn't need to die at all, if we'd only chosen to give up our powers voluntarily?

MICHAEL:

Right again.

Ares wanders towards the spot where Xena is standing; close-up.

XENA (under her breath):

What are you *doing*?!

ARES (also under his breath):

Just my job. Encouraging a little...civil dispute.

Cut back to the archangels.

RAPHAEL:

No. No, it's not right, Michael--none of it is! And none of it *was*.

ARES (to Xena, smugly):

You see?

Raphael approaches Androcleia's frozen form and lays his hands on her. White light begins to form around his fingers.

MICHAEL:

Stop! What do you think you're doing?

RAPHAEL:

You spoke to the Darkness in this girl's soul. I speak to the Light. She is free to choose as she wills.

The light glows and expands, then fades. Michael grabs Raphael by one arm; Uriel takes the other. Raphael tries in vain to protest.

MICHAEL:

This is going to have to wait.

URIEL (to Xena):

Real pleasure meeting you, though.

Michael opens a shining portal and thrusts Raphael through it, then follows. Uriel snaps his fingers at the frozen people, then follows Michael. The portal irises shut. In its place, the chakram falls to the ground and spins. Xena picks it up.

XENA (to Ares):

I'm impressed.

She turns around--he is no longer there. Abruptly, the noise returns, along with all the action.

Xena throws the chakram again--this time, it completes its circuit of the roofs, sending all the stone-throwers toppling down into piles of reeds. The attack grinds to a halt.

ANDROCLEIA (looking somewhat dazed and scared):
What's going on?

XENA:
You might want to have a chat with your warrior wannabe pals. (indicates the children)

ANDROCLEIA:
I think...I think I wanted them to throw stones at you. (looks at the women's injuries) Oh, no...

GABRIELLE:
I think it's safe to say you succeeded in that.

ANDROCLEIA:
I'm so sorry...I have no idea what came over me.

EVE:
That's all right. *We* do.

ANDROCLEIA (seeing her mother in the distance):
Mama!!

She turns and runs to her mother, while Eve watches thoughtfully.

CUT TO

Evening. Long shot of the temple ruins on the beach where Ares and Xena had been talking earlier that day. The colonnade looks eerily beautiful, bluish in the gathering dark. The waves are lapping at the marble steps.

The camera moves closer, focusing on the stairs. Gabrielle and Xena are sitting one step above the water line; Eve is lying on her back, looking up at the sky, her head in her mother's lap. Xena is stroking Eve's hair slowly, talking to Gabrielle in a whisper.

Eve moves, Xena looks at her questioningly, but Eve smiles and shakes her head before getting up. She walks up the stairs to one of the columns and leans against it, apparently lost in thought.

XENA (to Gabrielle):
She's all grown up.

GABRIELLE:
Aren't we all?

Xena smiles.

GABRIELLE:
We're very lucky, you know. It's not every parent that gets the chance to see their daughter find her place in the world.

Xena gives Gabrielle a searching look.

XENA (gently):
Hope?

GABRIELLE (shakes her head, smiling sadly):
We can't change the past. (nods in Eve's direction) But she's our future.

XENA (looks at Eve, then back to Gabrielle):
We missed so much of her life...

GABRIELLE:
But we've gained more.

They are silent, looking out at the rocky headlands in the distance, their base lost in the evening mist and sea spray as we:

FADE OUT

THE END

[Michael, Raphael and Uriel are purely fictional. Any resemblance to actual archangels, real or imagined, is entirely coincidental.]