

SHIPPER SEASON SEVEN

“Restoration”

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Episode #7.11

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Logline

Xena is called on to help a town with an unusual problem in a comedic adventure of epic proportions.

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TEASER

FADE IN

[MONTAGE OF PREVIOUS EPISODE]

ANNOUNCER:

Previously on Xena...

GABRIELLE (looks at Xena thoughtfully):

Are you implying that we should help the gods?

XENA (uncertain):

I don't know. They tormented mankind for centuries--who's to say they won't carry on?

CUT TO

ARES:

You know what this is, don't you?

XENA:

The entrance to Tartarus and beyond that...Hell.

ARES:

The gods are down there--my family.

Xena looks away regretfully.

ARES:

All my life they had treated me as if I was a disease. I had become the pariah of Olympus; they didn't care about me and I didn't care about them. But now that they're gone...

Looks at the cave then back at Xena.

ARES:

...I guess I do miss them, a little.

CUT TO

XENA (grimly):

Michael's not getting away with this little number, not if I can help it.

CUT TO

There are little glass spheres floating in the air, like jars with fireflies inside; each one glowing with a different color--gold, green, blue, orange and others.

CUT TO

Xena crosses a bridge, Eve, Gabrielle, and Ares follow, holding onto the ropes on the side of the bridge, trying not to lose their balance.

CUT TO

EVE:

They're so deep inside their own nightmares that they have lost their sense of self, their sense of reality.

CUT TO

ZEUS (walks up to Ares):

Son...

CUT TO

ARES:

Guess that means you don't hate me at the moment, right?

Athena makes a noise partway between a laugh and a sob.

ATHENA:

Thank you, Ares. I mean that.

CUT TO

EVE:

The gods are free. (she smiles) I hope they take advantage of their second chance at life and use it wisely.

[END OF MONTAGE]

A tranquil forest. Birds chirp in the trees, a deer and her fawn slowly walk up to a crystal clear brook, bending down to take a drink. Chipmunks scurry on the forest floor, gathering nuts and berries.

CUT TO

Close up of Xena's face. She seems fearful and distressed. The camera slowly moves back to reveal her tied to a tree. She is struggling against her bonds, trying to free her hands. At length, she stops and leans her head back against the tree, closing her eyes. A lone tear runs down her cheek.

A branch cracks to one side. Xena's eyes fly open, she looks towards the noise. The camera pans right to show Ares rushing towards Xena. He draws his sword. Terrified, Xena begins to struggle again, but it's too late--the blade swishes through the air and...cuts the ropes.

Joyfully, Xena flies into his arms. He sweeps her up...

GABRIELLE:

Andromeda! The rescue of Andromeda!

Zoom out to show Gabrielle and Eve sitting on the ground.

ARES (still holding Xena):

Hey! We were just getting to the best part.

XENA:

All right, they got it. (after a pause) Ares?

ARES (innocently):

What?

XENA:

You can set me down now.

Ares does so. Xena removes the cut ropes from around her body.

EVE:

That was way too easy.

ARES:

May I remind you that you thought Xena was meant to be Prometheus?

EVE (smirks):

Only because you would've been perfect as the flesh-eating eagle.

ARES:

I think I finally understand why you're not allowed to speak in this game.

GABRIELLE:

Actually, it's so that we can listen out for an ambush.

ARES:

Or for a villager hurtling through the forest, yelling "Xena!" at the top of his voice?

GABRIELLE:

He could yell "Gabrielle."

MAN (running toward them shouting):

Xena! Xena!

Ares gives Gabrielle a smug look.

XENA:

Come on.

The man runs up to them and stops, trying to catch his breath. Xena walks up to him, Gabrielle, Ares and Eve follow.

XENA:

What is it?

MAN (breathing heavily):

My town...it needs help, Xena.

ARES:

Gee, what a surprise.

Xena elbows him, Ares pretends it hurt.

XENA:

Help with what? Warlords? Monsters?

MAN:

The gods.

EVE (surprised):

What?

XENA:

That'd be right.

MAN:

Hera and Athena. (pleading) You have to save us, Xena. We're counting on you.

GABRIELLE:

Wait a second--calm down. What are Hera and Athena doing?

MAN:

Come and see for yourselves, before it's too late. Please. (to the whole group) We need all the help we can get. Not so long ago, we were just a little farming community...

ARES:

Whoa--you know, I'd love to, but I'm allergic to farming.

GABRIELLE:

Chicken!

Ares narrows his eyes almost teasingly and disappears.

MAN (after the flash of light):

Wow. That's quite an allergy.

XENA:

All right. Lead the way.

CUT TO

Olympus. Hera and Athena are in the middle of a heated argument. They are literally trying to attack each other, Aphrodite is caught between them, trying to hold them back.

ATHENA:

The last time you offered a gift to someone, it resulted in the Trojan War!

HERA:

Oh? Unless I'm much mistaken, you offered a gift too!

Athena snarls and lunges forward, only to be stopped by Aphrodite's hand pushing against her chest.

APHRODITE:

Whoa, whoa, you two! Now, can't we discuss this calmly and rationally? All this snarling can't be good for your karma.

ATHENA:

Obviously, the last few years weren't completely wasted on you--you must have been brushing up on your vocabulary.

HERA (to Aphrodite):

You're the one to talk. You were the one who *did* cause the Trojan War!

ATHENA:

You got the golden apple from Paris and drove him to abduct Helen.

Aphrodite backs away from them. Hera and Athena look at her.

APHRODITE (trying to look innocent):

We all make mistakes.

HERA:

Some mistake. (mimicking Aphrodite) Oops--there goes Troy!

ATHENA:

Speaking of mistakes, you're making one right now, sticking that pretty little nose into something that's none of your business.

Hera and Athena move toward her slowly. Aphrodite raises her hands in defense.

APHRODITE:

Hey, don't go ganging up on me! Besides, I've got a couple happening in Corinth that I'd really like to get back to, if you don't mind.

Ares appears beside them. Aphrodite sees him and lights up with joy.

APHRODITE:

I am so glad you're here, Bro! Hold the fort, I'm off to Corinth. Later.

She snaps her fingers and starts to disappear but before she is fully gone, Ares takes hold of her arm, stopping her.

ARES:

Hold it. I'm not here to baby-sit.

He looks over at Hera and Athena who are arguing again, then back at Aphrodite.

ARES:

If this is about the town, Xena's on her way there.

APHRODITE:

Xena to the rescue again, huh?

ARES (sarcastic):

Gotta love that.

APHRODITE (smirks):

Bet you would.

She chuckles and looks at Athena and Hera.

HERA (shouting):

It was your fault, Athena!

Aphrodite shakes her head then looks back at Ares.

APHRODITE:

I'll be so glad when Olympus is back to normal. All this yelling and screaming is giving me a headache.

ARES:

Oh, and here I thought this *was* normal.

Aphrodite walks back over to Athena and Hera. Ares shakes his head as he watches Aphrodite trying in vain to stop Athena and Hera from going at each other again.

ARES:

Gods. Can't live with 'em, can't live without 'em.

FADE OUT

ACT ONE

FADE IN

Long shot of a town. As we move in closer, we see a large crowd gathered in the main square. At one end of the square is a site where an obviously large and magnificent building is under construction; at the other is a wooden platform with some seats on it. Down the center of the square is a long red ribbon dividing it in two. People are crowded on both sides, shouting.

CROWD (on right side; repeating):

He-ra! He-ra! He-ra!

CROWD (on left side; repeating):

A-the-na! A-the-na!

An elderly man, evidently the mayor of the town, and other members of the city council are trying in vain to calm the crowd down.

MAYOR (trying to shout over the yelling):

Everyone, please calm down! Your attention please! Please, calm down!

Everyone begins to quiet down a bit.

MAYOR:

Thank you.

The mayor and the city council members go up on the platform and take their seats. Then, the camera pans over to six well-muscled, good-looking men who are walking through the square, three of them on one side of the line, three on the other.

The men walking on the right side are dressed in tight black leather pants and skintight white shirts with the sleeves ripped off. The shirts have designs of peacocks on them, shining brilliantly with glitter.

The men on the other side are dressed exactly in the same outfits as the others, but instead of peacocks on their shirts, they have glittering designs of owls.

Both sides of the crowd begins to cheer, cat calls are heard as the six men approach the center of the street, facing the side of the crowd that they are standing on.

The latter three begin a cheerleading routine with gymnastic moves and kicks.

ATHENA CHEERLEADERS:

She's a living legend
With one-two-three--three!--skills
Weaving, war and wisdom
One look at her shield kills.
The ideal modern woman
Who's into noble deeds
We're telling you, Athena
Is what this town needs!
Athena!!!

The camera pans over to Xena, Gabrielle and Eve arriving in the square. They look utterly confused.

HERA CHEERLEADERS:

Old fashioned family values
These days are hard to find
But with our goddess Hera
We'll leave all that behind
She's into childhood welfare
(Don't worry 'bout her past)
We want our little darlings
To have the very best!
Hera!!!!

Xena, Gabrielle and Eve exchange puzzled looks.

GABRIELLE:

This is what that man was worried about? Looks like a party to me.

EVE:

There must be more to this than we know.

XENA:

Let's hope so.

Xena walks past the cheerleaders, up to the seating area where the mayor and the councilors are present. Gabrielle and Eve follow. Seeing them, the mayor rises.

MAYOR:

Xena. Thank the gods!

XENA (warily):

What for?

GABRIELLE (off the mayor's blank look):

What's going on?

MAYOR (steps down from his seat and walks up to them):

Both Athena and Hera want patronage of our town, and they've both offered a gift if we choose to worship one of them. Athena offers an Academy of Sciences where the best scientists in all of Greece will teach, and Hera offers the most magnificent kindergarten we have ever seen. Both are quite marvelous gifts.

GABRIELLE:

And the people can't decide which they want more.

EVE:

Which explains the division in this town.

MAYOR:

Exactly. You see, Xena, when we heard that the gods were back, we immediately started building a beautiful temple. (He points to the construction site on the other side of the square) Now we have to decide which goddess to dedicate it to.

XENA:

So how do you think I'm going to be of help?

MAYOR:

I don't know. You are Xena! (whining) You helped to bring the gods back. I assumed you'd be able to think of something.

XENA (through clenched teeth):

I should start charging a consultation fee.

MAYOR:

I beg your pardon?

XENA:

I said, you have a very charming town here.

MAYOR:

Thank you. It's new.

EVE:

You mean, you never did have a patron god?

MAYOR:

Of course not--Neopolis was only founded three seasons ago! (wails) It's a dilemma! We're stuck between Charybdis and Scylla!

XENA:

I thought you said it was Athena and Hera.

GABRIELLE (aside to Xena):

Figure of speech.

XENA:

Know-it-all.

The mayor begins to wail again. Eve tries to comfort him. Other councilors don't pay them any attention, their eyes riveted to the cheerleading display.

Xena turns to Gabrielle.

XENA:

Well, let's get to it, shall we? (between the mayor's wailing and the noise of the cheerleading, Xena is visibly getting annoyed) But first, let's go somewhere...quieter.

As Gabrielle, Xena, and Eve jostle through the crowd, the camera moves to one side to reveal a figure a short distance behind them, not cheering. The figure moves away from the crowds and begins to follow the three women out of the busy town square.

CUT TO

Xena, Gabrielle, and Eve are leaning against a wooden fence; the main square and the two crowds are visible in the distance. Cheering is faintly heard. All three are breathing heavily.

GABRIELLE:

I thought they were going to trample us in there.

EVE:

I think they did.

XENA (brushing herself off):

Good thing this doesn't need ironing.

The figure following them reappears: it's Virgil.

VIRGIL:

Xena, Gabrielle. Eve.

XENA:

Virgil? What are you doing here?

VIRGIL:

I heard about Neopolis and thought I'd check it out. It sounded like a joke--but when I saw you here, I knew there had to be something more to it.

EVE:

So you see what's going on around here?

VIRGIL:

People squabbling over dead gods? Mass delusions?

GABRIELLE:

Uh--not quite. Actually, Athena and Hera--and all the others--they're alive.

VIRGIL (astonished):

You mean, they never died?!

XENA:

Not permanently.

VIRGIL:

You're joking. (off Xena's look) No, of course not. Not permanent. Just for a while. Right.

GABRIELLE:

Well, there's a simple explanation for that. Xena got involved, brought them back. (looks at Eve) With our help. The problem is, they now need worshippers.

VIRGIL:

So Athena and Hera are really after Neoplolis?

EVE:

Yeah. Funny, isn't it--the gods need people more than people ever needed them.

VIRGIL:

I wonder if we ever needed them at all.

XENA:

Oh, it's nice to have them around. Great way to attract tourists.

VIRGIL:

Well, I bet you'll come up with a way to help these people. You always do.

GABRIELLE:

All we ever really do is show people the way to help themselves.

Xena gives her a thoughtful look.

GABRIELLE:

Why do I get a feeling that you have a plan?

XENA:

Even better. *We* have a plan. (to Virgil) And you can be a part of it.

VIRGIL:

Great! Um...what is it?

XENA:

Eve, do you remember Hypatia?

EVE (nods slowly):

Of course--we met her in Alexandria. But she's a...

XENA:

Exactly! Virgil, I think I'm going to need you and Eve to take a little trip to Thebes.

Virgil and Gabrielle look at each other. Virgil mouths, "No idea". Gabrielle grins.

VIRGIL:

Why Thebes?

The noise of the crowd in the square, which has been growing louder in the background, suddenly erupts into a roar, and the cheerleading starts again.

XENA (winces):

Let's go someplace where we can actually hear each other talk, shall we?

The camera pans back to the square where the competing cheerleading squads are trying to shout each other. Finally, the mayor covers his ears and, with a loud wail, runs down from the platform and scampers away.

CUT TO

A street outside an inn. Virgil and Eve are on horseback.

EVE:

We'll be back as soon as we can.

GABRIELLE:

You'd better. If you take too long, there may not be anything left of the town.

Eve and Virgil leave. Gabrielle looks at Xena.

GABRIELLE:

Well, now that we've gotten that taken care of, I think I should go and have a chat with some of the people on Hera's side.

XENA:

All right, you do that. I've got a little errand to run first.

GABRIELLE:

Which has nothing to do with Ares?

XENA (deadpan):

Absolutely not.

GABRIELLE:

We may not need the gods... But it can't hurt to have another god on our side, right?

XENA:

It all depends on the god.

Gabrielle leaves. After a few moments, Xena turns around.

XENA:

Ares!

GABRIELLE'S VOICE IN THE DISTANCE:

I heard that!

ARES (appearing):

What? What did I do now?

XENA:

Nothing...yet.

ARES:

Come on, Xena. What are you up to? I don't have time for games right now. The ruckus back home is bad enough. But I'm guessing you already know that.

XENA:

Oh yeah....I mean to ask you--how *does* it feel, having your family around again?

Ares shudders theatrically.

ARES:

You should really see how Athena and Hera are adjusting to their return to Olympus. It's a jungle up there.

XENA:

Didn't take very long for this sort of thing to start all over again, did it? I thought that things might have changed a little, now that they're back.

ARES (shrugs):

Old habits die hard.

XENA:

And what about your old habits? I'd think you'd be out there trying to rebuild your own fan base instead of hanging around me all the time.

ARES:

Hey, *you* called *me*.

XENA:

Yes, I did. There's something you can do for me.

ARES:

Ask not what you can do for your god, but what your god can do for you.

XENA:

I need to have a private chat with one of your relatives.

ARES:

What, you're going to try to talk some sense into Sis? Or Mom? Forget it.

XENA:

Actually, no. I want to talk to Hades.

FADE OUT

ACT TWO

FADE IN

Xena is standing in a forest, seeming to be waiting for something. Hades appears in front of her in a chariot driven by three moth-eaten black horses. The paint on the chariot is peeling and the wheels are squeaking. With a sound like nails on a blackboard, it finally jerks to a halt.

HADES:

That's it. From now on, I'm walking.

XENA (sympathetically):

Things not looking so good in the Underworld?

HADES:

You have no idea. Cobwebs everywhere. Graffiti all over my throne. Charon decided to turn his boat into a trireme and now transports the new arrivals only once a day, at double the price... Even as I speak, some new disaster is no doubt unfolding.

XENA:

Well then--why don't you do something about it?

HADES:

Xena, I am only one god, with an entire domain to look after!

XENA:

What about the shades? Can't they help?

HADES:

Oh, they are no use. They just walk around moping about their past lives.

XENA:

So what you need is a real labor force.

HADES:

Who would agree to take a job in the Underworld?! The working conditions aren't exactly up to scratch.

XENA:

Maybe what you really need is more worshippers. You know, the other gods are working on rebuilding their fan base since they've been back...why not you?

Hades looks down and then back at her.

HADES (squirming a little):

Well, to tell you the truth, Xena, it's not like I had a really huge fan base to begin with. (dejectedly) People don't seem to think there's much point in worshipping the God of the Dead. The kind of job I have doesn't exactly win you many friends. (remembers to be suspicious) But what would that matter to you?

XENA:

Come on, Hades. *We're* friends, aren't we? (slightly embarrassed) Assuming that we can put certain...past differences aside.

HADES:

I guess that's fair enough. So what do you suggest?

XENA:

Well, I was thinking. You do know that Athena and Hera are fighting over which one of them is to be the patron deity of Neopolis?

HADES:

Of course. It's even made the gossip circuit in the Underworld--particularly in the gamblers' pen. I never realized just how many dead gamblers we had down there! I tried to set Cerberus on them, but he took a punt on Athena.

XENA:

But Hades, the thing is, Athena and Hera both have plenty of temples and worshipers already. And now they want to get their hands on this new town as well? Why not let someone else have a chance?

HADES:

But Cerberus...

XENA (frustrated):

Not Cerberus! *You!*

HADES:

Me? (thinks about it) Yeah. And why not? (getting excited) I could have a temple! A real one, with what do you call them... Priests? Slaves?

XENA:

A labor force. For the redecorations.

HADES:

Sounds good to me. (suspicious again) But what's in it for you?

XENA:

Well, you know me, Hades. I have this thing about fighting injustice.

HADES:

I also know you have this thing for trying to cheat death...

XENA:

I don't cheat. I just play hardball.

HADES:

This had better not be about trying to score points with me when you end up in my domain.

XENA:

Hey, don't write me off yet! Listen, if you're not interested...

HADES:

No, no, I'm definitely interested. Thanks for the tip, Xena. I got work to do.

With horrendous creaking and squeaking, the chariot rumbles out of sight, flashing red in the distance.

CUT TO

Olympus. Athena and Hera are bickering again. Behind them, some of the columns have fallen; they had obviously gone at it by using their powers against each other.

ATHENA:

The town is mine!

HERA:

Oh, really? Well, we'll just see about that.

Hades lumbers in his creaky chariot.

HADES:

Not so fast, ladies.

Athena and Hera look up at him.

HERA (turning up her nose):

Must you ride that wreck everywhere? It really crashes with the decor.

HADES (raising an eyebrow):

Crashes?

HERA:

Oh, did I say "crashes"? I meant "clashes", of course.

HADES (looking around):

Well, it's not the only thing that's doing some crashing around here.

ATHENA:

Uncle. How are things?

HADES:

Could be better. I mean, you all got to go back to Olympus. I'm mostly stuck in the Underworld whether I'm alive or dead. Oh well, at least now I have more elbow room.

HERA:

So, what brings you to Olympus-- (looking him over in distaste) --looking like *that*?

ATHENA (to Hera):

They must have heard your screeching all the way down to the Underworld.

HERA:

Why, you-- (raises her hand, preparing to launch a fireball)

HADES:

Ladies! Ladies! Please! Can we avoid any more property damage?

HERA:

Don't tell me you have some ideas about how to settle our disagreement.

HADES:

As a matter of fact, I do.

CUT TO

A courtyard of a mansion in town. A small marble statue of Hera stands on a pedestal amidst flowers and greenery. A group of townsfolk, mostly women, are sitting around on benches. Gabrielle is sitting in the center of the circle.

WOMAN #1:

We agree with you, Gabrielle. We hate to see all this squabbling over whom the town should worship.

MAN #1:

We want the fighting to stop.

WOMAN #2:

But we just feel so strongly that Hera is the best patron goddess our town could possibly have. What's an Academy of Sciences to the average person? A kindergarten, on the other hand....

WOMAN #1:

And not just *any* kindergarten! One with little beds of pure gold for the afternoon nap...

MAN #2:

...rocking horses made of mahogany and plated with gold leaf...

WOMAN #2:

...marble columns...

WOMAN #3:

And don't forget the musicians to soothe and entertain the little ones! Harpists, flute girls...

MAN #1 (perks up):

Flute girls?

Woman #1 gives him a sharp look and slaps his hand.

GABRIELLE:

That does sound wonderful. So Neopolis doesn't have a kindergarten right now?

WOMAN #2:

The one we have is so run down, it looks more like a barn.

MAN #2 (embarrassed):

Our town hasn't been around that long, Gabrielle. We don't have the money for a really good kindergarten.

WOMAN #3:

And the little ones don't have much to do except play ball and hide-and-seek...

The people nod in agreement.

GABRIELLE:

You know something? Wouldn't it be nice if the kids in a kindergarten could do something that would let them have fun *and* learn something useful at the same time?

WOMAN #1 (chuckles):

Tell that to the lady who runs our kindergarten. She's lucky if she can keep those kids from poking each other's eyes out with a stick.

GABRIELLE:

It must be tough for her, caring for so many kids all by herself.

WOMAN #2:

Well, that's why Hera is the one we need. With her help, our kids will really have the best of everything!

GABRIELLE:

Well, what if there was some other way of getting what you want for your kids?

MAN #1 (puzzled):

Another god?

There is a clamoring in the distance.

GABRIELLE:

Uh-oh. Sounds like things are heating up again.

CUT TO

The main square. The two crowds are still on different sides of the red ribbon, getting agitated. Chants of "A-the-na! A-the-na!" and "He-ra! He-ra!" are heard. The mayor is no longer there but a few councilors are milling about on the platform looking worried.

ATHENA CHEERLEADERS (start their routine):

She's a living legend
With one-two-three--*three!*--skills...

HERA CHEERLEADERS (start their routine on the other side of the square):

Old fashioned family values
These days are hard to find...

Their chants are drowning each other out. The crowds are getting more and more agitated and start jostling each other. The cheerleaders are getting jostled too as they perform their routines--one even

gets knocked to the ground--but they heroically continue. Finally, a few people on Athena's side of the square push forward and the ribbon is torn down. Somebody throws a punch and it looks like a riot is about to begin, when a loud clash of cymbals brings everything to a standstill.

From a side street, three women enter. They are dressed in tight, entirely black leather costumes, with long-sleeved though rather low-cut shirts. Their hair is tightly pulled back. These are Hades' cheerleaders, wearing appropriately grim attire for worshipers of the God of the Underworld. They are followed by a small group of people some of whom are carrying cymbals, which they strike again with a deafening noise.

HADES CHEERLEADERS (chanting as they start their own gymnastic routine):

Ha-des, Ha-des, he's our God,
Ruler of the Underworld...

HEAD CHEERLEADER (interrupts a cartwheel and gets up, sounding very displeased):

No, no, no! It's "our Lord"! I told you, it has to *rhyme*!

ANOTHER CHEERLEADER (sheepishly):

Well, it's not like we've had a lot of time to practice...

HEAD CHEERLEADER:

Let's take it from the top.

The people following the cheerleaders strike the cymbals again, causing many of the people in the crowd to wince and raise their hands to cover their ears.

HADES CHEERLEADERS (doing their gymnastic moves):

Ha-des, Ha-des, he's our Lord!
Ruler of the Underworld!
He will have the final word!

The Hades worshipers take up a chant of "Ha-des! Ha-des!"

HADES WORSHIPER #1:

Forget Athena!

HADES WORSHIPER #2:

Forget Hera!

HADES WORSHIPER #3:

Hades rules!

HADES WORSHIPER #1:

Let's build a temple to Hades!

The Hades cheerleaders take up their chant again. The Athena and Hera cheerleaders, having recovered from their surprise, also resume their acts.

The camera pans over to Xena, who is standing at the edge of the square with a slight, satisfied, catlike smile on her face. After surveying the chaotic scene for a while, she turns around and walks away down one of the narrow streets leading away from the square.

There is a flash of blue light, and Ares materializes in front of her.

ARES:

So--let me see if I get this straight. The people in this town are about to come to fisticuffs because they can't agree on which of two goddesses to worship. And your solution is to...bring in a third god?

XENA (grins):

Oh, you noticed.

ARES (winces at the noise):

Good thing gods don't get headaches. With all due respect, Xena, this is the worst idea you ever had.

XENA (smiles slyly):

I thought that was when I took you to the farm to hide you from the warlords.

A loud cheer erupts in the background; Ares flinches.

ARES:

I just changed my mind.

XENA:

Don't know what you're complaining about. Everything's working out perfectly.

ARES:

So what's the point of bringing my uncle into this?

XENA:

If nothing else, it buys us some time.

ARES:

Buy *us* some time? Time is good...

Xena smirks.

ARES:

Good plan.

FADE OUT

ACT THREE

FADE IN

Three townspeople are standing in a large room lit with candles--they are representatives of each of the three gods. A conservatively dressed middle-aged man wears Athena's crest on his robes; a flamboyant younger man has a cape decorated with Hera's trademark peacock feathers, and a girl who looks suspiciously like Discord has the white skin, black cape and red lips marking her as either

a worshipper of Hades or an extra from "Buffy, the Vampire Slayer" who accidentally walked onto the wrong set.

All three are standing in order of height, looking around the room, clearly bored.

GOTH GIRL/HADES REP (petulantly):

Where is she?

CONSERVATIVE MAN/ATHENA REP:

I don't just represent Athena, you know--I am also a member of the city government. I have three more meetings this afternoon. I'm a very busy man!

FLAMBOYANT GUY/HERA REP:

This is really quite atrocious. (looks longingly in the direction of the window) We're missing the party!

He starts humming Hera's cheer, softly at first, then getting louder. The other two give him withering looks.

FLAMBOYANT GUY/HERA REP:

Sorry.

GOTH GIRL/HADES REP:

I've had enough. If Xena thinks we're going to hang around here waiting for her all day--

The doors fly open and Xena appears in the doorway, looking a little flushed. There is a swish that sounds like Ares disappearing. Xena shuts the door hastily.

CONSERVATIVE MAN/ATHENA REP (trying to peer past Xena):

Was that lightning? I thought I saw a flash...

XENA:

Static. (runs a hand over her armor) Imitation leather--bane of my existence.

FLAMBOYANT GUY/HERA REP:

Really? I'd have never guessed. It looks so genuine...

CONSERVATIVE MAN/ATHENA REP:

Everything looks genuine to you. That's the problem.

FLAMBOYANT GUY/HERA REP:

What's that supposed to mean?

CONSERVATIVE MAN/ATHENA REP (to Xena):

He's not exactly the sharpest tool in the shed. (to Hera's rep) You seriously think Hera is interested in kindergartens?

GOTH GIRL/HADES REP (snorts):

Like either of you seriously *thinks*.

FLAMBOYANT GUY/HERA REP:

At least *we* worship gods who have some fashion sense.

GOTH GIRL/HADES REP (gestures toward Conservative Man/Athena Rep):

Oh, like *he* would know fashion sense if it came up and bit him on the--

XENA (interrupts):

Now, now--we're here to put an *end* to all the squabbling, remember?

CONSERVATIVE MAN/ATHENA REP (dryly):

Yes.

GOTH GIRL/HADES REP and FLAMBOYANT MAN/HERA REP (sigh in unison):

Yeah.

XENA:

You saw what happened out there on the square. They almost had a riot.

CONSERVATIVE MAN/ATHENA REP (solemnly):

A riot is an ugly thing.

FLAMBOYANT MAN/HERA REP (shudders):

And once you've got one going, there is no stopping it.

GOTH GIRL/HADES REP (to Flamboyant Man/Hera Rep, shrugs scornfully):

Worried about getting your feathers ruffled? (gestures toward his cape with the peacock feathers)

CONSERVATIVE MAN/ATHENA REP:

We would like to find a civilized solution to this problem, Xena. (looks pointedly at Goth Girl/Hades Rep) I assume that I speak for all of us.

GOTH GIRL/HADES REP (impatiently):

Yeah, yeah. So how do we solve it?

XENA:

Very simple. By putting the matter to a vote by the whole town.

ALL THREE REPS (simultaneously):

A vote?

GOTH GIRL/HADES REP:

How boring.

CONSERVATIVE MAN/ATHENA REP (doubtfully):

I don't think it has ever been done that way before.

FLAMBOYANT MAN/HERA REP (flustered):

Oh, I don't know...it sounds *terribly* disrespectful... I mean, Hera is offering to be our patron deity, not running for mayor...

CONSERVATIVE MAN/ATHENA REP:

I hate to say this, but he's got a point.

XENA:

Come on, think about it. It's a whole new era, isn't it? You know as well as I do that the ancient gods have lost a lot of worshipers. What they really need is to show everyone that they can keep up with the times. Be more democratic. Update their image. I'm sure you can convince them that it's the modern thing to do.

FLAMBOYANT MAN/HERA REP (intrigued):

Update their image? Oh, that *does* sound interesting.

CONSERVATIVE MAN/ATHENA REP:

It's true, of course, that holding a vote is much more respectable than having people yelling in the streets...

XENA:

Why not hold a town assembly on the main square? Then the gods themselves can appear before the people, each of them can make their case, and they can put it to a vote.

FLAMBOYANT MAN/HERA REP:

If our gods agree to it, of course.

XENA:

Well, that's where you come in. Explain to them why it's the way to go. You know--since they've only been back recently, it's not exactly good public relations if the first thing they do is turn such a respectable town into a circus.

GOTH GIRL/HADES REP (sullenly):

At least a circus is *fun*.

CONSERVATIVE MAN/ATHENA REP:

I think Xena's idea has some merit. Let's go talk to our gods, and then we can schedule the assembly for...shall we say, tomorrow at noon?

FLAMBOYANT MAN/HERA REP:

Noon! I *do* hate getting up so early...

GOTH GIRL/HADES REP:

Tomorrow? Waaaait a minute...that just isn't fair. Look at all the time you've spent promoting your goddesses! We're only just starting to rally people for Hades...

FLAMBOYANT MAN/HERA REP (sarcastically):

We could give you a year and it still wouldn't help you much.

CONSERVATIVE MAN/ATHENA REP:

All right--at noon in two days. That's final.

A slight smile touches Xena's lips.

GOTH GIRL/HADES REP:

I guess that's all right.

XENA:

So we're all set.

CUT TO

A room at the inn. Xena walks in and Gabrielle rises to meet her. Cheering is heard again outside. Gabrielle covers her ears for a moment.

GABRIELLE:

How did it go?

XENA:

Oh, they bought it. Now all they have to do is sell it to the gods. I think with the pitch I gave them, it shouldn't be too hard. The assembly is scheduled for noon, two days from now. And how's it going with Hera's supporters?

GABRIELLE:

I got twenty volunteers.

XENA (smiles affectionately):

We're still a great team, aren't we?

GABRIELLE:

You betcha. I just hope Virgil and Eve are doing as well.

CUT TO

Thebes. Virgil and Eve are walking down the street, looking rather dejected.

VIRGIL:

You know, this is the third refusal we've gotten. And we don't have much time.

EVE:

All we need is two or three scholars to bring back to Neopolis with us, and so far we can't even get one except for Hypatia! It's really sad that people of such achievement would show so little interest in helping out their fellow human beings...

VIRGIL:

Maybe we need a different approach.

EVE:

Like what?

VIRGIL (thinking):

I don't know... What would Xena do?

EVE (laughs):

Mother? Oh, she'd get an idea...something you'd never see coming...and then once you found out what it was, you'd slap yourself on the knee and say...

She pauses as her eyes fall on something before her and she stops, gazing intensely at whatever attracted her attention.

EVE:

...now why didn't I think of that?

VIRGIL:

Eve? What is it?

The camera pans over to focus on what Eve is looking at. It's a display of wares in front of a stone carver's shop--and in particular, one marble plaque with gold lettering.

VIRGIL (reads):

"The citizens of Thebes are proud to present this plaque to--blank space--in recognition of his outstanding achievements in the field of--blank space." (looks over to Eve) Are you thinking...?

EVE:

I think I've got an idea. Come on!

She pulls Virgil inside the shop.

CUT TO

A house in Thebes. Virgil and Eve are standing at the door. Eve knocks, and a rather pompous-looking middle-aged man in a purple tunic opens.

MIDDLE-AGED MAN:

Yes?

EVE:

Are you Anicolis, the famous mathematician?

MIDDLE-AGED MAN (smugly):

I am not, but I have the great honor of serving him. Are you here to intrude on his busy time?

VIRGIL:

We're here to honor him on behalf of the citizens of Neopolis. (holds up a plaque) We'd like to invite him to a formal ceremony for a presentation of this plaque.

SERVANT (looks over the plaque skeptically):

Neopolis? Never heard of it.

EVE:

Oh, it's a very important town, I assure you. In fact, at this very moment, three gods are disputing the privilege of being its patron deity.

SERVANT (grudgingly impressed):

Indeed? Well, come on in.

Eve and Virgil follow him inside the house.

CUT TO

Eve and Virgil coming out of the house several minutes later. They have big smiles on their faces.

VIRGIL:

It worked!

EVE:

Flattery will get you everywhere.

VIRGIL:

Well, that's one down, two to go.

They walk away as we:

FADE OUT

ACT FOUR

FADE IN

An assembly in the main square of Neopolis. The red ribbon is gone. The mayor, the city council members and other important persons in town are seated on the wooden platform, as are the three representatives of the gods. Behind the wooden platform is a new structure--a high dais draped with gold brocade. Gabrielle, Eve, Xena, and Virgil are standing in the front row of the crowd before the platform. With them are four very serious-looking people, three men and one woman.

The cheerleaders come out and start their acts in the space between the platform and the crowd. This time, however, they take turns.

GABRIELLE (winces):

Well, I certainly hope this is the last time we have to listen to this!

Aphrodite and Ares materialize next to Xena and Gabrielle.

ARES:

Ah. The warm-up for the big event.

XENA:

A warm-up? I must say it leaves me quite cold.

APHRODITE (giggles):

Well, it's making *me* hot. The guys anyway. (cranes her neck to get a better look at the men as they do their high kicks) Wow! Sexy!

Ares rolls his eyes. The cheers continue until there are three bright flashes of light and Hera, Athena, and Hades appear on the dais. The cheerleaders move to the side. There are gasps in the crowd.

ARES (to Aphrodite):

So, I wonder who's going to win. I bet on Uncle Hades.

APHRODITE:

I bet on Athena.

ARES (looks at Aphrodite):

You wanna back up that bet, dear Sis?

APHRODITE:

Of course. You know I'm always right, Bro.

ARES:

We'll see about that. Let's see...if I'm right, you have to go for a whole week dressed like a Hestian virgin.

APHRODITE:

And if I win, you have to stay away from Xena for a whole week.

XENA (grins at Ares and then at Aphrodite):

That wouldn't be such a bad thing.

ARES:

Oh, come on. You'd miss me.

XENA:

Guess you'll have to lose the bet to find out.

ARES:

All right. I'm not one to back out of anything.

APHRODITE:

You're on, Slick.

GABRIELLE:

Shhh! The assembly is about to start.

The crowd quiets down as the mayor rises.

MAYOR:

As all of you know, we have quite a predicament on our hands. We have two... (one of the councilmen tugs at his sleeve and whispers something in his ear) ...*three* gods who are all competing to be the patron deities of our wonderful town. Today, we are going to settle this problem. Each one

of these revered deities (he turns around and bows to the gods) will make their case, and then we will take a vote on which one of them our fair city will worship.

Chants of "He-ra, He-ra," "A-the-na, A-the-na" and "Ha-des, Ha-des" go up in the crowd. The mayor holds out his arms, bidding the people to be quiet.

MAYOR:

Please! Let us proceed.

He turns and bows to the gods again, then sits down.

ATHENA:

Good people of Neopolis! I, Athena, Goddess of Wisdom and Warfare, wish to give you a magnificent gift if you dedicate this town and this new temple to my worship.

ARES (whispers to Xena):

She forgot to mention weaving.

ATHENA:

I will create for you a grand Academy of Sciences, where the most revered scholars, philosophers, and scientists in all of Greece will come to teach their knowledge. It will make Neopolis the envy of all of Greece. Right up there with Athens--which, of course, became celebrated around the world under my patronage.

ARES (to Xena):

Sis makes quite a sales pitch.

XENA:

Runs in the family.

ARES (innocent look):

Who, me? When were you ever impressed by my sales pitch?

Xena gives him a mock glare, then turns back to the platform.

ATHENA:

So think about your decision carefully, my good people. Think about all the great things you will be able to achieve with my guidance.

Athena steps back while Hera steps forward.

HERA:

Men and women of Neopolis! Wives and mothers! Husbands and fathers! What is it that you cherish more than anything in the world? (she pauses for dramatic effect)

FAT, RUDDY-FACED MAN IN THE FRONT OF THE CROWD (calls out obsequiously):

The gods?

HERA (smiles):

That's a very nice thought. But I meant, of course, your children. If you choose me as your patron goddess, I will give this city the most spectacular kindergarten Greece has ever seen. It will have

golden beds and marble columns. Worship me and dedicate your temple to Hera, and Neopolis will become the child welfare capital of the known world.

Hera steps back. There are murmurs in the crowd as Hades steps up.

HADES (gruffly):

Well, I don't really have anything to offer this town. I kinda got into the race at the last minute. I just figured I've never had many worshipers before and...well, nobody wants to be a second-class god. Besides, I need major help with renovations in the underworld--the place has really gone to the dogs. So, if you worship me, your little town here will have the distinction of having the biggest temple of Hades in all Greece, and you will have the pleasure of getting to know me while you're still alive.

ARES (muttering):

There goes my bet...

MAYOR (bows to the gods):

Thank you, O magnificent ones. (turns back to the crowd) Well, now that you've heard what the gods have to say, let's vote.

XENA (steps forward):

Hold it. Gabrielle and I would like to say something first.

ATHENA'S REP (glares at her):

This is highly irregular.

MAYOR (nervously):

Uh...after everything Xena's done for us...I think it's only fair to let her speak.

Xena and Gabrielle go up on the platform and turn to the crowd. Gabrielle is carrying a satchel.

GABRIELLE:

Good people of Neopolis! You've been arguing over which god you want to worship and trying to decide which gift you want more, the Academy or the kindergarten. But actually, you already have a kindergarten. It's just in bad shape because no one's been really taking care of it. Well, while you've been squabbling, some of the parents have organized a volunteer effort to turn the kindergarten into something the town can be really proud of. (cut to Hera's face in close-up--she looks shocked.) And in just two days, they've been able to work wonders.

WOMAN IN THE CROWD:

It's true! When I was dropping off my little Nicos this morning, I couldn't believe my eyes!

HERA'S REP (contemptuously):

Oh *really*? Well, that's *very* nice, but *Hera* is offering us a kindergarten with marble columns and golden beds. I'm *dying* to know if our volunteers can match that.

GABRIELLE:

Who needs marble columns and golden beds in a kindergarten? That's not for the children--that's for Hera's glory. (Hera glowers) What children *really* need are games that would let them have some fun and develop their minds at the same time. Something like this. (she opens the satchel and shakes out a pile of building blocks)

HERA'S REP (scoffs):

Little wooden cubes. How *fabulous*.

GABRIELLE:

They're not just little wooden cubes. You can use them to make anything--a castle, a boat, a bridge...use your imagination. You can also use them to learn to add, subtract and multiply. And some of them have letters on them so that the kids can learn to write by putting words together.

An appreciative murmur goes up in the crowd as Gabrielle collects the building blocks and puts them back in the satchel.

ATHENA (to Hera, sarcastically):

Sounds to me like she made a pretty good case.

ATHENA'S REP:

I told you all along. Athena's the one!

XENA:

Just a minute. I'd like to introduce you all to some people.

She motions to Eve, Virgil, and the four people standing with them. They come up to the platform.

XENA:

This is our good friend Virgil. He'd like to tell you something.

VIRGIL:

People of Neopolis, it's an honor to speak to you. While you were trying to decide which god is to be your patron, my... (he hesitates for a moment) my good friend Eve and I went to Thebes to bring over some of its best scholars and scientists to this town. (he points at the four, from left to right) This is Anicolis, a mathematician; Hypatia, an astronomer; Reolis, a botanist; and Comeus, a philosopher. They have agreed to teach at your Academy of Sciences.

Athena purses her lips, very displeased.

ATHENA'S REP:

And where are you going to get a building to house this academy? Would you be so kind as to tell us that?

XENA (points to the temple under construction):

There's your academy!

The gods and their representatives exchange stunned glances. A murmur goes up in the crowd.

EVE:

You see, you don't really need the gods to give you what's best for you or your children. If you put your mind to it, you could do it all on your own.

The murmurs grow louder.

WOMAN #1:

She's right!

MAN #1:

Do you think Athena or Hera are really interested in our welfare? All they care about is stroking their own egos!

TEENAGE GIRL (at the top of her lungs):

People need gods like a fish needs a chariot!

Laughter erupts.

TEENAGE GIRL'S MOTHER:

Shush, Gloria! That's not a very ladylike thing to say.

GABRIELLE (to Xena):

Catchy slogan. I should keep it in mind.

Pandemonium now reigns on the square. There are shouts of "No more gods!", "Gods! Who needs them!", and "Go back to Olympus!"

MAYOR (steps forward in consternation):

Quiet...quiet, please!

The noise continues. Then, Xena dismounts from the platform in a flip, letting out her ululating battle cry, "A-yi-yi-yi-yi-yi!" and silence is immediately restored.

MAYOR (wipes his forehead):

Are you saying that now, you don't want to vote for *any* of the gods?

MAN #2:

No, wait! Personally, I thought Hades was pretty cool.

WOMAN #2:

Yeah! A no-nonsense guy.

MAN #1:

He's out for himself too, but at least he's up-front about it.

SEVERAL PEOPLE IN CROWD:

Yeah! Let's vote for Hades.

A chant of "Ha-des! Ha-des! Ha-des!" goes up. Hera and Athena glower; Hades is obviously happy but trying not to show it. Hera's rep looks dismayed; Athena's rep looks disapproving, and Hades' rep--Goth Girl--beams for a moment before she remembers to look grim as always.

MAYOR:

So...let's have a show of hands. Who's voting for Hades? (more than half of the people raise their hands) I guess that means Hades wins.

Hades worshipers cheer. Hera and Athena disappear.

MAYOR (to Hades):

My lord Hades, you are now the patron god of our town. We'll dedicate a temple to you... (fidgets) I

hope you don't mind if it's only a small one. And I'm sure you'll find volunteers who will be glad to help you with your renovation work.

HADES (still trying to maintain a cool facade):

Of course, of course. Anyone who helps me out will get a tour of the underworld at no cost... (smiles thinly) ...to their lives, that is.

There are scattered, slightly nervous laughs in the crowd as Hades disappears.

ARES (looks at Aphrodite):

What's it like to lose, Sis?

APHRODITE:

I'll ask you next time the Warrior Babe kicks your ass.

ARES:

Hey. I think a little change in wardrobe is in order. A bet's a bet.

Aphrodite whines and pouts and stamps her feet, then finally clicks her fingers. Golden sparks fly, and in an instant, Aphrodite is dressed in a severe white dress buttoned all the way up to her neck, with a wrap around her shoulders.

XENA (comes up):

Aphrodite! (looks her over incredulously) Where's the rest of you?

APHRODITE:

Very funny.

She glares at Ares, then disappears. Ares looks at Xena.

ARES:

So...people need gods like a fish needs a chariot, huh?

XENA (smiles slightly):

Oh, some of you are fun to have around. (as a smile starts spreading on his face, she continues) Like Aphrodite, for instance.

ARES:

We-ell, just remember, I won the bet. So I can still annoy you whenever I like.

XENA (smiles almost affectionately):

I'm sure you will.

Ares disappears. Gabrielle, Virgil and Eve approach.

XENA:

Well, our work here is done.

GABRIELLE:

Yeah.

VIRGIL (to Gabrielle):

Say, where did you get those little cubes you showed at the assembly today? I wish I'd had something like that when I was a kid!

GABRIELLE (smiles proudly but a little shyly):

I invented them.

VIRGIL:

Wow. I guess Xena isn't the only one who has many skills.

EVE:

So, what are you going to do, Virgil? You coming with us?

VIRGIL (looks at her and slowly shakes his head):

No. I think I'll stay here for a while...help with that academy.

She puts her hand on his for a moment.

EVE:

It was really good to spend some time with you, Virgil.

VIRGIL:

Good to see you again, Eve. Take care of yourself. (looks at Xena and Gabrielle) All three of you.

XENA:

We will.

GABRIELLE:

Good to see you again, Virgil. (she kisses him on the cheek) See you around.

VIRGIL:

Soon, I hope. Goodbye!

Virgil turns around and walks away through the crowd, which is already dispersing. Gabrielle, Eve and Xena watch him for a moment.

XENA:

All right, let's get our things at the inn and get moving.

They start walking.

GABRIELLE:

You know, I really do think Eli was right. People *can* take care of themselves without the gods. It just never meant that the gods had to die.

XENA (pensively):

You're right.

GABRIELLE:

Besides, like you said, they're fun to have around.

XENA:

Yeah.

GABRIELLE (teasing):

And, of course, that doesn't have anything to do with any particular god.

XENA:

Of course it does.

Their voices start fading as they walk away.

GABRIELLE:

It does?

XENA (deadpan):

Sure. Don't you think Hades is a laugh a minute?

Xena, Gabrielle and Eve walk away as we:

FADE OUT

THE END

[The egos of some Greek goddesses were damaged during the production of this motion picture.]