

SHIPPER SEASON SEVEN

“The Wings of Trust”

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Logline

Xena and Gabrielle are summoned to stop a monster from destroying a city and the only way they can do that is if they have help from a most magnificent animal.

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TEASER

FADE IN

Long shot of a small rocky island in the middle of the ocean. The camera zooms in closer, and we see three hideous she-monsters. They have bodies like dragons with large wings and long tails, deep greenish scales covering their bodies. Their eyes are red and they have slithering snakes for hair. One of the monsters opens her jaws and makes a sound midway between a roar and a screech.

From the sky, a man dressed in leather armor, a black cape draping over his shoulders, a bronze cap on his head swoops down toward them on winged sandals. In one hand he holds a sword and in the other he holds a polished bronze shield.

When he gets closer, he moves over the monsters, but never looks at them, only at their reflection in the shield. He flies directly in front of one, but there is no reaction--the cap he wears conceals him from their eyes.

The monster in the middle screeches again, and the man aims his sword down at her head. With a single swipe, he cuts through its neck. The head falls to the rocks and rolls; the other two monsters

shriek in rage and grief, unable to see the attacker. Avoiding their blindly swiping tails and talons, the man flies down low enough to seize the head.

The monsters howl while the man flies off, the head in his hand. Then, the headless body of the slain monster begins to shake. A white light shines from the blood that trickles out of its neck. In a burst of light and sparks, a white winged horse springs out of the monster's neck and flies high up into the air.

Its movements are graceful, almost floating on the wind. Its body is the purest white, its wings made of white feathers and its body is glowing with a white aura. The winged horse rears up in the air, whinnying loudly, and then flies off.

CUT TO

A forest clearing, a blue mist blowing over the land by a calm breeze. The magic steed appears from above the trees and gently lands on the ground.

Directly under the spot where it lands, a spring, as clear and blue as the sky, appears and begins to flow, filling the area of ground around the animal. The horse flaps its wings briefly and paws the ground before beginning to drink from the spring.

CUT TO

Xena is riding Argo and Gabrielle is riding a white and gray speckled horse through a thin birch forest. Somewhere, a chorus of frogs starts up.

GABRIELLE:

Xena, I think we took a wrong turn back there.

XENA:

Oh, really? (a tint of humor in her voice) Why would you say that?

At that moment, Argo's front legs sink almost to the knees in a hidden bog--Gabrielle wheels her horse aside while Xena vaults backwards off Argo's back and grabs her reins.

GABRIELLE:

Well, for one thing, we're in a swamp.

Xena manages to persuade Argo back onto solid ground and gets back in the saddle.

GABRIELLE:

And I don't think horses are going to be of much use here...

XENA:

Not unless they could fly. (pause) And you did say you wanted a change of scenery.

GABRIELLE:

Well, I've been to Lycia before--traveled there every few years with my family when I was young--and I don't ever remember traveling through a swamp to get there. So this must be the scenic route.

XENA (looks around):

I assumed that this would be a shortcut. Guess I was wrong. I'm not perfect, you know.

GABRIELLE (grins):

Really?

Xena gives her a mock glare.

GABRIELLE:

Well, I hope we don't get stuck here for too long. King lobatas is expecting us. Must be something important.

Xena kicks Argo a little harder and she starts off in a brisk trot, hooves splashing in the puddles. Gabrielle follows. Then a large white object flies above them at amazing speed and they stop their horses instantly to get a look at what it is. It flies above them so fast that they hardly have time to distinguish what it is, but it creates a massive shadow on them as it goes over.

GABRIELLE:

Was that a bird? (thinks for a second) No. It couldn't be. It was too huge. (grins at Xena) Hey, maybe it's your flying horse!

XENA:

Oh, great. Wave it down and maybe it can get us out of here.

GABRIELLE:

Ha, ha.

XENA:

C'mon. You said yourself you wanted to get to Lycia as soon as possible. Maybe that thing that just flew over us, whatever it was, has something to do with why lobatas called us here.

GABRIELLE:

Maybe.

Xena clicks her tongue and is off again. Gabrielle takes one more quick look at the sky before following Xena.

CUT TO

Xena and Gabrielle enter the city gates of Lycia. As they ride to the streets, the people around them seem to be going about their daily lives, yet there is some tension in the air. As they pass through a marketplace, they notice that many vendors' carts are nearly empty. Others display various goods--food, clothing, weapons, jewelry--but few people seem to be buying anything; they merely come up, shake their heads and move on.

Gabrielle and Xena exchange a worried look, then speed up.

CUT TO

The royal castle. A guard ushers Xena and Gabrielle into the throne room, where King lobatas is seated upon his throne. He is a well-groomed, slightly smarmy man in his late fifties or early sixties.

XENA:

King lobatas.

lobatas stands up and smiles, proceeding to take her hand and raise it to his lips. Xena looks unimpressed.

IOBATAS (still holding Xena's hand):

Xena. I'm so glad you came. I was worried that you hadn't received my message. (he finally releases Xena's hand). Few of my couriers are willing to brave the roads out of the city these days.

XENA:

Why's that?

IOBATAS:

Lycia is in terrible danger. We would have called Hercules for help but we haven't been able to reach him. You, as many people have said, would be the next best thing.

XENA:

Stop, you're embarrassing me.

IOBATAS (completely missing the sarcasm):

Ah, you are as modest as Hercules himself.

GABRIELLE (to Xena, quietly):

Hercules is still in this business? Isn't he a little old for that now?

Xena shrugs.

GABRIELLE:

What kind of danger?

IOBATAS:

A monster, a hideous monster terrorizes the people of the city and will destroy Lycia if it is not dealt with soon. Most of the roads to the city are now too dangerous for traders without an armed escort, and things are only getting worse. If Lycia isn't destroyed outright, the monster will surely starve us out of hearth and home.

GABRIELLE (frowns):

This monster--can it...fly?

lobatas looks down at her for a moment, as if he finds the question ridiculous.

IOBATAS:

If the monster could *fly*, it would hardly have stopped at besieging our city.

GABRIELLE (under her breath):

I'll take that as a 'no'.

XENA:

So what does this hideous, non-flying monster look like?

lobatas swallows in visible fear, his eyes darting from Xena to Gabrielle and back.

IOBATAS:

We call it the Chimaera.

Gabrielle and Xena glance at each other and then back at the king as we:

FADE OUT

ACT ONE

FADE IN

GABRIELLE:

The Chimaera?

XENA:

Look, lobatas, killing monsters really isn't my thing. I think you'd be better off summoning Hercules.

IOBATAS:

Xena, you're our only hope. Lycia is doomed without your help.

Xena sighs and Gabrielle walks up to lobatas.

GABRIELLE:

You said this monster is outside the city. But we saw nothing on our way in.

IOBATAS:

It's entrenched itself outside the city gates to the north, in the mountains overlooking the trade routes that our merchants use to deliver food and other goods to the city. Already it has ravaged portions of our land, and it kills everyone who braves the mountain passes. The creature breaths fire from a lion's mouth and tears its victims with dragon claws. None of us have any hope of dealing with it on our own. (he looks past Gabrielle to Xena) Please, Xena, help us. I assure you that your bravery will be handsomely rewarded. Shall we say...five hundred dinars?

XENA (scowling):

I thought your city was on the verge of bankruptcy.

IOBATAS:

What about six hundred, then? Seven? I'm sure no one would fault me for spending our emergency resources at a time like this.

XENA (disgusted):

Keep your money, lobatas. I'm no mercenary.

She starts to turn around; Gabrielle catches her arm.

GABRIELLE (quietly):

Xena, you know, you can't just not help. You have to try, at least. No one will blame you if you fail.

Remember how you said before that you weren't perfect? Well, you're not. And no one is expecting you to be. We've never been ones to get discouraged by a problem. Why start now?

XENA (surprised):

Who's getting discouraged? I just don't want his money. Lycia is going to need every last dinar, even after we've taken care of the monster.

Gabrielle looks relieved.

GABRIELLE:

You mean, we *are* going to help?

XENA (to Iobatas):

Of course we'll help. It just might be a little more...challenging. (grins at Gabrielle) And you know how I love a good challenge.

IOBATAS (daring to hope):

You mean, you don't even want a reward?

XENA:

No.

IOBATAS (sighs in relief):

Thank you, Xena.

CUT TO

Xena and Gabrielle are standing outside the castle entrance.

GABRIELLE:

Any ideas?

XENA:

It wouldn't hurt to find out more about this monster. I'm going to check it out--I'll be back soon.

GABRIELLE:

You expect me to stay here while you are out monster hunting?

XENA:

Yep.

GABRIELLE (warningly):

Xena...

XENA:

Listen, Iobatas could have been rid of this Chimaera a long time before things got to this stage, if he'd been willing to part with the dinars it would have cost him.

GABRIELLE:

You're saying the monster is no big deal.

XENA:

I'm saying that killing the monster is going to be the easy part. Get something to eat. I won't be gone long.

CUT TO

Xena rides Argo out of the city toward a cliff in the distance. As she nears the cliff overlooking the mountain pass, the Chimaera becomes visible. The closer Xena gets, the more she realizes how large it really is. Xena halts Argo just to the side of the pass, far enough away so that the Chimaera doesn't see her.

Towering almost into the clouds, the Chimaera sits motionless on the rock face guarding the canyon road. The creature has the body of a lion, except that it's covered with thick scales; it has a goat's head growing out of its back, facing in the other direction, and its tail is the head of a serpent.

While Xena continues to study the creature, it suddenly stirs, standing up but still making no noise. Xena looks up at it curiously, trying to figure out what aroused it. The camera pans down, to show a caravan of merchants winding their way through the pass, armed guards on either side of the wagons.

The Chimaera approaches the lip of the cliff, stalking its prey. Without a sound, it leaps down into the pass.

Xena's eyes widen and she immediately goes into action, drawing her chakram and heading for the pass.

The Chimaera lands on all fours, hisses and rears up. The armed guards panic, and the merchants scatter, but the monster is too quick for them. Like a cat toying with mice, the Chimaera flicks its paws and tail around the screaming merchants, herding them towards the narrowest part of the pass.

Xena urges Argo into a gallop, and races toward the people caught in the pass. It seems that she is going to make it--but at that moment, the monster pounces on its prey, blocking Xena's path, and her view.

Xena hears the screams and sees the fire, but she can't see what's going on. Enraged and helpless, she throws her chakram at the back of the monster's neck, but the scales are too thick, the weapon just bounces back harmlessly and the monster returns to its hideout in the cliffs.

The pass is thick with black smoke. Xena rides into it slowly. Charred bodies are everywhere; the sight is horrifying. Xena looks pale and sick.

As the smoke begins to dissipate, four men and two women, looking very shaken and with their clothes torn and singed, emerge from behind some rocks.

MALE MERCHANT #1 (potbellied and middle-aged):

Is it gone?

XENA:

I...I think so. (she is visibly trying to keep a grip on herself)

The merchants come closer to the scene of the carnage and look in horror at the charred bodies. Some seem dazed; others are crying and wringing their hands. One of the women mechanically picks up what's left of a sack of merchandise.

FEMALE MERCHANT #1 (stocky, tough-looking woman):

It's all gone....they're all gone...

XENA (almost angrily):

What were you doing here? Hadn't you heard about the monster?

MALE MERCHANT #1:

Oh, we had... (wipes the sweat from his forehead) That's why so few merchants even venture into Lycia any more...but to tell you the truth...the prices in the city being what they are right now, it was such a great chance to make a profit, we thought we'd take the risk. (Xena gives him a scornful look) I mean, we had armed guards with us...

MALE MERCHANT #2 (a tall, lanky younger man, speaks sarcastically but with a hysterical edge in his voice):

Armed guards! A lot of good that did us...

FEMALE MERCHANT #1:

It's like trying to hide from a storm in a papyrus sack!

MALE MERCHANT #1 (stares curiously at Xena):

And who are you?

XENA:

My name is Xena. I'm a warrior and I'm here to... (her face darkens and her voice drops) ...kill the monster.

The merchants stare at her in bewilderment, clearly skeptical of her ability to fulfill the task. Xena stares back, a defiant look on her face, as we:

FADE OUT

ACT TWO

FADE IN

A large temple building with marble stairs, columns and burning torches in front of massive double doors. The doors are guarded by two solemn-faced priests. Half a dozen people are standing in a group near the stairs, listening to a gray-haired woman dressed like a priestess. The camera moves closer and we see that Gabrielle is among the listeners.

PRIESTESS:

...and the pillars in front of you are part of a group of sixteen ionic columns, which extends into the temple towards the altar inside and circumscribes a single Corinthian column behind it.

ELDERLY MAN NEAR GABRIELLE:

Could we enter the temple, Priestess, to observe its splendor for ourselves?

The man is draped in sheets of brown, tattered cloth. He has a long, white beard and holds a cane in one hand. The priestess looks slightly put out by his interruption.

PRIESTESS:

Unfortunately, that's not possible. Athena's temple is only open to the public on feast days. At any other time, you must bring an offering to enter.

The priestess resumes her monologue.

The elderly man turns to a younger man beside him, presumably his son. The young man has curly red hair and an open, freckled face. He wears a dark green garment draped around him in a similar style to his father's.

ELDERLY MAN:

Let us head back, Theias, we can do nothing here until we find the Warrior Princess.

Hearing this, Gabrielle turns around.

GABRIELLE (to the elderly man):

The Warrior Princess? Xena?

YOUNG MAN:

Yes. Do you know where we can find her?

GABRIELLE (laughs):

Sure. Just look for the monster outside the city.

The young man grins. The elderly man taps his cane on the ground impatiently.

ELDERLY MAN:

This is no laughing matter!

The priestess falls silent at this outburst and glares at Gabrielle and the two men.

PRIESTESS (pointedly):

Those who are still interested in the fascinating history of this temple may follow me to the northern wing of the building.

Gabrielle and the young man look embarrassed, the old man completely ignores the group as they walk past and disappear around the corner of the building.

When they are gone, the elderly man turns back to Gabrielle. His eyes never focus on her, obviously completely blind.

ELDERLY MAN:

I am Polyeidus, and this-- (indicates with cane) --is my son, Theias. We must find the Warrior Princess--it is a matter of some urgency. I expect you can lead us to her?

GABRIELLE:

Well, I'm supposed to be meeting her very shortly. I'm her friend, Gabrielle. But maybe I can help you if you tell me why you want to see her.

POLYEIDUS (curtly):

I don't think so, young woman. What I have to say is for Xena's ears alone.

THEIAS:

Please excuse my father, Gabrielle--he is tired after our journey. It's been many days since he first had his vision....

POLYEIDUS (interrupting):

Be silent, Theias. (to Gabrielle) Take us to Xena. Quickly, please, we have no time to waste.

GABRIELLE (smiles sweetly):

Well, I'm not sure about that. Dealing with a fire-breathing monster and talking to you might be a bit too much for her to tackle in one afternoon.

POLYEIDUS (almost chokes in disbelief):

Impertinence! (raps his cane again) Come along, son--

THEIAS (puts a hand on his arm trying to calm him down):

Come on, father...we really don't have anything to lose by being friendly. (to Gabrielle, smiling) We do appreciate your help. Xena's not an easy woman to track.

GABRIELLE:

You got that right.

THEIAS:

My father has seen a vision--your friend is on a dangerous mission...

GABRIELLE (laughs):

When is Xena *not* on a dangerous mission? You don't have to be a seer to know that!

POLYEIDUS:

Nevertheless, a seer is what I am, and I can see the future even though, in my old age, my eyes have failed me. (reluctantly) I know that Xena is here to battle the Chimaera. But the monster is almost impossible to slay. I can tell her something that will show her the way to do it.

CUT TO

The stables at the inn. Xena is standing beside Argo, rubbing her down. Argo's harness lies on the ground nearby.

XENA (brushing Argo's flank):

Hey, girl... Guess Gabrielle had it right all along, huh? No one's perfect. (she jerks the brush with far more vigor than necessary) Can't win 'em all.

Argo neighs in protest. Xena drops the brush and strokes the horse's flank.

XENA:

Sorry 'bout that. Not your fault those merchants had more greed than common sense...

Argo nuzzles Xena's hand.

XENA:

Yeah, yeah, I know. Not my fault, either. (she strokes Argo's mane) Only we can't afford to make mistakes in our line of work, you and I. If we hadn't taken so long getting here, those people might still be alive...

She frowns, then gets an apple from a pack and feeds it to Argo, who accepts it gratefully.

XENA (decisively):

We're going to go out there and get that monster. And that's all there is to it. Right?

Argo munches the apple, oblivious. Xena smiles slightly.

XENA:

Right.

A sudden noise makes her turn around with a start. Gabrielle walks briskly into the stable, followed by Poleyeidus and Theias who stay a little behind.

GABRIELLE (relieved):

Xena! There you are. The manager of the inn told us we'd find you in the stables... (she notices the grim look on Xena's face) Is everything all right?

XENA:

No. (sneers bitterly) Not if you're one of the dozen people who made it to the Chimaera's barbecue today.

GABRIELLE (gasps a little):

You were there when it happened?

XENA (anguished):

I saw it, Gabrielle...I couldn't get to those people because the monster blocked my path. I heard them screaming... (she shudders)

GABRIELLE (puts a comforting hand on her arm):

Xena, you probably couldn't have saved them even if you had been able to reach them... I'm sure you did everything you could.

XENA:

It still wasn't enough.

GABRIELLE:

Sometimes, it isn't.

XENA (suddenly notices Poleyeidus and Theias):

Who are they?

GABRIELLE:

This is Polyeidus--he's a seer--and this is Theias, his son. (she smiles encouragingly at Theias)
They've come a long way to tell you something that Polyeidus thinks can help you in the fight against the Chimaera.

XENA (gives them a long stare):

All right.

POLYEIDUS:

Listen to me, Xena. The Chimaera is one of the most powerful monsters ever to plague this earth...it is very difficult to destroy.

XENA (curtly):

Tell me something I don't know.

POLYEIDUS:

It is impossible to attack the monster from the ground. (Xena cocks her head, wondering what he's getting at) There is only one way that you could destroy it--an attack from the sky.

XENA:

So all I have to do is learn how to fly. Great.

POLYEIDUS:

You must capture and tame Pegasus.

XENA:

What's Pegasus?

POLYEIDUS:

A winged horse; a most magnificent animal. Do you know the story of Perseus?

GABRIELLE:

Perseus, the hero who saved Princess Andromeda from the sea monster? Who beheaded Medusa, the hideous gorgon with snakes in her hair and the power to turn people into stone just by looking at them? That Perseus?

POLYEIDUS (dryly):

Yes. The tale of his heroic deeds is widely known, Xena, but there is something else that is known only to a few. From the blood of the Gorgon sprang a beautiful winged horse, Pegasus. It is said that he was later tamed by the goddess Athena, yet there is not a mortal he will follow or obey. The goddess appeared to me in a vision and told me to seek you out. But she alone can tell you how to capture him and tame him, for this wisdom she would not reveal to me. To learn this, you must spend one night in Athena's temple. It is the only way.

Xena's face twitches a little; Theias notices this and gives her a slightly puzzled look.

XENA (under her breath):

Athena... (louder) Thank you for your help, Polyeidus. We'll go to the temple right away--it's getting dark already.

POLYEIDUS:

Have you an offering for the goddess?

XENA (coldly):

Polyeidus, I haven't given offerings to the gods in a long time and I'm not about to start now.

POLYEIDUS (impatiently):

Warrior Princess, this is no time to be arrogant. (Gabrielle grins a little and shakes her head, obviously struck by the irony of Polyeidus admonishing anyone against being arrogant; then, she catches Theias' eyes on her, and looks down, embarrassed) Without an offering, the priests will not allow you into the temple. (he pauses, his voice softening a little) If you are going to be stubborn, I will make the offering for you. But I need something to offer.

Xena looks at him a little hesitantly, then obviously gets an idea.

XENA (to Polyeidus and Theias):

You two wait for me outside. Come on, Gabrielle--I think I know where we can get what we need.

CUT TO

The inside of the inn. Xena and Gabrielle come into the dining area, where the survivors of the Chimaera's attack are sitting around a table having a meal.

XENA (approaches Male Merchant #1 and points to a bundle lying next to him on the floor):

You have some merchandise left in there, don't you?

MALE MERCHANT #1 (looks up at her, slightly startled):

Uh--yes. (almost incredulous) Did you want to buy something?

XENA:

Maybe. Show me what you've got.

The merchant unties the bundle and takes out a necklace, then a pair of candlesticks. Xena shakes her head at each. Then, he takes out a silver bowl with intricate carvings, and she looks at it with interest.

XENA:

How much for this one?

MALE MERCHANT #1:

Fifty dinars. (she glares at him.) Well...considering that you helped us back to town...I suppose I could knock it down to forty.

XENA (continues to glare):

And considering that I'm trying to kill the monster that attacked you?

MALE MERCHANT #1 (squirms):

Okay...thirty? (she still glares at him) Uh...twenty-five.

Xena counts out the money and takes the bowl. Then, she and Gabrielle head toward the door.

XENA:

I sure hope Athena likes silver.

GABRIELLE (digesting her words, slightly shocked):

You are going make an offering to a goddess.

XENA (softly, looking a little embarrassed):

We've already established that I'm not perfect. So maybe I *do* need to be a little less stubborn. Come on.

She puts her hand around Gabrielle's shoulders, smiling, and they head toward the exit.

CUT TO

Xena, Gabrielle, Polyeidus, and Theias are walking up the steps of Athena's temple. It is now night; the moon is full. As they near the door, a priest bars their way.

PRIEST:

If you wish to enter the temple of Athena, you must first have an offering to give the great goddess.

XENA (shows him the silver bowl):

Will this do?

PRIEST (looks over the bowl critically):

Well...this should be enough for two people...but there are four of you. Only two may enter.

GABRIELLE:

What do you mean? You can't know whether it's enough to satisfy Athena just by looking at it!

The priest ignores her.

PRIEST:

Which of you wishes to make the offering?

Gabrielle opens her mouth to protest again, but Polyeidus pre-empts her. He releases his son's hand and takes Xena's wrist instead.

POLYEIDUS:

I am Polyeidus, Athena's favored seer--and this is Xena, the Warrior Princess.

Xena looks uncomfortable in her new role as the blind man's guide, but decides to let him finish.

POLYEIDUS:

We will be keeping vigil by the altar tonight.

PRIEST:

I'm sure that won't be necessary. Our priests are quite capable of...

POLYEIDUS (interrupts):

Until you get to my age, young man, do not presume to know what is necessary and what is not.
(he holds out his free hand to show a large gold ring on his withered finger)

PRIEST (gasps):

The seal of Athena! (with newfound courtesy) Please, enter.

The priest opens the doors.

GABRIELLE:

Wait! What about us?

POLYEIDUS (over his shoulder):

Theias, see that Xena's young friend gets back to the inn safely.

Xena releases the old man's hand and turns to Gabrielle apologetically.

XENA:

Gabrielle--this isn't fair on you... But we need Athena if we're going to help these people.

GABRIELLE:

I know. I'm going to stay out here, in case you need me.

XENA:

Thanks.

GABRIELLE:

Don't mention it--but next time, I get to deal with the monster.

XENA (grins):

Athena's not *that* bad.

Gabrielle rolls her eyes.

GABRIELLE:

Take care.

Xena nods goodbye to Gabrielle and Theias and rejoins Polyeidus. The priest shows them inside.

Gabrielle and Theias watch as the door closes, then look at each other.

GABRIELLE and THEIAS (at the same time):

The gardens.

CUT TO

The gardens of Athena's temple. A wall is almost entirely concealed by vines, except for a small window high up. Flickering torchlight spills from it, illuminating a marble bench where Gabrielle and Theias are sitting.

GABRIELLE:

I hope everything's all right in there.

She shivers with cold. Theias unwinds one of his drapes and puts it around her shoulders. Gabrielle smiles her thanks, drawing it closer.

THEIAS:

Xena looks like she can take care of herself pretty well. Why do you worry so, Gabrielle?

GABRIELLE:

With gods, anything can happen...

THEIAS (hesitantly):

Tell me, Gabrielle, does Xena have some kind of--problem with Athena? She looked so odd when my father mentioned the goddess...

GABRIELLE (surprised):

You don't know anything about the Twilight of the Gods?

THEIAS:

I've heard a few things about it.... My father told me, some four years ago, that a great turbulence had come upon the world and that the great goddess Athena was gone. Then, two months ago, he said that she was back. I don't know much more than that... Father doesn't like me listening to other people's gossip. (puzzled) Did Xena have something to do with... ?

GABRIELLE (sighs):

It's a long story, Theias... (clearly anxious to change the subject) What about your father, anyway? Don't you worry about him?

THEIAS:

My father has seen his own future in visions since he was a boy. He says he has nothing to fear, and I believe him... He marches through life as if nothing can hurt him.

GABRIELLE (picking up on the wistful tone):

You envy him?

THEIAS (surprised):

Envy? No. I have no desire to know what every coming day holds. I like surprises. I just...wish my father didn't pity me.

GABRIELLE:

Why should he pity you?

THEIAS (sighs):

He had great hopes for me, once. I wasn't just the seer's boy, I was the seer's heir. Even my name betrays my father's ambitions for me--

GABRIELLE:

Theias... "Seer"?

THEIAS:

Indeed. He wants to pass on all his knowledge to me--but no matter how he tries, there isn't anything he can do about the simple fact that I don't have the Sight. I have no more prophetic gift than any other mortal, and truth be told, I'm glad. But not so my father.

GABRIELLE:

I know the feeling. My family had all but disowned me when I decided that the future they'd mapped out for me wasn't going to make me happy. But it's your future, Theias. You make it happen.

THEIAS:

Your family nearly disowned you? Whatever for?

GABRIELLE:

For following my heart. I wanted to be a bard, a writer. And I wanted adventures, so I'd have something to write about.

THEIAS (somewhat embarrassed):

Then it is you I envy, Gabrielle. I can't even read, let alone write.

GABRIELLE:

You can't read?!

THEIAS:

My father is convinced that reading interferes with the Sight. Creates false visions. (chuckles bitterly) And so, I have neither the gift of prophecy, nor the skill to read. The worst of both worlds.

GABRIELLE:

Well, I can't help with the Sight--but I can certainly teach you to read, if you like...

Theias' freckled face lights up with delight.

THEIAS:

Would you, really?

GABRIELLE:

Sure. You'll be reading before the night is out.

She picks up a long stick and starts forming letters in the dust. Theias looks over, curiously.

GABRIELLE:

See--this one's "alpha"...

FADE OUT

ACT THREE

FADE IN

Polyeidus and Xena are sleeping inside Athena's temple. Everything inside is glittering with gold, which reflects the flickering light of candles and oil lamps. Statues of owls are mounted into the walls of each corner of the temple. The altar is lavishly decorated with gold brocade.

Dissolve into Xena's dream. She is standing in the Great Hall on Mt. Olympus, the same one where she battled Athena in "Motherhood." Everything is enveloped in clouds of white mist. As the mist clears, Xena looks around her, surprised and wary.

ATHENA (off-camera):

Xena.

Xena whips around and sees the Goddess of Wisdom standing behind her, the shimmer of golden sparks fading around her form. Xena's hand jerks instinctively toward her sword; then, recollecting herself, she brings her hand down and stares at Athena.

XENA:

What am I doing here?

ATHENA:

I know you are on a mission, Xena. I know my seer, Polyeidus, told you to come to my temple. In order to kill the Chimaera, you need to catch and tame the winged horse, Pegasus. I was the one who first tamed Pegasus and gave him to the Muses. This is what you need to capture him.

A golden bridle, glowing brightly, appears in Athena's hand. Its clasps have Athena's seal on them. The goddess hands the bridle to Xena. Xena hesitates.

XENA (intrigued):

Did you send Polyeidus to me?

ATHENA (smiles):

I did.

XENA:

Why?

ATHENA:

Maybe it's my way of saying that what's past is past. You know, Xena, when mortals fear for their lives...or the lives of those they love...it can bring out the worst in them. (she pauses) And the same goes for gods. (Xena nods and lowers her eyes) You risked your life to save me and the other gods, and for that, you have my thanks. Here.

She holds out the bridle again.

XENA (still hesitant):

It is not my way to ask the gods for help...

ATHENA:

I know you don't care for the gods very much, Xena. And perhaps you have your reasons. For immortals, we have often been...petty. (she pauses again, clearly making an effort to get the words out) Perhaps we wouldn't have lost the loyalty of as many people as we did if we had used our powers more often to help mortals, not for our own selfish ends. (Xena stares down thoughtfully) And

Xena? (Xena flinches slightly and looks up) You have always made your own destiny. But there is no shame in accepting help--even from the gods.

XENA (takes the bridle):
Thank you.

Athena nods slightly. Xena turns around and starts walking away.

ATHENA:

Xena? (Xena stops and turns around) You haven't asked where to find Pegasus. (Xena looks at her expectantly) Fortunately for you, it's not too far from here. The spring of Pirene is only three hours' ride from the city gates of Lycia, on the other side of the swamp. That spring was born when Pegasus first landed and struck his hoof on the ground, and at first the water flowed so abundantly that it created the swamp. It is still his favorite drinking place. Just wait for him there.

XENA:

Thank you. (she starts to leave)

ATHENA:

There is one other thing you need to know. (Xena turns, a little impatiently) I pledged to Pegasus that he would never have to obey the will of a mortal for more than one full day out of a year. So you have only a short time to do what you need to do before the bridle loses its power and Pegasus becomes wild once again. Good luck, Xena.

The white mist starts clouding again, and the golden flash of Athena's disappearance is seen through the mist. Xena looks around in bewilderment, trying to figure a way out.

Back in the temple, Xena wakes up with a start. It is morning already and a shaft of sunlight shines through the single small window. Polyeidus is still asleep. Xena looks around but the golden bridle is nowhere to be seen.

XENA (sighs as she stands up):
Gods...

Suddenly, there is a golden shimmer in the air in front of her, which begins to take shape and solidify. It is the golden bridle, which falls gently into Xena's hands.

XENA (shakes her head and smiles):
They do love their special effects...

CUT TO

The temple gardens. Gabrielle and Theias are asleep on the bench; he has an arm around her and she is leaning on his shoulder. Letters and words are scratched into the ground in front of them.

Xena and Polyeidus walk up, Xena supporting Polyeidus by the elbow while he uses his cane to find the way. Xena looks at the sleeping Gabrielle and Polyeidus and a shadow of a smile crosses her face.

XENA (gently, but loudly enough to wake up her friend):
Gabrielle!

Gabrielle and Theias wake up and are a little startled by their physical proximity. Xena can't help grinning a little.

GABRIELLE (rubs her eyes):
Xena...is it morning already?

XENA:
Yes. And now, we have a way to catch Pegasus. (she shows Gabrielle the golden bridle)

CUT TO

The forest clearing where Pegasus first landed and where the clear blue spring now flows. Xena and Gabrielle are sitting behind some trees waiting. Their horses are tied to a tree nearby. Argo's harness and saddle are lying on the ground.

XENA:
After we catch Pegasus, I think we'll build a campsite right here. I don't think it would do to bring him to the stable at the inn and frighten the horses. (smiles) Not to mention the people.

GABRIELLE:
If we catch Pegasus. I think we've been out here for two hours.

XENA:
He'll show up.

GABRIELLE (looks at Xena, obviously having got an idea):
Xena--that thing we saw fly overhead when we were on our way to town...do you think that could have been--

XENA (thoughtfully):
Maybe it was.

A brief pause.

GABRIELLE:
So I guess Athena came through.

XENA (dryly):
I guess so.

GABRIELLE:
You always did say you respected her more than any of the other gods...

XENA (gives her a quick glance and changes the subject):
So...seems like you and Theias are getting along pretty well.

GABRIELLE (blushing a little):
What exactly do you mean?

XENA (smirking):
Just what I said. You're getting along pretty well.

GABRIELLE:

Well, he's very sweet...

XENA (teasingly):

And very good-looking?

GABRIELLE (blushes even more):

Xena!

XENA:

What? What did I say?

Suddenly, the smile is gone from her face and she presses her finger to her lips as the flapping of giant wings is heard. The two women look up and see the magnificent white winged steed flying toward the clearing. Pegasus lands, folds his wings and begins to drink from the spring.

GABRIELLE (staring in awe at the winged horse):

That's incredible...

Xena takes out the golden bridle, rises, and walks slowly toward Pegasus. She walks stealthily toward it but then accidentally steps on a twig that cracks under her boot. Pegasus looks up, startled, and rears, hoofing at the air and flapping its wings in hopes of warding off the intruder. Gabrielle follows Xena with her eyes, alarmed.

Xena puts a hand up and murmurs, trying to calm the horse, but he is only getting more agitated, neighing loudly. Then, Xena raises the golden bridle in front of her face--and at the sight of it, Pegasus instantly lowers himself onto all fours. He folds his wings and, with a soft whinnying, walks up to Xena. Xena looks amazed and awed. She rubs Pegasus' velvety nose and the winged horse nuzzles against her shoulder. Xena slips the golden bridle over his head and then looks over at Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE:

It was the bridle that did it. Athena did come through.

XENA:

All right...now get me the harness.

Gabrielle tosses Argo's harness and saddle to Xena. Carefully, petting Pegasus on the head, Xena saddles the steed--who whinnies a little nervously but does not resist--and climbs into the saddle. Pegasus flaps his wings a couple of times.

GABRIELLE:

You did it!

THEIAS (off-camera):

Oh, by the gods...!

The camera pans over to Theias and Polyeidus, who have just arrived in the clearing. Theias is leading his father's horse by the bridle.

THEIAS (staring at Pegasus):

That is the most beautiful sight I've ever seen!

XENA (surprised):

What are you two doing here? I thought you were staying back at the inn.

POLYEIDUS (a little embarrassed):

I have seen this wondrous horse in my dreams and visions, Xena... Although my eyes do not see what is before me, it would mean a great deal to me to touch him with my own hands.

XENA (obviously moved):

Of course.

Theias helps his father dismount and leads him toward Pegasus. Smiling dreamily, the old man runs his hands over the horse's muzzle, neck, and side, stroking the soft fur, and then reaches over to touch the wings. Pegasus whinnies at first but calms down when Xena pats him on the head.

THEIAS:

He's magnificent, father.

POLYEIDUS (in an awed whisper, with a blissful look on his face):

It's him all right....Pegasus.

Theias helps him step aside.

XENA:

I have to go. There isn't much time.

GABRIELLE (with a worried look):

How are you going to tackle the Chimaera? Even from the air, it can't be easy.

XENA:

I've thought of something, Gabrielle. The monster's scales are too hard and thick--I wouldn't be able to get through with my sword or the chakram. But from the air, I can kill it by stabbing it in the eye. I just have to get close enough.

GABRIELLE:

Just be careful.

XENA:

Aren't I always? (smiles) Start making a campsite. I'll be back soon.

Xena gently kicks Pegasus in the side. He slowly spreads his wings and starts to flap them, faster and faster until he rises off the ground, turns and flies up past the treetops and into the open sky.

Gabrielle looks at Polyeidus, grabs a blanket from her saddlebag and spreads it on the ground.

GABRIELLE:

Here, sit down and get some rest.

With Theias' assistance, Polyeidus sits down.

POLYEIDUS (gruffly, but with a little more softness in his voice than he has previously shown toward Gabrielle):

Thank you, young woman.

GABRIELLE (to Theias):

Come on! You can help me make camp.

CUT TO

Xena guiding Pegasus through the air, soaring above the land. As they near the canyon cliffs, the Chimaera comes into view, still positioned motionless on the cliff. Xena directs Pegasus to fly higher to make sure the monster does not see her. From the air, she can observe the devastation that the Chimaera has caused.

As far as her eyes can see, the land on the other side of the rock face is charred, burnt to the ground. The Chimaera's fiery breath has destroyed the crops and now the land is barren. Along the sides of the cliff, scattered all over, Xena sees the bones of the unlucky victims that crossed the Chimaera's path. She winces painfully. Closing her eyes, she replays in her mind a flashback of the previous day's events--the screams of the people hidden from her view by the Chimaera's huge body, the flames that are consuming them, her chakram bouncing uselessly off the monster's back.

CUT TO

The campsite. Polyeidus is sleeping on the blanket. Gabrielle and Theias are sitting nearby, hunched over a scroll. Gabrielle is writing something.

GABRIELLE (in a half-whisper):

Here, can you read that?

THEIAS (moves his lips, reading, then looks up at Gabrielle):

That's my name, isn't it? Theias?

GABRIELLE (beaming):

Yes! There you go! I told you, there's nothing to it.

They stare into each other's eyes.

THEIAS:

You're very beautiful.

He looks away, struck by the boldness of his own words. Gabrielle is a little flustered.

CUT TO

Xena, circling over the Chimaera and planning her attack. Finally she swoops down, aiming her sword at its left eye. Seeing her, the monster roars. Xena strikes--but the Chimaera lowers its transparent inner eyelids, which are actually scales, as hard as diamonds. The sword shatters in half. A close-up of Xena's face. She looks shocked and dismayed.

Angered by the attack, the Chimaera flicks its lion head, hitting the winged horse and its rider. The force of the blow knocks Xena out of the saddle. The Chimaera snarls again and lets out a stream of

fire, barely missing Xena in her fall. She lands on a cliff, momentarily hidden from the Chimaera's view by a rock. Shakily, Xena clammers up to her feet while Pegasus swoops down toward her. As she tries to grab the bridle with her right hand, her face is distorted in a grimace of pain. She looks at her right arm and sees that it's badly damaged--covered with blood, the skin turning blue. Using her left hand, she starts, with difficulty, to get back in the saddle.

The Chimaera's roar is heard again, and there is another flare of fire. Pegasus bucks nervously.

XENA (pats the horse on the neck with her good hand, wincing with pain):
Shhh...shhh....there's a good boy...

She finally manages to get back in the saddle. Pegasus flies upward and away from the beast as we:

FADE OUT

ACT FOUR

FADE IN

The campsite. Polyeidus is still asleep; Theias is sitting beside him, with a scroll in his lap. Gabrielle is nowhere to be seen. Theias is frowning in concentration, reading in a halting murmur.

THEIAS:

...The price--uh, prince--said to Kse--to Xena... The prince said to Xena. Thank you for s--for sa--saving oh--our... Thank you for saving our city, Fro--... no, Thank you for saving our city from--

GABRIELLE (off-camera, in a mock deep voice):

"Thank you for saving our city from certain disaster, Warrior Princess."

Theias looks up to see Gabrielle carrying a loop of fishing line with several fish on it. He gives her a lopsided grin.

GABRIELLE (laughs):

Not the most original dialogue, I'm afraid. (indicating the fish) Lunch.

THEIAS:

It's a great story! (ruefully) I keep wishing I could read faster, to find out the rest of it!

Gabrielle looks over at the scroll.

GABRIELLE:

You've almost finished a scroll already?! Wow. You learn quickly.

Theias looks a little embarrassed by the praise.

THEIAS:

Uh--I've kept the fire going, shouldn't be long before we can eat.

Gabrielle flops down gratefully, letting Theias take the fish. He reaches into his pack for a knife.

GABRIELLE:

Thanks. (looking over the scroll) It's one of my early ones... (cringes) I like to think my writing's improved a bit since then. (reads) "Thank you for saving our city from certain disaster..."

There is a sound of beating wings off-camera, the camera follows Gabrielle and Theias' eyes to where Pegasus lands beside the campsite. Xena is hanging on to his bridle grimly, looking very pale. She winces, jolted by the landing. Off to one side, Polyeidus stirs and mutters.

GABRIELLE:

Xena! (gasps, noticing Xena's wounded hand) What happened?

XENA (groans):

If that scroll is what it sounds like, you might want to hang on to the laurels... (grimaces in pain) But keep the certain disaster part, that was good.

Gabrielle helps Xena off the winged horse, while Theias takes Pegasus' bridle and fixes the reins expertly to the tree where the other two horses are tied.

GABRIELLE (appalled):

Xena... Your arm! (accusing) You said killing the Chimaera would be the easy part!

XENA:

I take it back.

POLYEIDUS' VOICE OFF-SCREEN:

Is that the Warrior Princess? She returns?

He sits up on the blankets; Theias is immediately at his side to help. Polyeidus leans on his arm to get to his feet.

Xena allows Gabrielle to lead her to the fireside, then shakes her off gently. Xena's arm is badly swollen and bloody, there is blood on her face, neck and clothes. She sits down; the others follow.

XENA:

It's worse than it looks. There's salve in Argo's saddlebags...

THEIAS:

I'll get it.

He gives his father's cane to him and goes over to the horses.

POLYEIDUS:

You have failed then, Xena? The monster lives.

XENA (tired):

Go on, rub it in.

GABRIELLE (to Polyeidus):

This wasn't supposed to happen! You said you saw visions...

POLYEIDUS (clearly upset):

Visions. Visions are not truth. Only...what should be. What I must do to make it happen. (shakes his head) It is not the Warrior Princess who failed, but I.

THEIAS (returning with the salve):

You mustn't blame yourself, Father--it wasn't anyone's fault. There has to be another way.

GABRIELLE:

But we only have Pegasus until tomorrow...

XENA:

Well, if you've got any ideas... (she winces, applying some salve to her wound)... I'd love to hear them because this thing has scales like diamonds, and three very-- (she grits her teeth against the pain) --very unfriendly heads.

She nods at the spot where Pegasus landed. What is left of her sword is lying in the grass. Gabrielle goes to pick it up.

XENA:

I've had that sword for years--it's the best steel there is. And against that thing's eye, it could as well have been glass. (looks over the hilt regretfully) It was a good weapon.

GABRIELLE:

Forget the sword, you're in no shape to get back out there.

XENA:

I just need some time to...rest... (she puts down the salve pot) I'll be all right in a minute. This is potent stuff.

GABRIELLE:

No. You're staying here. I'll go.

XENA:

What? Go where?

GABRIELLE (defiant):

To kill the Chimaera.

XENA:

Did you wake up feeling suicidal?

GABRIELLE:

You don't think I could do it?

POLYEIDUS (sputtering):

What utter nonsense! The Warrior Princess must be the one to...

GABRIELLE (decisively):

The Warrior Princess is on sick leave. I'm taking this call, like it or not.

There is a pause as Xena and Gabrielle look at each other. Xena shakes her head.

XENA:

I'm not going to talk you out of it...

GABRIELLE:

Good.

XENA:

...but you're going to need a new strategy.

THEIAS:

I think I know a way. The Chimaera may not be quite as tough as it looks.

Gabrielle looks at him curiously.

GABRIELLE:

What are you getting at?

THEIAS:

What if we could kill it...from the inside out?

XENA:

And how do you propose to do that?

THEIAS:

Lead.

XENA (frowns):

Like the balls of lead they shoot in Ch'in from exploding tubes? Even if we had the black powder, which we don't--you shoot one of those at the Chimaera, and it'll bounce right back at you.

THEIAS:

No, no--I don't mean to shoot it. (he glances at his father uncomfortably) I heard a story when I was little about a hero who wanted to kill a dragon...

POLYEIDUS:

Pah! Old wives' tales, Theias! When are you going to learn?

GABRIELLE:

There's a lot to be learned from stories--from the past. (to Theias) Go on?

THEIAS:

Well... What he did was throw a hunk of lead into the dragon's mouth, and when its fiery breath melted the lead, it trickled down its throat, searing its vitals. (he pauses) At least, that's how the story goes.

XENA:

Hm. That might work--if we had some lead. And a way to get it into the creature's mouth... At least one of them.

GABRIELLE:

We could tie a ball of lead onto the end of a pole, or a spear and throw it in.

XENA:

If we had a pole.

POLYEIDUS (grudgingly):

You do.

The other three look at him in surprise.

GABRIELLE:

Is this another vision?

POLYEIDUS:

No. (grunts) This is quite solid reality, I assure you.

He gropes for the staff at this side, then holds it out to Gabrielle.

POLYEIDUS (gruffly):

Here. Take it.

THEIAS:

Father, your cane!

POLYEIDUS:

I'll get another one. (to Gabrielle) Well, go on then. Don't keep an old man waiting.

Gabrielle takes the long cane uncertainly, then gasps.

GABRIELLE:

It's heavy! (she notices a ball at the bottom of the stick, it's mounted on a joint to roll freely) Lead?

POLYEIDUS:

I use it to find my path. (almost kindly) It's useful for that. Finding one's path.

Gabrielle holds the metal-tipped cane turning it over in her hands.

GABRIELLE:

Polyeidus, thank you.

XENA (looks around):

Do you smell something?

THEIAS:

Oh--the fish!

Xena and Gabrielle exchange a look.

XENA:

You take the monster, I'll deal with the fish.

Gabrielle nods, takes the cane and mounts Pegasus, stroking his mane as she frees his reins. She takes the bridle and Pegasus rears slightly, preparing to fly.

GABRIELLE:

Wish me luck!

She turns Pegasus and he rises into the sky, beating his wings. Xena and Theias watch as the shape grows smaller.

XENA (quietly):

Good luck, Gabrielle.

CUT TO

Against the backdrop of clouds blazing with the colors of sunset, Gabrielle on the winged horse is approaching the Chimaera. Pegasus flies over the monster, circling it several times as before.

GABRIELLE:

Here we go... (loudly) *Hey!* You want to pick on someone your own size, huh?

The monster stirs, lifting its serpent head, then the others. Gabrielle flies just out of reach of the lion head. The jaws snap with a crack.

GABRIELLE (yells):

Open up!!!

Fire bursts from the Chimaera's lion mouth, trying to catch Gabrielle, but she dodges every flame. She flies Pegasus high above the monster's head and raises the staff. The Chimaera opens its mouth, ready to strike her again and instantly, Gabrielle thrusts the staff down into the Chimaera's mouth.

The Chimaera screeches and lets out a blast of fire, almost catching Gabrielle, but she swerves to the side again and watches as the monster begins to roar with pain, the lead obviously melting and scorching its insides.

A few moments later the Chimaera sinks down to the top of the cliff. Lifeless, it sprawls on the rocks above the mountain pass. Gabrielle breathes heavily, one calming hand on Pegasus' neck.

GABRIELLE (whispers):

It's over. (to Pegasus, grinning) We did it!

Pegasus rears and neighs, obviously proud of what they accomplished, then flies off.

CUT TO

Back at the campsite, Polyeidus and Theias are finishing their meal. It is now almost dark. Xena is sitting nearby, fixing a bandage around her arm. There are cuts and bruises on her face, but the worst of the blood has been cleaned up.

THEIAS:

Xena?

XENA:

Hmm?

THEIAS:

Do you think Gabrielle would mind if I...

Xena looks up, curious.

THEIAS (determined):

What I mean is, I'd like to buy one of her scrolls.

Xena raises her eyebrows--it's not what she expected to hear.

XENA:

What for?

THEIAS:

To read. Gabrielle's been teaching me...

POLYEIDUS (looks up):

Read? (getting angry) Do you listen to nothing I tell you?! You know very well what all those stories mean to a seer. They dull your Sight, they confuse your dreams--you will never know if your vision is a true one, or if you have merely conjured it from your reading! (adamant) Absolutely out of the question!

THEIAS:

But that's just the point, Father. I'm *not* a seer! You *know* I don't have the Sight, never did. What's the use of denying it?

Polyeidus looks stunned by this outburst.

XENA (to Theias):

I'm sure Gabrielle would be happy to let you have one of her scrolls. After all-- (she looks at Polyeidus) --we all find our own path, right, Seer?

After a long pause, Polyeidus nods. A tear runs from one unseeing eye, Theias reaches to wipe it from his father's cheek. Polyeidus catches his son's hand.

POLYEIDUS:

You're a grown man now, son. You must do what you think is best.

Theias squeezes his father's hand.

THEIAS:

I will.

A loud neighing comes from above the trees; Xena and Theias look up.

POLYEIDUS (to himself):

And thus she returns, victorious.

The camera shows a white blur in the sky, flying toward them.

GABRIELLE (waves):

Xena!

Gabrielle glides down and lands Pegasus near them. Her face is lit up with a sense of accomplishment and Xena smiles, knowing how it went just by reading her face.

GABRIELLE (dismounts):

Lycia is safe--the Chimaera is dead. (to Theias) It worked out just like you said. Thank you, Theias--Polyeidus. Couldn't have done it without you.

POLYEIDUS:

Perhaps when your spirits have calmed a little, you would be so good as to replace my cane. (to Theias) My job here is done. I must be on my way.

THEIAS:

Of course, Father. I will make you a new cane...

POLYEIDUS (grumpily):

I said, *my* job. Did you hear anything about your job? No, I thought not.

Gabrielle shoots a surprised look at Xena, who merely shrugs.

POLYEIDUS:

Perhaps the slayer of the Chimaera could oblige me?

Gabrielle nods hastily, looking around at the trees. She sees a suitable one, walks over to break off a branch. Theias rushes to her side to help. Polyeidus and Xena watch.

POLYEIDUS:

My son wanted a scroll that belongs to that young woman. See that he gets it.

Before Xena can reply, Gabrielle and Theias return with the branch, stripped off its leaves.

POLYEIDUS (taking the rough staff):

It will do for now. Warrior Princess--Slayer of the Chimaera... Son.

He nods in their general direction, then begins to walk away. All three watch him. Theias has a distant look on his face, almost regretful.

XENA:

Gabrielle--Theias wanted to buy one of your scrolls. (she grins at Gabrielle's slight embarrassment) To read.

GABRIELLE:

Um--which one?

THEIAS:

Whichever is your favorite. (he pauses, then smiles) How about the story about a beautiful bard who saves a city from certain disaster?

Gabrielle flushes a deep scarlet, looking at Xena helplessly. Xena nods in the direction of the horses.

GABRIELLE:

Okay... Um--just a minute.

She goes over to the horses, and looks through the bags. Theias and Xena walk up to her, and Gabrielle hands a scroll to Theias. He stashes it carefully in his pack.

THEIAS:

It was...wonderful, meeting you. Both. (to Gabrielle) I can't thank you enough for teaching me to read. I feel so free. Like I can do anything at all.

XENA:

So, what are you planning to do?

THEIAS:

For now, I have to return to my father's side... (corrects himself) No. I don't have to. I want to. He still needs me, whatever he may think. (he looks at Gabrielle carefully, suddenly shy) But I hope we will meet again, soon?

Gabrielle nods.

XENA:

Thank you, Theias.

Theias disappears in the direction his father had taken.

GABRIELLE (softly):

Bye.

Xena looks at Gabrielle, a mischievous sparkle in her eyes. Gabrielle ignores her and looks at the horses.

Argo, who is standing near Gabrielle's horse, walks up to Pegasus and they exchange soft whinnies. She then rubs noses with Pegasus.

XENA:

Looks like you aren't the only one who's found a new friend.

GABRIELLE:

But neither of us gets to keep them.

XENA:

Hm. That's true.

Xena unhooks the golden bridle from Pegasus' head and he shakes his head once it is off, obviously relieved about being freed from it. Xena rubs her hand over his mane, petting him gently.

XENA:

You're free to go, Pegasus. You've helped and I'm grateful. (she looks at Gabrielle) We're grateful.

Pegasus whinnies and nudges his head against Xena's shoulder, then Gabrielle's. Xena steps back and so does Gabrielle.

Pegasus looks at them, paws the ground a few times with his hoof and then rears up on his back legs, pawing the air and neighing. He starts to flap his wings, returns to all fours and after a quick gallop, he rises into the air.

XENA:

Slayer of the Chimaera, huh?

CUT TO

King Iobatas is standing in the throne room, looking out one of the castle windows. It is a bright moonlit night. The sound of the door opening is heard. He looks back to see Xena and Gabrielle walk toward him.

IOBATAS:

Xena!

GABRIELLE:

The Chimaera is dead. Lycia won't be tormented by the monster anymore.

IOBATAS (a large smile crosses his face):

Thank you! Thank you! I'm so grateful. If there's anything at all I can do for you in return...

XENA:

As a matter of fact, there is. It will be a while before normal trade is restored in Lycia--there are many people who have been hit hard by this disaster. You have money in the treasury, Iobatas. See that it finds its uses in the right hands.

IOBATAS (catching the implied threat):

Of course, of course. Consider it done. The last thing I want are people starving in my city.

XENA:

Excellent. You're a good king, Iobatas. (she turns around and starts to walk out the door followed by Gabrielle)

IOBATAS:

Xena... (she looks back) ...how did you defeat the Chimaera? I've sent many heroes to kill him but to no avail and yet you were victorious. How?

XENA:

Oh, I didn't.

IOBATAS (gapes):

Then how... Who? Gabrielle?

GABRIELLE (smiles, glances at Xena):

Let's just say...I was able to rise to the challenge on the wings of trust.

Xena and Gabrielle leave. Iobatas watches them go and then walks back to the window and looks up at the sky. A short distance away from the castle, in the moonlight, Pegasus can be seen flying freely like a bird, swerving through the sky...

IOBATAS (whispers, astounded):
The wings of trust...

The camera zooms in closer to see Pegasus rear up and let out a neigh that echoes through the sky as we:

FADE OUT

THE END

[Argo was depressed for weeks after the production of this motion picture.]