

# SHIPPER SEASON SEVEN



**Production #XWP147/SS13  
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## **Logline**

When a warlord destroys a village, Xena must journey to Athens to try to save a man who is near death and along the way, Ares recalls a tragic story from his past.

## **Airdate**

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## TEASER

### **FADE IN**

A small seaside village almost entirely engulfed in flames, dark clouds of thick, black smoke rising from the charred buildings. The sound of horse hooves pounding at the ground can faintly be heard, becoming louder until the sound fills the air.

The camera tracks around the village to see five heavily armed warriors riding through the village, chasing the women and children that scatter around their destroyed homes, screaming in terror, the men of the village lie dead.

The warriors ride through the village, slicing at the defenseless women who hold their children in their arms, trying to protect them and begging for mercy. All are killed without a thought.

There is a shrill, rhythmic war cry and in an instant, the camera turns to see Xena galloping through the water along the shoreline. She rides hard and fast toward the village. The warriors on horseback look up. Fear becomes apparent on many of their faces except for one--a rugged looking warrior.

### **WARRIOR #1:**

It's the Warrior Princess!

He along with the three other warriors, turn and flee from the village just as Xena enters.

### **WARLORD** (shouting to them as they disappear in the distance):

Come back, you cowards!

### **XENA** (galloping up):

Maybe you should find more dependable thugs to do your dirty work.

The warlord turns around to look at Xena.

### **WARLORD:**

Well, well. I see you still have lousy timing. Showing up right when we were starting to have some fun.

### **XENA:**

This is *fun*?

### **WARLORD:**

*You* used to enjoy it, I've heard.

### **XENA:**

I'm not in the mood to reminisce. The fun stops here.

### **WARLORD** (draws sword):

Let's see you stop me.

### **XENA** (grins, draws sword):

Love to.



Xena dismounts, as does the warlord. They attack, their swords clashing several times. Xena counters his every swing, then makes a flying leap over him, landing behind him. Before he has a chance to turn, she kicks him on the back; he falls face down. Xena quickly moves toward him as he turns around, looking up at Xena who now has her sword pointed at him. She grins devilishly.



**XENA:**

I guess you're not so tough without your loyal thugs to help you. Oh, wait. Looks like they changed their minds and ran the moment it looked like a real fight. Too bad.

The warlord's face twists with hatred. He grabs the sword at his side and slashes at Xena, she ducks as it swings over her head, then drops the sword she has pointed at his neck and quickly puts the pinch on him as he swings again. The sword drops from his hand, he starts to gag and blood drips from his nose.

**XENA** (kneels and grabs the warlord by the lapel and pulls him forward, forcing him to sit):

Now, I'm guessing you know the drill so lets cut to the chase. You tell me what possessed you to take the lives of these people and I might think about sparing yours.

**WARLORD** (coughs):

You...take it off and I'll tell you...what you want to know...though you won't like what I have to say.

Xena eyes him suspiciously, and then takes the pinch off him. He coughs briefly; Xena backs off as he stands rubbing his throat.

**CUT TO**

Another part of the village. Many of the houses are burning, and there are dead bodies lying everywhere. There is a flash of blue light and Ares materializes, looking very grim. He walks slowly through the street, almost transfixed. He blinks and we are taken into a flashback of an unknown event in the past.

**[FLASHBACK]**

A strong hand is raised in the air firmly grasped to a sword with an ornately decorated hilt. It comes down onto an unknown object.

**[END OF FLASHBACK]**

***CUT TO***

Xena, staring expectantly at the warlord.

**XENA** (snarls slightly):  
So tell.

**WARLORD:**

I was just doing my job, Xena. As you do yours. Only difference is, I don't do it for myself, I do it for my god.

Xena raises an eyebrow, curious.

**WARLORD:**

I live only to serve the greatest god of the Pantheon, Ares God of War.

***CUT TO***

Ares runs his hand along a charred wall. It comes away black. He blinks again.

**[FLASHBACK]**

In a dark forest, a figure slowly sinks to the ground. The camera moves in and we see that it is Ares. He leans against a tree and in the bright moonlight; the glistening image of blood is visible running down his right shoulder.

**[END OF FLASHBACK]**

***CUT TO***

**XENA:**

Ares? I don't believe that.



**WARLORD:**

Yeah, I've heard you two have gotten a bit friendly lately. Maybe you thought he'd gone soft, the way you did? Well, sorry to disappoint you.

Xena is silent for a moment then she looks at him, anger in her eyes. She points her sword at him, lifting it so it is at the tip of his chin.

**XENA:**

Get out of here. And if I find you causing trouble again, you'll end up with more than a warning.

The warlord backs away until he reaches his horse and gets in the saddle. He starts to ride off, then stops and raises his sword.

**WARLORD** (shouting):

By the way, Xena, I didn't introduce myself. I am Lycaon of Thessaly. Don't forget that name the next time we meet.

Lycaon sends his horse galloping off, out of the village. Xena sighs and rubs her forehead before putting her sword back in its scabbard.

The camera follows Xena through the village as she walks around the smoking buildings, hoping to find any signs of survivors. All around her there are villagers lying on the ground, covered with blood. Xena's face is drawn.

Next to one building are the bodies of a middle-aged woman and a young boy. The boy is cradled in his mother's arms. They are covered with dirt; scrapes all over their bodies. Xena kneels down and touches their faces but quickly jerks it away at the ice-cold feel of their skin. Xena walks around the building, then hears a faint groan coming from within. She runs inside.

**CUT TO**

Inside the building, Xena looks around, searching for the source of the sound. In the far corner of the room is a pile of large beams. Xena walks over to it and hears the groaning again.

She starts to lift the beams away from the corner and throws them behind her. As she does so, she starts to see a body buried underneath. She works quickly until finally she is able to uncover the body.

It is a man in his mid to late fifties. His grayish hair is ruffled and there is a gash on the side of his head, bleeding. Other than the cut on his forehead and a few scrapes and bruises on his face, he looks unharmed. He groans again, then opens his eyes only half way--his eyelids are swollen and bruised; we get a glimpse of how he sees her; his vision blurry, he doesn't get a clear picture of who he's looking at.

**MAN:**

Who...who are you?

**XENA** (holding his head):

Xena. I'm here to help you.

**MAN** (almost shocked):

Xena? (to himself) That's not possible... (he gasps and coughs, struggling to speak)

**XENA:**

What is it?

**MAN:**

Nothing...I just thought... (he coughs again)

**XENA:**

Lie still. I'll be back soon with something to patch that wound.

The man nods in response, Xena leans his head against the wall and then stands, turning and walking to the door.

**CUT TO**

Ares stands motionless, looking around him. He sees the dead body of a young woman and closes his eyes.

**[FLASHBACK]**

Ares, with bandages stained with dried blood around his arm, is trying to reach his sword while a thug lifts his dripping sword and laughs.

**[END OF FLASHBACK]**

**CUT TO**

Xena walks back inside and sits down next to the man. She holds a bowl and fills it with water from a wineskin, then dips a piece of cloth into the water, squeezes it and then gently dabs at the wound on his head. The man starts in pain, moaning.

**XENA:**

I've got to clean this wound. You'll be fine.

The man nods, gritting his teeth. Xena finishes cleaning the wound.

**XENA** (reaching for a piece of dry cloth lying beside her):

You want to tell me about it?

**MAN** (with difficulty):

It...it all happened so fast. My wife and I were outside tending to the horses. Our...son...was playing with the dog. That's when we heard hoof beats... And--metal. Warriors. I looked up and saw them, riding toward the village.

Xena takes a piece of dry cloth and begins to bandage his wound as he continues.

**MAN:**

I told my wife to take our son into the house and stay there, and I went outside...I had to do something! But then I heard...screams. Coming from my house.

Xena secures the bandage around his head and listens intently.

**MAN** (starts to cry):

I ran as fast as I could, back to the house but...I was too late. One of the warriors...was... (closes his eyes as tears roll down his cheeks, Xena puts a hand on his shoulder) ...dragging my wife and son out of the house. (he pauses, sobbing) Th-they were tied to the back of the horse and he...dragged them away. I didn't know...didn't know what I could do, but I was so angry! I grabbed the first thing I saw--a scythe, I think--and charged one of the other warriors, but he just sliced his sword across my side and pushed me back into my house. I hit the wall, that's all I remember--and then there were beams crashing down on top of me. (crying again) I should have died...I should be dead, with them. (to Xena) Why should I be the one to live?!



**XENA:**

Don't blame yourself. It wouldn't do anyone any good if you were dead. (pause) Can you stand?

The man nods, leaning heavily on Xena. She supports him as they walk out of the house.

**CUT TO**

Outside, Xena tries to shift the man to a more comfortable position, but he almost shrieks with agony. He moves a hand to his side, where Xena notices a wound. She slowly pulls the cloth away from his side to get a better look at it. Ares comes into view. He stops as he sees Xena helping the wounded man.

**[FLASHBACK]**

Ares is lying on a bed in a small house, eyes closed, his face bruised, his hair matted. A woman is sitting at the edge of the bed, her hand on his arm. He groans.

**[END OF FLASHBACK]**

Ares winces slightly, as if the image caused him pain. He walks toward Xena. Sensing Ares' approach, Xena turns around and glares at him, her eyes blazing.

**XENA** (bitterly):  
Ares.

**ARES** (blinks):  
Xena, I--

**XENA:**  
Come to admire your handiwork?

**ARES** (gives her a bewildered look):  
What are you talking about?



**XENA:**  
Does the name Lycaon ring any bells? (Ares flinches a little) I see that it does. I gotta hand it to you, Ares, you had me fooled this time. I actually believed things were going to be different now. Didn't think I'd find you sending your men to kill innocent peasants.

**ARES:**  
Xena--

**XENA** (in a low snarl):  
Get out. Just get out!



She takes a swing and punches him. He rubs his face as if in a daze, stares at her grimly and disappears.

On the ground, the man moans again. The camera closes in on his wound. It is producing a white foamy substance and isn't bleeding. Xena touches it and raises her fingers to her nose, curiously. She inhales and instantly her expressions change to that of fear. She looks around and the man catches the hint of fear in her eyes.

**MAN:**

What is it?

**XENA** (rubs her fingers together):

Poison.

***FADE OUT***

## **ACT ONE**

***FADE IN***

**MAN** (shocked):

Poison?

**XENA** (nods):

Yes. That sword must have been tainted with it. We're going to have to find the antidote.

**MAN:**

How much time do I have? (off Xena's uncomfortable look, raising his voice) Give it to me straight, Xena, I want to know!

**XENA** (pauses):

Once the poison has already entered your bloodstream...the end of tomorrow.

**MAN** (echoing Xena's last word):

Tomorrow...

**XENA** (nods):

We have enough time--if we hurry. Athens is a day's journey from here. They have an antidote for just about any poison... (pauses) If it can be treated, it can be treated there.

The man nods grimly. Xena binds the wound in his side and then stands up, looking around, as if searching for something.

**XENA:**

I've got to find something to help carry you out of here. I'll be back.

***CUT TO***

Xena is hooking a small cart to Argo. She straps it firmly to her side and then guides Argo forward. The man is now lying inside the cart, covered with blankets. Xena takes Argo's reins and leads her out of the village, drawing the cart behind her.

## **CUT TO**

Ares' halls on Olympus. Ares materializes and, with an exasperated grunt, slams his fist into the side of his throne. He sinks down on the throne and holds up his hand; a goblet of wine appears in it. He stares ahead of him, a thoughtful look on his face. Dissolve to a flashback.

### **[FLASHBACK]**

Ares is walking along a small dirt path. It is dark out; the moon is full. He looks like he is dragging with each step, his head hanging slightly, fatigue setting in. Then, he lifts his head, as if something has caught his attention. He looks around and slowly draws his sword, holding it firmly. The sound of footsteps can be heard; he jerks his head from one side to the other, listening intently. The footsteps get apparently closer; Ares keeps still.

From out of the bushes jump several rugged looking bandits. They grin at Ares.

#### **BANDIT #1:**

Well, well, what do we have here, boys?

#### **BANDIT #2:**

Looks to me like some sorry excuse for a warrior.

#### **BANDIT #1 (looks at Ares):**

All right. You give us your valuables and there will be no trouble.

#### **ARES:**

You think you can take me on?

#### **BANDIT #1:**

Oh, I know we can.

They attack Ares and many of them are no match for his skills. He proceeds to fight them but in the process, Bandit #1 swings his sword, and the blade grazes across Ares' arm. Instantly, Ares swings at the bandit, wounding him. The man screams, he and the other bandits run off, realizing that Ares is too much of a match for them.

Once they are gone, Ares' hand comes to his shoulder, seeing the small slit across his skin. Ares slowly sinks to the ground and leans against a tree. In the bright moonlight the glistening image of blood is visible running down his right arm from the cut.



Ares just lies there for several minutes, almost falling asleep and then hears the sound of footsteps coming toward him. His eyes open and he looks around. He slowly stands and grips his sword with his wounded arm, listening. Then, he turns around quickly, sword pointed out in front of him and there before him, he finds three simple villagers, frozen with fear.

There is a woman looking to be in her early forties holding a covered basket and standing next to a man of about the same age holding a bundle of sticks. Between them is a young girl about thirteen or so.

**WOMAN** (pleading):

Please! Please don't hurt us! We were just on our way home. Please, we'll give you whatever you want just don't hurt us.

The girl huddles next to her mother and father. Ares lowers his sword.

**ARES** (grins):

Sorry. Bad habit.

Ares puts his sword back in its scabbard at his side. Then the villagers relax, realizing that they aren't in danger. Ares looks at them uncertainly, not sure how to address them. The woman looks at him sympathetically--she can tell that he's had a long day by the looks on his face and in his eyes.

Ares turns around and starts to walk away.



**WOMAN:**

Wait. (he stops and looks back) You look like you've had a long day. (sees the blood on his arm) And you're hurt. Why don't you come back with us tonight? I'll treat that wound.

The man standing next to her jerks her arm, pulling her toward him.

**MAN:**

What do you think you're doing, Chloe? He was going to kill us!

**CHLOE:**

Calm down. It was a mistake. He didn't know it was us, he admits that. (his eyes are angry) Dymas, please. He looks like he hasn't had a chance to rest in a long time. And he's wounded. All I'm asking is to let him spend one night with us. He needs help.

**DYMAS** (exhales):

But we don't even know who he is or what he's like. He could be a cold-blooded killer for all we know.

Ares watches as they talk. Chloe looks back at him.

**CHLOE** (noticing the softened expression on Ares' face):

Does he look like someone who's a murderer? (looks back at Dymas)

**DYMAS** (looks at Ares, closes his eyes, then sighs):

All right. But only for one night. We don't know what kind of influence he might have on this family.

**CHLOE** (kisses him on the cheek):

Thank you. (she walks up to Ares) We have an extra room for you if you'd like to stay with us tonight. We wouldn't want you spending the night out in the cold.

Ares looks at her thoughtfully, thinking a warm bed would be better than the cold, hard ground.

**ARES:**

Sure.

**CHLOE:**

Come on. (she leads him back toward her family, they stop for a moment) By the way, my name is Chloe; this is my husband Dymas and my daughter, Helice. What's your name?

**ARES:**

Ar-- (looks around, trying to think of something) --Argeus.

**CHLOE:**

Well, it's nice to meet you.

Chloe, Dymas, and Helice start to walk down the path. Ares waits behind them and then starts to follow.

**CUT TO**

Night. Wide shot of a small village, sparkling with lights from the fires that burn in the houses.

**CUT TO**

A small house, the window is open. Seen through it, a man paces back and fourth. Move in closer inside the house--it is Dymas. Chloe is standing next to a small table fixing dinner.

**DYMAS:**

I don't know about this, Chloe. I don't trust him.

**CHLOE:**

So you can't trust my judgment, either?

**DYMAS:**

I have a feeling about him and it's a bad one.

**CUT TO**

Ares, standing behind the door, listening to their conversation. He looks a little troubled.

**CUT TO**

**DYMAS:**

I mean, look at him. He could be some kind of warlord. We don't know anything about his past--who he's fought for, who he's fought against...

**CHLOE:**

Dymas...

**DYMAS** (raising voice):

Didn't you see the way people looked at us when we walked into the village with him? I bet they had a bad feeling about him too.

**CHLOE:**

Well, like you said, Dymas--we don't know anything about him. He could be a warlord. Or he could be a hero who has fought for his homeland. Like Achilles, or Ulysses. Anyway, right now, he's just a man....alone and tired. Maybe he did some bad things in the past. But you know something, Xena used to be a warlord too, and now she's the greatest hero in Greece. (focus on Ares' face; at the mention of Xena, his eyes widen slightly.) Just let him stay here for one night.

**DYMAS:**

All right. But he leaves in the morning.

**CHLOE:**

Thank you. (kisses him briefly)

She takes a plate of food from the table and heads for the door. Ares sees this and moves away and over to the small table in the room, sitting down. There is a fireplace behind the table, a kettle hanging over the flickering fire.

Chloe walks in followed by Dymas. She sets the plate of food on the table. It has several loaves of bread and some slices of cheese on it. Dymas sets a pitcher on the table and sets out three wooden plates and cups. He sits down across from Ares.

**CHLOE** (shouts):

Helice, time for dinner!

**HELICE** (calling from another room):

Coming, Mom!

She rushes into the room and sits down next to her father. Chloe sits down at the table next to Ares. She looks at him.

**CHLOE:**

I know it's not much, Argeus...I wish we could feed you a better meal, but this is all we've got.

**ARES** (taking a piece of bread):

Bad times?

**CHLOE:**

It wouldn't be so bad if it weren't for Tykan, the warlord. He passes through here every month or so and demands that we pay him tribute--supplies, food, and money for his army. We obey and give them what they want but...

**DYMAS:**

So, Argeus, what is it you do for a living?

**ARES:**

I...I...used to be a soldier in the...Athenian army.

**CHLOE:**

Used to be? What happened?

**ARES** (looks down):

Lots of things.

Ares continues to eat, looking up every so often at the family before him.

**[END OF FLASHBACK]**

Ares sits on his throne, a pensive look on his face. He throws the now-empty goblet aside and it dissolves in a flash of light as we:

***FADE OUT***

## **ACT TWO**

***FADE IN***

The sun is setting. Xena is walking briskly along a shore, leading Argo. Waves crash on the sand, sparkling gold in the fading sunlight. Xena hears coughing and looks over her shoulder, at the man in the cart.

**XENA:**

Hang in there. We'll reach Athens by nightfall.

***CUT TO***

A wide shot of Athens by night. Xena rides up to a building and dismounts. She knocks on the large doors. It opens and a woman stands in the doorway. She wears a starched white tunic and has a sheaf of parchments in her hand.

**WOMAN** (impatiently):

No patients can be admitted until dawn.

She tries to close the door, but Xena blocks it with her foot.

**XENA:**

There's been a change of plans. I have a dying man here (motions at the cart) --if he's not treated tonight, it will be too late.

The woman glances over at the sick man.

**WOMAN** (sighs, after a pause):

All right then, here. (she pushes the parchments into Xena's hands) Fill these out--here, and sign over here--and I need the name, father's name, mother's name, place of birth, marriage records, childhood diseases, allergies, sexual orientation...

**XENA:**

*Whose?!*

**WOMAN:**

The patient's!

Xena scowls and throws the parchments away.

**WOMAN:**

Hey! What do you...

Xena pushes past her, inside.

**XENA** (yelling inside the house):

Xanthus!

**CUT TO**

Inside the house; a small room, lit by lamplight. An elderly, kindly man rises from his table with some difficulty just as Xena storms in.

**XANTHUS:**

Xena. What brings you here at this hour?

**XENA:**

Xanthus, how much do you know about poisons?

**XANTHUS:**

Well, I really...

**XENA:**

I have a man outside who's been wounded with a poisoned sword. He's delirious, there's not much time.

**XANTHUS:**

Why didn't you say so right away! (yells) Philyra! Bring the patient in!

The woman who met Xena and another servant carry in the man on a stretcher. His eyes are closed, his forehead sweaty but he is shivering.

**XANTHUS:**

Let's take him to the infirmary. (to Xena) I'll be right back.

Philyra and the servant carry the stretcher into the adjoining room. Xanthus follows.



## **CUT TO**

The infirmary. It is a large room, all white, well lit with oil lamps. There are shelves all along the walls with bottles and vials.

Philyra and the servant carefully move the wounded man to the table in the middle of the room, then stand back while Xanthus inspects him. He removes the cloth that is wrapped around his body and then removes the bandage covering the wound at his side. It is now surrounded completely with a patch of dead white skin and has started to fester.

## **CUT TO**

Xanthus' office where Xena is waiting. Xanthus comes out of the infirmary, a worried look on his face.

**XENA:**

Well?

**XANTHUS:**

The poison has spread through his body, Xena. It is the venom of a plant they call "widow's tears" --without the antidote, it will consume him by morning.

**XENA:**

But that's why I'm here! (glancing at the shelves, where there are countless vials of all sizes) You have the antidote, right?

**XANTHUS** (regretfully):

Not for "widow's tears". It requires a vital ingredient we don't have--an extract of the Mickree flower.

**XENA:**

Well, where can we get it?

**XANTHUS:**

It grows in the hills of Athens, north of the city. My assistant, Lysander, usually collects it. Unfortunately, he's not here right now...I gave him a week's leave to visit his family.

**XENA:**

Then I'll go get it myself.

The camera pulls back and the image of Xanthus' office grows slightly hazy. We see Ares, still sitting on his throne on Olympus, watching Xena and Xanthus through a viewing portal. He has a thoughtful look on his face.

## **[FLASHBACK]**

Chloe, Dymas and Helice are running around their house in a frenzy, gathering things in baskets and taking them to the front door. Ares walks into the main living area, seeing all the commotion.

**DYMAS:**

We've got to hurry; they'll be here soon!

**ARES:**

Who?

**CHLOE:**

Tycan and his men. They're coming to collect their tribute.

**HELICE:**

They're here, Mom.

Chloe looks over at Helice, who is looking out the window, pointing. Half a dozen warriors ride into the town, at the head of them is Tycan. He is wearing a feathered helmet over dirty blonde hair, brown leather armor and silver gauntlets.

Chloe pulls Helice away from the window.

**CHLOE** (looks at Dymas):

Let's go. (he nods, she looks at Helice) Stay here.

Chloe picks up a basket of fruit and vegetables, while Dymas takes two small pouches of coins. They open the door and walk outside. Ares tries to follow; Helice grabs his arm.

**HELICE:**

No! Wait--please. They'll take what they need and leave. If they see you out there, there's going to be a fight.

**ARES** (breaking away):

That's the idea.

He walks out. Helice rushes to the window to watch.

***CUT TO***

Ares emerges from the doorway, but no one is looking in his direction. He walks a little way ahead and looks to his left. Chloe and Dymas are standing there, holding out the tribute for the warriors. Along the street, others are doing the same. The warriors make their way to each house, taking everything. They reach the house of Dymas and Chloe.



**TYCAN** (cantering up, the other warriors behind him):  
Well, do you have my tribute?

**DYMAS** (a little nervous):  
Yes, Tycan.

He extends his hands; Tycan snatches the moneybags. Chloe hands the food basket to him and he takes it as well. Tycan opens the bags and paws through them roughly; disappointment turning to anger. He looks at Dymas.

**TYCAN:**  
This is all you're giving me?

**DYMAS:**  
Isn't it enough?

**CHLOE:**  
It was what you requested last month.

**TYCAN:**  
Well, maybe it was enough last month, but (motions over his shoulder) them there's growing lads. (guffaws from the thugs; Tycan's voice drops to a growl) We want a little more than ten dinars today. (barks) Double it!

**CHLOE:**  
But it's all we can spare.

**TYCAN:**  
Well, that's too bad. (to a man behind him) Search their house. Take anything of value.

The warrior nods and dismounts, heading into the house. Dymas and Chloe look terrified.

**TYCAN** (bites into one of the pears then spits it out):  
Are you trying to poison me!? This is no fruit, it's a piece of rotting garbage!

**ARES** (quietly to himself):  
Takes one to know one.

**HELICE** (from inside the house):  
Get your hands off me! Mom!

Helice is pushed out of the house by the warrior. Close up as she tries to struggle, but is held fast.

**WARRIOR'S VOICE:**  
Look what I found.

**TYCAN:**  
Well, well, isn't she a beauty.

**CHLOE** (pleading):  
Please, let her go!

**TYCAN:**  
She's young, fit...and perfect. (lifts his hand to scratch his chin) Yeah, she'll fetch a coupla dinars on the market.

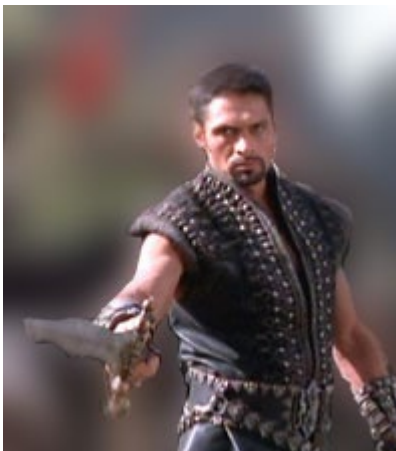
**CHLOE:**  
No!

**TYCAN:**  
Take her away, boys!

**ARES** (off-camera):  
What part of "no" don't you understand?

The camera pans back to show Ares drawing his sword and slowly walking forward. Tycan stops what he is doing.

**TYCAN** (grins):  
What's this? Someone in this pathetic village has a backbone?



**ARES:**

Actually, I have a whole collection of them--mind if I add yours?

**TYCAN** (his face changes slightly as he recognizes Ares):

You!

**ARES:**

Not your lucky day, is it?

**TYCAN** (sounds cocky):

We'll see about that. You're just another man now. And I think you're a little outnumbered.

**ARES:**

Never knew you could count.

He charges the warrior who is holding Helice. We see the warrior's face. It's Lycaon. Lycaon lets go of Helice; the girl runs to her mother and father, who hug her tightly. Ares and Lycaon clash; even though Ares is mortal, it is obvious that his fighting techniques are still superior. Lycaon manages to slash Ares' arm, but Ares knocks the sword out of his hand with a powerful blow that makes Lycaon sprawl on the ground. Ares is about to run him through when two of Tycan's other men rush toward him.

Ares charges Tycan's men and cuts down one of them; the thug falls off his horse, dead. In quick succession, Ares wounds another one of the men and knocks the sword out of the hand of a third. Emboldened, a few villagers grab sticks and pitchforks and start heading toward them.

**WARRIOR #1:**

Let's get out of here!

They gallop away, Lycaon getting on the horse of his dead comrade.

**LYCAON** (turns around and yells at Ares):

Don't start celebrating yet!

As the warriors ride off, Ares turns around, runs back toward Chloe's and Dymas' house. Some of the other villagers burst into applause, while others look fearful.

**VILLAGER#1:**

You fools. You think they won't be back? (to Ares) Whoever you are, all you did was make things worse.

**DYMAS** (angry):

Sure, everything was fine until he intervened. My daughter was only about to be taken away to a slave market. (to Ares) I'm sorry I didn't trust you before. You're a hero.

Ares looks embarrassed.

**CHLOE** (comes up to look at the wound on Ares' arm):  
Are you all right?

**ARES:**  
Oh, yeah. It's just a cut.

Chloe inspects the wound, which we now see in close-up. It looks much like that of the man Xena found in the village. There is not much blood, but there's white foam coming out of the wound.

**CHLOE** (a frightened look on her face):  
No, Argeus, it's not just a wound. It's poisoned.

**DYMAS:**  
Poisoned?

**CHLOE:**  
It's one of the deadliest poisons of all..."widow's tears."

A close-up on Ares' face. He looks terrified.

**[END OF FLASHBACK]**

Ares glances again at the portal--Xena is still in Xanthus' study.

**XANTHUS:**

Xena, the flower changes color depending on the time of day. But no matter what color it is, there is always a blue iridescent glow to it. I know if anyone can find it, you can.

Xena nods. Off-screen, the door to the infirmary creaks open. Xena and Xanthus turn to see Philyra come out.

**PHILYRA:**

Xena? Your father is awake...

**XENA:**

He's not my father.

**PHILYRA:**

...and he is asking for you.

Xena and Xanthus exchange a look; Xena nods and follows Philyra.

**CUT TO**

Infirmary. The man is lying on a low bed, cold compresses around his wound. He opens his eyes halfway, his breaths growing shallow.

**MAN** (whispers):  
Xena?

Xena comes up to the bed; he takes her hand.

**XENA:**  
Yes?

**MAN** (smiles slightly):  
This is a nice dream. Such a nice dream...

**XENA:**  
Dream?

**MAN:**  
You even sound like her. (he opens his eyes wide) Have you come to take me to join my family? Is mother there, too? And Lyceus? I'm ready.

**XENA** (jumps):  
Lyceus? What do you know about him?

**MAN:**  
He... (draws a breath) Our brother...



**XENA** (disbelieving):  
Toris?!

**MAN** (seems to regain clarity):  
Xena? It's really you? But... (looks her over) You look so young!

**XENA:**  
Toris.... (she takes both of his hands, rubbing them) Toris, it's been so many years...

**TORIS:**  
It *is* you! How?! By the gods... Have you seen our mother? I...haven't h-heard from her for a long time...

**XENA** (averting her eyes):

It's...things have happened. She's...passed away.

Toris makes a small sound and reaches for Xena, embracing her. He strokes Xena's hair.

**TORIS:**

I don't have much time left...I just wanted to tell you--

**XENA** (interrupts):

No. You need to get some rest. (lays him down) Here. Rest. I'll be back soon, with the medicine.

Toris starts to protest, but his words turn into coughs. Eventually, he lies back, exhausted and nods weakly, trying to smile.

**TORIS:**

Yes...I'll be waiting...when you...return.

**XENA:**

Won't be long. I promise.

She walks out, Toris watching her. He looks away slowly, tears rolling down his cheeks.

**TORIS:**

Xena...

***FADE OUT***

## **ACT THREE**

***FADE IN***

Long shot of Xena riding Argo out of the city gates, galloping along a dirt road toward the hills.

***CUT TO***

She is riding at a trot now. Argo's head hangs; she is obviously exhausted from the long ride. Argo neighs and Xena pats her.

**XENA:**

Tired, eh girl? Yeah, me too. But we can't stop now; see, we have to save a man's life. And this time, it's personal.

***CUT TO***

A hillside. Dawn is breaking. Xena, who has dismounted, is wandering around looking intently at the ground. There is a strong wind that lashes at her, whipping through her hair. Suddenly Xena sees something that catches her eye: underneath a shrub, there is a very faint blue spot that glows slightly. She walks over and kneels, lifting up the twigs of the shrub. It is a five-petal flower about the size of a



daisy that grows low to the ground. Its petals are a beautiful pink but it emits a faint blue glow. Xena's face lights up with a smile as she reaches toward the flower.

**LYCAON** (off-camera):

The Warrior Princess. Thought I'd find you here.

Xena bolts upright and turns to face Lycaon, on horseback.

**XENA:**

Lycaon. Back for more?

**LYCAON:**

You could say that. You know, Xena, I figured one of those worthless peasants I cut with my sword might have survived...at least for now. And I thought there was a good chance you'd come here looking for the antidote.

**XENA:**

What do you want?

**LYCAON:**

I told you. Everything I do, I do in the name of the God of War.

**XENA** (bitterly):

Don't tell me he sent you after me!

**LYCAON** (sneers):

No, he didn't. And that's the problem.

**XENA** (narrows her eyes, looking at him in puzzlement):

What?

**LYCAON:**

You know something, Xena? Ever since I was a boy, Ares was the only god I revered. The god of warriors, the god who reveled in fighting and bloodshed. I became a warrior because I wanted to serve him. And then he betrayed us. Suddenly, we heard stories that he was now mortal. And you know what the story was? That he became mortal for you! (Xena's face remains impassive as she listens.) I didn't want to believe it. Not until I met him in a village...much like the one where my boys and I were (derisively) having fun yesterday. Not only was he mortal, he was defending a bunch of peasants!



**XENA** (flinches):  
Ares was *what*?

**LYCAON:**  
Believe it. He should have been on our side! You turned him soft, Xena...the way you turned soft. Even now that he's a god again, he isn't half the god he used to be.

**XENA:**  
You told me you fought in the name of Ares.

**LYCAON:**  
Oh, I do. He's disgraced the name of the God of War, made it nothing more than fodder for minstrels with no reverence for what is sacred. (accusing) And *that* was your fault too, Xena! You robbed the people of their faith, their dignity. Well, guess what? You won't rob me of mine. If Ares won't fight in his name, then *I* will!

He charges her and tries to cut her down, but Xena grabs his arm and yanks him down from his horse. Lycaon leaps to his feet and they begin a sword fight. Xena swings left and right as he does the same, countering every blow. She flips over him and kicks him in the back, sending him falling forward but he quickly rises to his feet.

**LYCAON:**  
And you know something else, Xena? When Ares was mortal, he wasn't even much of a fighter. (off Xena's distracted look) Are you listening?!

**XENA** (purrs):  
Oh, I promise, you have a captive audience.

**LYCAON:**  
I mean, he was no match for any *real* warrior.

Xena smirks. There is a flash of blue light. Ares materializes with the tip of his sword at Lycaon's chest.

**ARES:**  
I think I've listened to just about enough of this. (to Xena) Allow me.

**LYCAON:**

Ares. I should have killed you when I had a chance.

**ARES:**

Famous last words.

Lycaon snarls and raises his sword, but Ares is much too quick for him--in the next moment, Lycaon clutches at his chest and drops to the ground, his eyes never leaving Ares until they turn glassy. He's dead.

Ares looks at the blood on the sword. With a slight frown, he motions over the blade, and it is left clean.

**XENA:**

You know, for mortals, it's not as easy to get the bloodstains out...they fade, but they never disappear completely. (sighs) Feel better?

**ARES:**

Better than your friend back in town.

**XENA:**

He's not just my friend; he's my brother. And he *will* feel better once I get back.

**ARES:**

Your *brother*?

**XENA:**

He's Toris. I...just found out.

**ARES (reluctantly):**

Xena, Lycaon did almost kill me...with the same poison. If it weren't for... (he stumbles and lowers his eyes) ...a friend...I would have been dead.

Xena looks at him, horrified.

**[FLASHBACK]**

Chloe and Dymas rush Ares inside the house, Helice following, closing the door behind them. Ares sits down on the bed; he is starting to shiver and gasp. Chloe looks at his wound.

**DYMAS:**

You were right about him, Chloe. I'm so sorry I didn't believe you.

**CHLOE:**

That doesn't matter now. He needs help.

**HELICE:**

Is he going to die?

**CHLOE:**

I'll do all I can. (Ares gives her a surprised look) Luckily for you, Argeus, I'm the village healer. And I think I have an antidote for this poison.

Her eyes settle on a shelf across from the bed where several jars sit. She stands up and walks up to them, checking every one. Finally she finds a small green vial sitting behind a stack of other, larger jars. It is covered with cobwebs and dust.

Chloe picks it up and blows the dust off, looking at a mark on the vial. Her eyes light up with joy.

**CHLOE:**

This is what we need. It's an antidote.

She takes a cloth and dips it into a small bowl of water by the bed, dabbing the wound to clean it. Ares groans and grits his teeth. Chloe pours a little of the antidote on another piece of cloth and starts dabbing at the wound. Ares cries out slightly.

**CHLOE** (a little surprised):

For a warrior, you don't seem to be used to pain...

Ares manages a bitter smirk.

**ARES:**

Oh, I'm getting used to it; believe me.

Once Chloe is done treating the wound, she wraps it firmly with a dry cloth and then looks at Ares. He looks back at her and nods gratefully. His face is covered with sweat.

**CHLOE:**

Argeus...thank you very much for what you did. You risked your life for our daughter...that was very noble.

Ares blinks and says nothing.

**CHLOE:**

I've treated your wound. You should be all right but you're going to get quite sick before the antidote takes full effect. It will probably take you a week or so to get back to normal. Until then, you'd better stay in bed. The only thing we can do now is let you rest and let the antidote do its job.

**[END OF FLASHBACK]**



**XENA:**

You risked your *life* to save that girl?

**ARES:**

Hey, what exactly you implying about my combat skills?

Xena looks at him and smiles, shaking her head a little.

**XENA:**

So the antidote works. Great! All I have to do is get the flower...

**CUT TO**

Xanthus' study. Xanthus is asleep at his desk. Philyra comes out of the infirmary. The noise makes the elderly physician wake up with a start.

**XANTHUS:**

How's the patient?

**PHILYRA:**

He's delirious again... I hope we get the antidote soon. (her face changes suddenly as she thinks of something) Xanthus--you did tell Xena about the special quality of the Mickree Flower, didn't you?

**XANTHUS:**

What are you talking about?

**PHILYRA:**

The flower cannot be touched directly by human hands. (Xanthus gives her a nervous look) If it is touched, it will wilt and become quite useless.

**XANTHUS (shocked):**

What?

**PHILYRA:**

Didn't Lysander ever tell you?

**XANTHUS (confused):**

I...I don't think so... If you can't touch it, then how are you supposed to get it?

**PHILYRA:**

Use a cloth, a glove...anything. As long as it doesn't touch human skin, it's fine. But if you touch it with your bare hands, it will die.

**XANTHUS** (horrified):

Oh no....

**CUT TO**



A ray of morning sunlight reaches the thicket where the Mickree flower grows. There is a sound like a soft chord played on a lyre--and one by one, the pink petals of the glowing flower turns a brilliant violet. Xena reaches down to pluck it and rises with a smile on her face. But suddenly, the flower starts to shrivel and fades to a grayish color. Xena's face turns from joy to bewilderment and then horror as we:

**FADE OUT**

**ACT FOUR**

**FADE IN**

Xena holds up the glowing Mickree flower, smiling--but suddenly, the flower starts to shrivel and fades to a grayish color. Xena's face turns from joy to bewilderment and then horror.

**XENA:**

No... No!

The flower disintegrates into ash, running through Xena's fingers. She cups her hands, but to no avail--the precious plant is gone. She looks up at Ares, who is just as stunned.

**ARES:**

What was that?

**XENA** (tonelessly):

The Mickree flower, the antidote--it's gone, turned to dust the moment I touched it. (getting angry) I'm not letting Toris die! I was too late to save his family, and now--I'm going to be too late to save him, too.

**ARES:**

There was nothing you could have done about his family.

**XENA:**

No. No, there wasn't. But then to you, it's just another... (an idea has obviously struck her) ...village.

Seeing the change in Xena's face, Ares looks at her curiously.

**ARES:**

What is it?

**XENA:**

You said you were poisoned in the same way--and there was an antidote. The healer may still have it! (hurriedly) Ares, take me to that village...

**ARES** (looks down almost sadly):

You won't be able to get it from them, Xena.

**XENA:**

Why not? It wasn't that long ago when you were mortal, a year or two. They should still be around.

**ARES:**

No...they're not.

**XENA:**

What do you mean "they're not"?

**ARES:**

There's still a part of the story that I haven't told you. Tycan's thugs did return, a few days later...

**[FLASHBACK]**

Daytime. Ares is sitting up in bed, looking very weak; Chloe is beside him, tending to his wound, wrapping it with a new bandage.

**CHLOE** (finishing bandaging it):

There you go.

Ares nods gratefully, flexing his arm.

**CHLOE** (getting up):

I'll be back with some food.

She leaves the room just as Helice enters. She sees Ares sitting in the bed and walks up to him.

**HELICE** (looking at the bandaged arm):  
That looks better.

**ARES:**  
It's fine--your mother's fussing.

**HELICE** (shyly):  
You can't blame her, after what nearly happened. (serious) Argeus, I could have never forgiven myself if you'd died to save me. I've...always wanted to meet a real hero. (wryly) Though maybe under less dramatic circumstances.



**ARES:**  
Yeah, sure--there's a concept for a heart-stopping drama: a hospice! It'd never take off. I'm more into action myself...

The door opens and Dymas comes running in, out of breath.

**DYMAS:**  
Where's Chloe?

**HELICE:**  
Dad! What's wrong?

**CHLOE** (walking into the room):  
What is it, Dymas?

**DYMAS:**  
Tycan is coming. I saw his army just over the hill. He'll be here in minutes.

**CHLOE:**  
We're not safe here.



**DYMAS:**

Gather up your things. We're going to the Arcon caves to hide.

**CHLOE:**

Help Argeus, Helice! He's too weak to walk.

**ARES:**

There's nothing wrong with my *legs*! (he tries to stand, then sinks back on the bed, grimacing in pain.) I need a minute.

**HELICE:**

Don't move; I'll pack enough for you.

Dymas, Chloe and Helice try to gather their possessions into sacks. Ares tries to get up again, without success.

There is a pounding of horse hooves outside. Dymas rushes to the window--Tycan and about a dozen warriors gallop into the village, lit torches in their hands.

**DYMAS:**

It's too late. We are not going to make it.

***CUT TO***

The village street.

**TYCAN** (shouting to the whole village):

So, you weren't afraid of us before, huh?! Maybe it's time you remembered what real fear feels like!

He takes the torch that he holds in his hand and throws it on one of the buildings. It is quickly engulfed and people begin to flee in terror. Tycan and Lycaon laugh. Tycan signals to the other warriors and they kick their horses, scattering around the village, throwing their torches on every building they see.

***CUT TO***

Inside the house, Dymas snaps back from the window.

**DYMAS** (panicked):

We have to get out of here.

Just then, the door to their house comes crashing down and Tycan strolls in, a torch is in one hand and a sword in the other. Dymas, Chloe, and Helice are frozen with fear. Ares tries to reach back for his sword. He grits his teeth as he pulls his arm and the wound reopens, red blossoming through the bandage.

**TYCAN:**

Well, well. We meet again. Can't say it's a pleasure. (looks at their frightened faces) Well, not for you, anyway.

He throws the torch into one of the walls of the house and it bursts into flames. He laughs and points his sword at Chloe, Dymas and Helice who are now huddled, holding each other. Off to one side, the sword slips from Ares' grip, he bites down on his lip against the pain in his arm, and tries again.

**TYCAN** (smiles):

I'm going to enjoy this.

Tycan swings his sword, Chloe shrieks and throws up her hands--then a sword point is visible between her shoulder blades. She falls.

**DYMAS:**

Chloe, *no!!*

He grabs a chair, charging Tycan--only to be stopped by the sword that goes through his stomach. He collapses into his own blood on the floor, dead.

**HELICE:**

Dad!!!

Tycan looks up from the bodies of Chloe and Dymas, directly into Helice's eyes. She is paralyzed with horror, her mouth parted slightly. Tycan's boorish face moulds itself into a tender smile.

**TYCAN:**

Don't worry, little one. I'm not going to hurt you.

She looks up, almost seeming to believe him, but her expression is short-lived--Tycan slits her throat and she dies instantly.

**TYCAN** (looking at the blade of his sword):

See? Didn't hurt a bit.

The entire house is becoming engulfed in flames now; beams are crashing to the ground. Tycan turns to go--and finds himself face to face with Ares, wielding his sword. He looks at Tycan with rage and pain. The bandage on his arm is soaked with blood.

**ARES:**

Going so soon?

A pompous smile crosses Tycan's face. He points the bloodied blade at Ares' chest.

**TYCAN:**

Don't worry; you'll be going sooner.

He rushes Ares, who ducks to avoid the blow, then slashes at Tycan. Tycan parries.

**TYCAN:**

How pathetic! Ares, here in a place full of insignificant villagers. I would have thought you'd be out with an army somewhere, instead of helping these gnats meet their sorry end.

The swords clash several times; Tycan is clearly gaining the upper hand.

**ARES:**

You're right--that's *your* job.

**TYCAN** (smirks, ignoring his comment):

You may have survived the first time, but this time you won't be so lucky. What I wouldn't give to waste the former God of War.

He rushes at Ares, sword raised, and prepares to strike--but Ares is ready. He vaults backwards over the warlord, and locks his left arm around Tycan's neck before he can realize what happened, then puts his sword to Tycan's thick neck.



**ARES:**

Scream, Tycan.

Tycan whimpers.

**ARES** (pressing with the sword):

Louder!

Tycan screams--the sound shatters through the village; the camera zooms out to show the crumpled bodies of Dymas, Chloe and Helice--then the scream stops. The camera plunges back into close-up as Ares pulls back his sword and releases Tycan's motionless body onto the floor.

Ares looks down at him, shaking, his teeth chattering.

**CUT TO**

Lycaon stops his attack on the villagers when he hears the screams of his commander and in moments, he runs up to the house.

***CUT TO***

Ares looks up from the body--he is no longer shaking. Around him, the fire rages dangerously close. Off-camera, there are sounds of logs falling and the crackle of burning straw. Ares glances quickly at the bodies of the family--then goes out of the room through the back door.

***CUT TO***



Ares staggers away from the burning house and falls to the ground, exhausted. He breathes heavily and closes his eyes.

***CUT TO***

Lycaon runs into the house through the front door which is about to collapse, and finds Tycan lying on the floor. He seems to be moving a little and Lycaon kneels down beside him.

**TYCAN** (softly):

Ares... (he exhales and dies)

Lycaon stands up, then shouts in frustration. He looks around the room--the flames are closing in.

**LYCAON:**

You will pay for this, Ares!! I promise you this. One day, I'll find you and *destroy* whatever is left of the God of War!

***CUT TO***

Ares listens from behind the wall, hearing the warrior's threats. He looks around and then struggles to get up as quickly as he can. Then he walks unsteadily out of the village, behind him are the images of the entire village overcome with flames, and the screams of villagers can still be heard.

**[END OF FLASHBACK]**

**XENA:**

So they're dead. (Ares nods) I'm sorry.

Ares looks down, not answering.

**XENA:**

But that antidote they had is my only hope at curing my brother. Ares, will you take me there? Maybe the antidote is still in the village.

**ARES:**

It was destroyed by fire, Xena. Everything was burnt to the ground.

**XENA:**

Just take me there.

Ares looks at Xena and hesitates, not sure if he wants to go back there himself. Then after a pause and Xena's almost pleading eyes, he nods and puts his hand on her shoulder and they disappear.

**CUT TO**

Morning, ruins of a village. Remnants of buildings are everywhere--skeletal, charred crossbeams, half-burnt barns and houses. Xena and Ares appear on the street.

**XENA** (looks around):

Was their house around here?

Ares points to a pile of wood to the left. Xena runs over to it while Ares stays back. Xena walks around the building ruins, searching frantically through fallen boards. She walks over to a place where one of the walls used to be, and something catches her eye. Under a pile of earth and some wooden beams, there is a tin box. Xena digs it out and opens it--inside is a set of vials, all intact.

**ARES** (coming up beside her):

It's the green one.

**XENA:**

Are you sure... (off his look) Okay.

She takes the green vial and opens it--there is only a little bit of the antidote left. She puts the top back on and stands up.

**XENA:**

I hope it's enough.

Xena and Ares disappear.

**CUT TO**

Athens' city gates. The sun is well above the horizon--it's late morning. Xena and Ares appear in front of the medic's house; the doors are now open. Xena opens her palm and looks at the small vial, then hurries inside. Ares looks after her.

### **CUT TO**

The infirmary. Xanthus is standing next to Toris, looking very grim. Toris is throwing off his blankets in delirium, moaning with agony. Xena bursts into the room.

### **XANTHUS:**

Xena! It's too late--there's no time to make the antidote now...

### **XENA:**

We don't have to.

She hands him the vial. Xanthus is speechless for a moment.

### **XANTHUS** (smelling it):

How... Where did you get this?

### **XENA:**

From a friend. (impatiently) There's no time for questions now, Xanthus--you've got to hurry!

### **XANTHUS:**

Yes, of course. Help me, Xena--hold him down.

Xena takes Toris' arms and pins them to his sides with difficulty. He struggles against her hold, then opens his eyes for an instant, almost seeing her. His eyes close again, but he stops struggling. Xanthus unwraps the bandage from around Toris' wound, opens the vial, dabbing the contents of it onto the festering flesh. Toris flinches a little and groans.

### **XENA:**

Is it enough?

Xanthus inspects the wound.

### **XANTHUS:**

Plenty. He'll be just fine in a few days, though he may be weak from the fever for a little while longer.

### **XENA:**

Xanthus--thank you.

### **XANTHUS:**

It's--a rare thing to witness.

### **XENA:**

Poisoning?

**XANTHUS:**

No. The determination to triumph over death. I feel privileged to know you, Warrior Princess--and your brother. (pause) I must see to my other patients--I'll leave you two alone.

Xanthus walks out of the infirmary to give Xena some time with her brother. When he's gone, Xena looks at her brother. Awake now, Toris smiles weakly.

**XENA:**

You heard him. You're going to be fine, brother.

**TORIS (quietly):**

I knew you'd come through, Xena. Thank you.

**XENA:**

Hey. We're family.

At the mention of the word, Toris' face closes over.

**TORIS:**

All the family I have left. Xena--when Lyceus died...I blamed you for not protecting him well enough, then not mourning him enough...

**XENA:**

Shh...

**TORIS (turning away):**

I was a fool. I didn't understand that this kind of grief is...deep in the heart. Too deep for tears.

**XENA:**

Toris... There is nothing I can say that will make it all right, because it's not all right. It never will be. But when you look in your heart--it won't be grief you find there. It'll be love. Their love, and your own. Treasure it.

Toris looks back at Xena, then reaches up to stroke her cheek lightly. She takes his hand.

**TORIS:**

Perhaps one day, I'll be able to do that. I'll return to the place, give them a proper burial... There are many things I need to do--things that they would have wanted me to do.

**XENA:**

I'll come with you--

**TORIS (gently):**

No, Xena. I need to do this alone.

They look at each other for a moment, then Xena nods.

**XENA:**

You know you can count on me if you need anything.

**TORIS:**

I know. Mother...would have been very proud of you.

Xena smiles sadly; Toris releases her hand and closes his eyes. Very carefully, Xena arranges the blankets around him, then kisses his forehead.

**XENA:**

I'm glad we have each other, Toris.

**TORIS** (whispers):

So am I.

Xena watches him for a moment, then leaves the room.

**CUT TO**

The porch of the medic's house. Xena comes out, squinting in the light. Ares stands in front of her, holding Argo's reins. He is feeding her something.

**XENA** (coming up):

I don't believe it. One morning, and she's already eating out of your hand.

**ARES:**

I think it was Greba who said, "why can't we be more like animals?"

**XENA** (smirks):

She also said you have grey hair.

**ARES:**

Point taken--but I was mortal at the time. All that's behind me now.

**XENA:**

Is it? Then why do you hang around burning villages, reliving the "past"? Toris' village had nothing for the God of War.

**ARES:**

Hey--I had nothing to do with... (pauses) How did you know about that?

**XENA:**

So you *were* remembering.

**ARES** (changing the subject):

How *is* your brother?

**XENA:**

As well as expected. The soul takes longer to heal than the body. (looks at Ares shrewdly) Even for gods.

**ARES:**

But...it does heal?



**XENA:**

Not always. And not completely. (she smiles slightly at Ares' pained expression) But sometimes a few scars only make a soul more beautiful.

Ares holds out his hand, Xena gently touches her fingertips to Ares', then weaves her fingers through his.



**XENA (softly):**

You were a good man, Ares.

Ares' guarded look gives way to something like contentment. Xena raises Ares' hand to her cheek, holding it close for a second before letting go.

**XENA:**

Perhaps you still are.

They look at each other for a few moments, then Ares grins and shakes his head.

**ARES:**

Good? I thought you were into bad boys in leather?

**XENA:**

One out of two ain't bad.

Xena tries to get up into Argo's saddle, but Argo steps away, tossing her head, obviously too tired to carry a rider.

**ARES:**

Looks like you have a mutiny on your hands.

**XENA:**

She's just tired. (pats Argo's neck, Argo nuzzles her) She knows where her loyalties lie. Gabrielle and Eve are waiting for us.

Ares holds out his hand with a little flourish.

**ARES:**

There are always alternative means of transportation...

**XENA** (taking his hand):  
Sure. We can walk.

**ARES:**  
Uh, Xena--don't you think you're taking this mortal thing a *little* too far?

**XENA:**  
Why? Do you?

Ares looks down at their hands.



**ARES:**  
Did I say too far? I meant not far enough.



**XENA:**  
Oh, it's another half-day's walk--that should be far enough for you...

Their voices begin to fade as they walk away, leading Argo, and the theme music rises.

**ARES:**  
So you're serious about this walking thing?

**FADE OUT**

**THE END**

*[Gabrielle and Eve shared some quality time during the production of this episode.]*