

SHIPPER SEASON SEVEN



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Logline

Michael is intent on gaining another servant of the Light to replace a soul long gone, and Ares gets caught up in his scheme. Now, Xena must set things right-but Michael has one card left to play.

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TEASER

FADE IN

We open on Heaven, a vast expanse of floating clouds and peach colored sky. A large rock face juts up from far below, surrounded by other scattered rocky peaks. We pan around and move in closer toward the rock face where we find Callisto standing near the cliff's edge. Her wings are gone and she is no longer angelic in appearance, though she is still clad in white. Her face is troubled and she keeps looking around, as if waiting for something.



CALLISTO (impatient):
Michael.

A few moments of silence and then there is a flare of white light before her and Michael appears. His face is serious.

CALLISTO (frustrated):
This wasn't how it was supposed to be, Michael.

MICHAEL:
Callisto, you know you were meant to be reincarnated int--

CALLISTO:
You lied to me. If I was reincarnated then why am I still here? (pause) I wanted to repay Xena for all the evil things I'd done to her by giving life to Eve.

Michael looks at her, and opens up a portal, which shows Eve, Xena and Gabrielle walking along, smiling.

MICHAEL:
And you did.

CALLISTO (bitterly):
For the right price. Forgot to mention the fine print, didn't you? Now that I've given up the wings, (motions at her back) what's to stop me from turning back into who I used to be?

Michael steps up to her to lay a hand on her shoulder, but she backs away.

MICHAEL (shakes head, disappointed):

There are still so many things that you do not understand about our Lord...even after all your time spent here.

CALLISTO:

Him, I understand. You...you baffle me. Michael, I want to go home. My family's in the Elysian Fields. You've kept me from them for too long.



MICHAEL:

Your place is here, in Heaven, where you were redeemed. This is where you must stay.

CALLISTO:

Michael, I..do..not..belong! Look at me! What use am I to our Lord?

MICHAEL (irritated):

Frankly, I don't know what he sees in you, either. But it's out of my hands.

CALLISTO:

What else do I have to do? I gave you your Messenger--and since she was born you've skyrocketed. Is that worth nothing?

MICHAEL:

Ah yes. The Messenger who has forsaken us. Nice going.

CALLISTO (sounds more like her old bad self than she has done in the whole scene):

That had nothing to do with me. Blame her mother.

MICHAEL:

Believe me, I do.

CALLISTO:

Then take me to speak to our Lord.

MICHAEL:

I can't do that.

CALLISTO (or else):

Try.

MICHAEL:

I don't think-- (narrows his eyes at Callisto appraisingly) All right, I might be able to arrange something. Of course, if you go--we'd have to find someone to take your place here. (slowly) Someone whose redemption would do a great deal to promote the glory of the God of Love.

CALLISTO:

Like who?

CUT TO

Xena, Gabrielle, and Eve are walking through a small, cleared area of a forest near a village. There are wooden pens enclosing all different kinds of animals--monkeys, camels, several exotic-looking birds, etc. Villagers are mingling around the area, little children are pointing and chattering excitedly.

EVE (looking at the animals in cages):

So, what do they call this place?

GABRIELLE:

A zoo.

XENA (joking):

You know, Gabrielle, if I didn't know better, I'd say this has Salmoneus written all over it. Just crazy enough to be something he'd come up with.

A woman and her toddler have overheard and come over.

WOMAN:

Excuse me--I couldn't help overhearing, but this *was* Salmoneus' idea. Around...ooh, ten years ago, this place opened up and has been pulling in big money ever since. They're all over this part of Greece now.

TODDLER:

I like the camels!

Xena and Gabrielle are staring at each other incredulously. Eve is watching them politely.

GABRIELLE:

I don't believe it! He finally made it.

XENA:

Who'd have thought it?

WOMAN:

He's a hero around these parts. Before, all we had was farmland, but you wouldn't believe how popular the animals are. The dinars are pouring in--

XENA:

Straight into Salmoneus' purse.

WOMAN:

Oh, no, not anymore. He died soon after the first one opened. Isn't it ironic?

GABRIELLE:

He was a good friend of ours.

WOMAN:

I'm sorry.

XENA:

It happens to everyone.

GABRIELLE (wry look at Xena):

And sometimes more than once.

Eve chuckles; Xena is a little upset.

Xena, Gabrielle and Eve continue walking until they reach a pen with several zebras in it. Gabrielle walks up to the posts and looks at the animals thoughtfully.

GABRIELLE:

You know what these remind me of?

XENA:

Horses that were painted on Salmoneus' budget?



GABRIELLE (laughs):

Xena! (thoughtfully) No, it's the black and white stripes... They always remind me of how good and evil are both necessary parts of life. (Xena rolls her eyes, Eve smiles at her mother when she does this) One cannot exist without the other.

XENA:

You've never seen one before. Since when does five seconds count as always?

GABRIELLE:

Just because you can't word it as eloquently as I can.

CALLISTO'S VOICE:

Don't you think the zebra would be much more beautiful if it were all white?

Xena and Gabrielle turn around, startled. Callisto is standing behind them. Eve turns around as well.

XENA (clearly shocked):

Callisto. (looks her up and down, confused) You're not an angel.

GABRIELLE:

And you're not in Eve, either.

CALLISTO (sadly, looks down):

No. (looks up) I've been exiled from Heaven because Eve has abandoned her path as the messenger of the God of Love.

Xena, Gabrielle, and Eve all look shocked as we:

FADE OUT

ACT ONE

FADE IN

Xena looks troubled.

CALLISTO:

I need your help, Xena.

GABRIELLE:

Again?

CALLISTO (uncomfortable):

I know I have no right to ask anything of you--not after you gave up your own salvation for me. But please--I have no one else to turn to. Michael is keeping me from joining my family.

XENA (heard enough):

All right, that's enough. It's time Michael and I had a little chat.

CALLISTO:

I can take you to see him.

XENA:

Do it.

Gabrielle catches her arm.

GABRIELLE:

Xena, wait! You sure you want to do this?

XENA:

I *have* to do this.

Eve walks up to Xena and puts a hand on Xena's shoulder.

EVE:

Please be careful, Mother. You know how Michael can be.

XENA:

Don't worry. I can handle him. You know that. (to Callisto) Let's go.

Xena steps up next to Callisto and then looks at Gabrielle and Eve.

GABRIELLE (worried):

Good luck.

EVE:

We'll be here waiting for you.

Xena nods, then looks at Callisto and they disappear.

CUT TO

They appear in a quiet area of a forest where Xena finds Michael standing in the shadows. Callisto disappears, leaving Xena and Michael alone.

Xena's eyes narrow as she stares at Michael who has begun to slowly walk toward her.

MICHAEL:

Well, it seems we meet again.

XENA:

I wouldn't say it's a pleasure. (pause) So...what's your game this time, Michael? This is not exactly playing fair.

MICHAEL (innocently):

Whatever do you mean?

XENA:

You know very well what I mean. Callisto told me what happened to her. You condemned her to the life of a ghost because Eve gave up her duties as your god's messenger. Callisto's redemption had nothing to do with Eve or me following the faith of your god--it was something I bought with my own salvation. You had no right to do that to her.

MICHAEL:

You are in no position to presume to understand how redemption works.



Xena's lip comes up into a snarl, clearly angered with Michael.

XENA:

Try me.

MICHAEL:

The simplified version is that as Callisto and Eve are the same being, spiritually, the sins that one commits affect the other.

He starts to walk around her slowly.

MICHAEL (continuing; changing the subject):

I'm just curious, Xena. Are you in the habit of considering the consequences of your actions?

XENA:

Don't change the subject. We were talking about *your* actions.



MICHAEL (jovially):

We'll get there, never fear. But let's talk about you for a minute. You tricked Lucifer into taking your place in Hell. You turned against the agents of the Light, who had resurrected you after your crucifixion and given you a daughter. You restored Ares and Aphrodite to Olympus, and then all the other gods and thus, derailed the Twilight prophecy, which was meant to come true.

Xena's snarl begins to fade, but her face is still set. Michael stops circling her.

MICHAEL:

How can you be so sure you didn't screw up the destiny of the whole world by doing that?

XENA:

Simple. You gave me a daughter for your own purposes, and as I recall, you weren't at all opposed to the idea of me corrupting Lucifer. As for screwing up the world's destiny, it doesn't need me to do that. You seem to be doing just fine on your own.

MICHAEL:

I am bringing about a change for the better--have you forgotten how cruel and despotic the ancient gods could be? The Twilight was supposed to begin a new era in the world and you single-handedly prevented it. How many people would be living happier lives if it weren't for you?

XENA:

Off the top of my head--one. *You.*

MICHAEL:

Eli's message--

XENA:

Eli's message wasn't about your god destroying all other gods in the world! His message was that people are free to create their own destiny--and that neither the Olympians nor your God can have power that isn't theirs to take. It belongs to the people, who, frankly, could do a much better job of running the world than any god I've ever met.

MICHAEL:

Is that so? Then answer me this, Xena. How could you ally yourself with Ares, who has tried again and again to lure you back to the path of war and darkness? He wishes to lead the world into darkness through you, so he, not the people, has all the power. I thought you'd given up on that path. You go around helping people and doing good and all the while, you still feel you must join Ares, the very soul of what I thought you were against.

Xena wavers a little at the mention of her alliance with Ares. She looks down for a moment. Michael sees her hesitation and grins slightly, not noticeable to Xena though.

MICHAEL:

And don't forget, Xena, that after your ridiculous theatrics in Jappa, it was Eli and the God of Love who enabled you to come back to life--by steering the 40,000 souls to redemption and freeing them. How do you know that, now that you have openly set yourself against the God of Love, the souls haven't been lost again?

Xena looks up at him, visibly shaken.

XENA:

Talk straight, Michael. What have you done to them?

MICHAEL:

I can't answer that. You must look for the answer inside your own heart.

Xena hesitates and then suddenly, she is zapped out of sight in a burst of brilliant white light.

CUT TO

Xena appears in the middle of a desolate, gray, rocky, almost completely barren landscape, which stretches as far as the eye can see. Xena looks bewildered and she begins to walk, but soon bumps into an invisible wall that keeps her from going any further.

Michael's gleeful laughter suddenly fills the air and Xena looks around quickly.

MICHAEL'S VOICE:

You are free to leave at any time, Xena...as soon as you feel completely free of guilt.

His voice fades in the air with another faint laugh. Xena continues to look around.

XENA (infuriated):
Michael!!

CUT TO

Heaven. A spacious room. Callisto walks into it and down a hall to find Michael seated on a large golden chair. Callisto looks a little troubled.

MICHAEL:
Ah! There you are--nice job!

CALLISTO:
I'm not sure this is right, Michael.

MICHAEL:
What, losing heart so soon? What about your family? No, no--we don't do things by halves around here. If you're to have your reward, you must complete your mission.

CALLISTO (looks at Michael a little worried):
Will Xena be all right?

MICHAEL:
Of course--she will be saved. And you will have repaid your debts.

Callisto looks around for a moment, still a little uncertain, and then walks away. Michael watches her leave and a gleeful smirk appears on his face.

CUT TO

Gabrielle and Eve are in the forest at a campsite. They are both sitting around a campfire, looking worried.

EVE:
She's been gone an awfully long time, Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE:
I know.

EVE:
Hope nothing's gone wrong.

GABRIELLE (shakes her head):
Me too.

Ares appears before them. He looks slightly concerned.

GABRIELLE:
What's wrong?

ARES:
Where's Xena?

GABRIELLE:

She went off to talk to Michael about Callisto.

ARES:

What?

GABRIELLE:

It's a long story--but she's okay.

ARES (distracted):

I can't feel her.

GABRIELLE (confused):

You can't feel her?

ARES:

No... (closes eyes; trying to reach out again) No, she's not in this world.

GABRIELLE:

What do you mean?

ARES:

The last time I didn't feel her was in Jappa... (he trails off)

Gabrielle and Eve glance at each other, now looking very worried as we:

FADE OUT

ACT TWO

FADE IN

ARES (seeing their worried expressions):

Why is she with Michael?

GABRIELLE:

I told you--it's about Callist--

ARES (interrupting):

I know that, you told me. But why *her*?

GABRIELLE (shakes head):

Callisto came to us, asking for Xena's help. She says she has been condemned because Eve left the service of the God of Love. Xena went to confront Michael about it and we haven't seen her since.

Ares looks very perplexed and then vanishes.

CUT TO

Ares is standing in the halls of Olympus. He is pacing back and fourth, throwing fireballs into the walls at an alarming rate.

ARES:

Damnit. Xena, what trouble have you found now? There's only so many times I can save you.
(throws another fireball to the left)

CALLISTO'S VOICE:

I can help you find Xena...

Ares turns sharply to the side and sees Callisto standing there. She has a gaping hole through her midriff, which has flames licking around the edge. She closes her eyes, tenses her muscles and slowly her body becomes whole again.

CALLISTO (continued):

...if you promise not to do that again.

ARES:

You have something to do with Xena's disappearance, don't you.

CALLISTO:

All I want is to help you find her.

ARES:

Why should I believe you? That's what you told her.

CALLISTO:

The question is...will you risk that I'm telling the truth? Isn't it worth being sure?

His eyes narrow in suspicion, it is clear that he suspects there is something wrong. Callisto gestures for him to follow her, he hesitates and then does so.

ARES (looking at Callisto, sarcastically):

You know, you always looked better in black.

Callisto pretends not to hear.

ARES:

Then again, I also preferred you with a mind of your own. Much more interesting than anything Michael has to say.

CALLISTO:

Ares, are we going to save her or am I going to have to listen to you complain that we didn't manage to?

ARES:

Ooh...your claws are still there after all.

Callisto just puts her hand on his arm and they disappear in golden sparks.

CUT TO

They appear in the same part of the forest that Callisto had taken Xena to meet Michael. Michael is again standing in the shadows and Callisto disappears.

Ares looks at Michael, rage in his eyes.

ARES:

What have you done with Xena?

Michael doesn't answer, but instead, he opens a window in the air in front of them that shows Xena, who is wandering restlessly in the place where she is trapped, looking for a way out.



Ares snarls, enraged. He moves toward the window and tries to walk through it, but it dissolves the moment he touches it. He shoots a lightning bolt at it, but it is no use, nothing he does is strong enough for him to get to her--Michael and the Light control the place and Ares is powerless to do anything.

MICHAEL (seeing Ares trying to get to Xena):

You might as well give up, Ares. (studies him disparagingly) You're nowhere near strong enough to reach her.



Ares looks at Michael, draws his sword and charges the archangel, who draws his sword. He fights Michael fiercely, but is never able to beat Michael. Their swords clash and when Ares rushes at Michael again, he parries Ares' sword and causes it to fly out of his hand. Then Michael kicks Ares in the shins and knocks him flat on his back, Michael quickly pointing his sword against Ares' throat.

MICHAEL:

You know, we'd get on much better if you learned to trust me. I did say that you're *not* strong enough.

ARES:

Oh, and you are? Go ahead then--kill me.

Ares looks at Michael, challenging him. Michael pauses.

MICHAEL (as though talking to himself--although it is for Ares' benefit):

It would not be the Way of Love to kill a god...even you.

Ares looks at Michael for a second, before grinning triumphantly.

ARES:

You can't! You can't kill gods. (realizing) That's why you had to use Xena as your instrument. (Ares backs away from Michael and stands, staring at him) You have no more power over me than anyone else does.

MICHAEL:

Oh, but you forget. I can still make your existence quite unpleasant and above all...I have the one person who *does* have power over you in my control.

Ares sheathes his sword and looks at Michael firmly.

ARES:

Quite the hunter and collector, aren't you? So. What do I have to do to get her back?

MICHAEL (sanctimoniously):

All I want is to increase the power of the Light.

ARES (chuckling hollowly):

Oh, really? And just how do we fit into that? Gonna ransom Xena for my godhood--have me give up my immortality yet again? (raises eyebrows) I thought you've covered that one.

MICHAEL:

Oh no, not at all. All I want from you is much less...or much more, depending on how you look at it. (pause)

ARES:

Get on with it.

MICHAEL:

I have an offer for you...a gift. You could call it (pauses) a win-win situation.

Move in on Ares who looks very curious.

CUT TO

The campsite. Eve is sitting near the campfire, stirring a pan of food, and Gabrielle is standing up, looking a little restless.

EVE:

Come on, please eat some of this. There's nothing we can do.

GABRIELLE:

I can't just sit here not knowing what's happening with Xena. Eve, I'm going to go and try to look for her.

She gets up and starts loading a few things onto her horse, which is standing in the background, along with Eve's horse and Argo.

EVE:

I hate to say it, but if Ares can't find her, there is no chance you'll be able to.

GABRIELLE:

I'm worried about her--and two sets of eyes are better than one.

Eve looks like she's about to object again.

GABRIELLE:

You stay here--if she comes back, tell her I went south. There's an oracle there, maybe I can find out where she is.

EVE:

Gabrielle--wait!

Gabrielle doesn't look at her again, but walks away into the forest.

EVE (muttering to herself):

Honestly, with her, Ares and Mother between them, no wonder we have an interesting life.

She keeps stirring her food and after several moments, there is a flash of light. Callisto appears. Eve sees her, but says nothing. Callisto walks up to Eve and they study each other.

EVE (warily):

Will my mother be all right?

CALLISTO:

I assure you, Xena will be all right.

EVE:

Where is she?

A pause as Callisto sits down next to Eve.

CALLISTO:

Not in this world.

EVE:

We gathered that.

CALLISTO:

Of course--Ares was with you.

EVE:

If Gabrielle and my mother believe him, I don't see any reason not to. But, personally, I trust him only a little more than I trust Michael. Or you, for that matter.

CALLISTO (ignores the barb):

You are angry, Eve. It's...not the Way of Love to seek a focus for that anger.

EVE:

The way of Michael, you mean. Which happens to be whatever suits him best.

CALLISTO (uncertainly):

Michael is only serving the Lord. His intentions are good.

EVE:

And you know what they say about the path to Hell. I ought to know; I've spent my entire life as his puppet! (bitterly) How do you think that feels?

CALLISTO:

You've had a tough life, Eve. Most people never have anything much happen to them...but those that do, they more than make up for it.

EVE (coughs bitterly):

Oh yeah.



CALLISTO:

You did some terrible things (Eve looks at her, but Callisto smiles--the comment was not meant as an insult) --I know. So did I.

EVE:

Gabrielle told me about some of them.

Callisto looks away; her eyes show she is reliving some bad memories.

CALLISTO:

Yes...I expect she would have done.

EVE:

And then... Eli's god--your god--redeemed me in that temple. But you know the funny thing?

CALLISTO:

Tell me.

EVE:

He didn't redeem me. Maybe he put some spell on me, but I'm still Livia, deep down. (softly) Only now, it scares me.

Callisto has a look of recognition on her face. Her eyes are very sad.



EVE:

I don't think you can just be "redeemed". You have to want it--and I wanted it so badly. Maybe that's why I was so blind about Michael.

CALLISTO (thoughtful):

Maybe.

There is a moment of silence between them before they see Gabrielle walking through the trees toward them. Gabrielle sees Callisto and anger shows on her face.

GABRIELLE:

What are you doing back here? You already have Xena--now you want her daughter too?

CALLISTO (stands up):

Gabrielle--

Before she can continue, there is a flash of white light. The camera slowly pans up the figure's body. He is dressed in resplendent white and gold robes, a pair of white wings extending majestically from the figure's back. Continue panning up until the figure's face is seen--it is Ares. His face is strangely bland and washed out. Gabrielle and Eve, who has now stood up, stare at him, completely stunned and speechless. Callisto looks rather uncomfortable.



EVE:

Wh-what happened to you?

ARES:

I've been rescued from damnation.

GABRIELLE (nonplussed):

Where's Xena?

ARES (emotionless):

She will be saved too.

Ares suddenly winces and seems to be trying to say something more. However he soon stills and stares at them with the same blank expression. Gabrielle looks at Eve; they are both still taken aback by Ares' appearance. Callisto has her head hanging down; she seems somewhat ashamed.

CUT TO

Xena is standing in the middle of the barren landscape looking around. Suddenly, in front of her appears a window in which she can see the image of the new Ares standing with Eve, Gabrielle, and Callisto at the campsite. Xena's mouth nearly gapes open, a horrified, incredulous expression on her face..



XENA:

Ares?!

ACT THREE

FADE IN

Heaven. Michael is looking through a portal, watching Ares, Gabrielle, Eve, and Callisto at the campsite. There is a satisfied smirk on his face. Uriel is standing next to him.

URIEL:

You've done a magnificent job this time, Michael. How did you get Ares to agree to your deal?

MICHAEL (chuckles):

He's a fool. I told him that only by becoming an angel could he rescue Xena--and he agreed to it.

URIEL (slightly confused):

But a true angel wouldn't want her returned to the mortal world, with its wickedness and (dreamily) --temptations. He'd want her brought over to the... (pauses as he realizes; he grins) Light.

MICHAEL:

Exactly.

URIEL (claps slowly; smiles):

Brilliant. Simply brilliant.

CUT TO

The campsite. Gabrielle walks up to Ares--who still shows no emotion.

GABRIELLE (snapping her fingers in front of his face):

Ares, what's gotten into you? You can't be an angel!

ARES (looking at her):

The Light has "gotten into me"--and I most definitely am an angel.

GABRIELLE:

You're the God of War!

ARES:

War has no meaning without a righteous cause--it's empty. I have seen the truth, Gabrielle. War means nothing to me now.



GABRIELLE (going against her better judgment):

Don't you remember how thrilling it is to kill people, seeing them scream and run in fear of you, feeling their blood on your hands? You really want to give all that up for a fancy pair of wings?

ARES:

This (he indicates himself) is only a material manifestation of what really matters. Love--and its God.

GABRIELLE:

Doesn't sound like the Ares I know.

ARES (looks at Eve and Gabrielle):

This is who I am now so you'd better get used to it. The old Ares is gone...for good.

GABRIELLE (deliberately goading):

I bet that'll disappoint Xena.

ARES:

Xena will be grateful when I help her find her salvation--and that's just what's going to happen.

He flashes out of the campsite. Gabrielle looks over at Callisto.

GABRIELLE (angry):

Callisto, what's going on? Why is Ares an angel?!

Callisto looks very troubled.



CALLISTO:

I was sure I was doing a good thing, I swear.

She shakes her head and disappears. Gabrielle sighs and looks at Eve, who is half-heartedly emptying their burned dinner out of her pot.

EVE:

Now what do we do?

Gabrielle shrugs her shoulders.

GABRIELLE:

Hope that Xena can snap him out of it. Otherwise...

CUT TO

The realm where Xena is trapped. She is sitting down on the ground. Ares appears in front of her. When she sees him, she stands up, looking over him in utter disbelief.

XENA:

Ares?

She tries to come closer, but he stops her with an outstretched hand.

ARES:

I have been redeemed, Xena. Purified from the evil--which had infested my soul.

XENA:

And what, if I come any closer, I might defile you with my wickedness?

ARES (serious):

Perhaps. I'm not sure how this works--but until I ask Michael, I will take no chances.

XENA:

This is sick. You, nipping at Michael's heels?

ARES (a hint of the real Ares emerging):

It would be a far more enjoyable task with you by my side.

XENA (uh-huh):

As an angel?

ARES:

Of course.

XENA (shaking her head):

This isn't you, Ares. This isn't who you are.

ARES:

You've said it yourself; you wanted me to change.

XENA:

Not into a bathrobe with feathers!

ARES:

But Michael said--

XENA (exploding):

I don't give a damn about what Michael says! And neither did you--until now.

Xena steps closer to him, her eyes betraying various emotions, all negative. He frowns, but doesn't stop her this time.

XENA:

Will you get me out of here?

ARES:

You are free to leave...as soon as you accept your salvation.

XENA:

My salvation?

ARES:

That's the offer. Accept the God of Love into your heart. There is no room for war anymore. And then...you'll be free.

XENA:

Ares, we've been through hell together--more; I know you're stronger than this. Are you really just going to let Michael take hold of you? You're losing everything you love because of him. Don't let him take that away.

Ares again winces--and his face looks very troubled.

ARES (dully):

It's better this way.

XENA (sensing progress):

Just like it would have better to leave your family rotting in Hell? That kind of better? Well, I didn't let that happen and I'm certainly not going to let you go without a fight.

Ares is about to speak--but just at that moment, Michael appears next to them. Ares looks at Michael.

MICHAEL (commanding):

Ares, you're wanted back in Heaven.

Ares gives Xena a slightly regretful look and disappears. When he's gone, Michael looks at Xena, grinning.

MICHAEL (sarcastic):

Do you feel free of guilt yet, Xena?

Xena stares at him for a long moment and then smiles briefly--but with a cold glint in her eyes--looking much more confident.

XENA (no longer smiling):

You know, Michael, I may never know if everything I do is right and I may never be free of guilt, but I do know one thing: it has nothing to do with you, or your god--you can't judge me.

She walks forward and the invisible wall no longer holds her in place. It opens up before her and she strides straight through it.

CUT TO

The place where Xena had been speaking to Michael before she'd been transported to the other realm. Xena steps out of thin air, looking slightly dazed.

MICHAEL (appearing before her; unwillingly impressed):

Well, well, you are certainly one tough opponent.

XENA (raising an eyebrow):

I'm only just getting started.

MICHAEL:

How nice--and I was just finishing up. I must congratulate you--as bait, you really shine. (Xena scowls) Ares serves our Lord now. Who would have ever thought that the Olympian God of War would become an angel of the Light? (Xena's eyes narrow, he grins sarcastically) Goodbye, Xena--it's been fun. (disappears)

Looking furious, Xena walks off.

CUT TO

Heaven. Michael is again sitting on his golden chair, a very smug grin on his face. Callisto appears before him.

MICHAEL:

Callisto, all of Heaven sings your praise. You have given us a great deal of power in the former

God of War. We thank you. (he waves his hand and a portal opens up, with an image of a sunny day inside) The Elysian Fields. Your family awaits.

CALLISTO:

I changed my mind.

MICHAEL:

What?

CALLISTO (sounding very much like her old self):

I had a little chat with my daughter, Archangel. (Michael folds his hands on his chest, trying to look like he doesn't care) A funny thing--it seems that you've been pulling her strings since the day she was born. Using her to manipulate her mother--and everyone else.

MICHAEL:

This-- (nods at the portal to the Elysian Fields) --is a limited time offer. I hardly think it's the moment for discussing your offspring.

CALLISTO:

On the contrary, it's the perfect moment. You must admit that I have quite a vested interest in Eve's welfare--seeing as she and I are *the same spiritual being*.

MICHAEL:

You know that's not true. It was merely something to tell Xena.

CALLISTO:

Oh, I know.

Callisto comes up to him, so close that it makes Michael rather uncomfortable.

CALLISTO:

It was-- (sing-song) --just-another-lie. No, I sold Xena's gift--my existence as an angel--to make little Eve. For *you*.

MICHAEL (defensive):

What do you want?

CALLISTO:

What do I want--now let me think--*what* do I want? Hm, yes. (contemptuously) A concept so simple, even you might understand it. *Justice*, Archangel. Justice for Xena, for Eve--and for me.

MICHAEL (through his teeth):

The Elysian Fields are waiting!

Callisto looks regretfully at the portal, then her gaze hardens again.

CALLISTO:

Oh, no. You're not rid of me yet. (disappears)

Michael grits his teeth, looking very irritated.

CUT TO

The campsite. Eve and Gabrielle are sitting around the campfire. Gabrielle has her head in her hands and is mumbling about something to herself. Eve looks despondent. Eve is fiddling with a stick, running it through the dirt aimlessly. Xena walks up silently behind them.

XENA:

Hi.

Their faces light up with delight and they stand, hugging Xena tightly.

GABRIELLE:

Xena! You're all right!

They break the embrace and look at Xena.

GABRIELLE:

You won't believe what has happened while you've been gone. Michael--

EVE:

He's turned Ares into an angel.

XENA (nods):

I know.

GABRIELLE:

You saw him?!

XENA:

I saw something white and feathery that *looked* vaguely like him.

EVE and GABRIELLE:

You saw him.

GABRIELLE:

We've got to do something.

XENA (wryly):

You mean you didn't think it was an improvement? We *could* just leave him like that.

EVE:

As Michael's trophy?

GABRIELLE (shudders):

Make that, "we've got to do something *soon*."

XENA (serious):

I have to confront Michael. This has to end once and for all.

Callisto appears; she is met with three very angry stares.

XENA:

What's going on, Callisto? I know you're a part of this.

CALLISTO (hard):

Not anymore.

GABRIELLE:

What are you talking about?

CALLISTO:

I wanted out. But according to Michael, the only way I could join my family was if someone took my place in Heaven.

XENA (understanding):

Ares.

CALLISTO:

Yes. I know now that it is wrong to force redemption on anyone. I want to help undo what I've done.

XENA:

You class that as redemption?! He's a babbling idiot.

CALLISTO:

Well...it should have been redemption.

EVE:

How can we undo anything Michael has done? He's too powerful.

CALLISTO:

There are others who don't agree with Michael's policies.

GABRIELLE:

What about Raphael? He's tried to stand up to Michael before.

XENA:

With a little encouragement from Ares.

EVE (to Callisto):

Would Raphael help us? He *is* one of the archangels, after all.

CALLISTO (grins):

I can be very persuasive.

Xena nods and Callisto disappears.

GABRIELLE (mutters):

Yeah, like she persuaded Eli to get himself killed.

XENA (softly):

It was Eli's choice, Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE (sighs):

I know.

Xena sighs and looks out into the quiet forest.

XENA:

What I can't understand is how Michael was able to trick Ares into becoming an angel. Ares would never do something like that voluntarily.

GABRIELLE:

There must be an explanation.

There is a flash of light and Raphael appears before them with Callisto, who moves out of the way, looking smug.

EVE (under her breath):

That was quick.

XENA:

Raphael.

RAPHAEL:

Xena. Callisto tells me you have a quarrel with Michael.

GABRIELLE:

Now there's an understatement.

XENA:

Tell me, Raphael. How much longer are you going to allow Michael to play in his power games? Doesn't sound much like what you say the God of Love is all about.

RAPHAEL (looking doubtful):

Michael's always been more powerful than I, Xena. He is the only one of the archangels who has a direct line of communication to the Lord.

XENA:

Sounds awfully convenient.

RAPHAEL:

It is the Lord's choice. (hesitates, then continues) But many of the angels see it your way.

XENA:

And what do you think?



RAPHAEL:

There are times when I believe them.

GABRIELLE:

Then you'll help us defeat Michael? Surely you can see how dangerous he's getting--and it will only get worse.

Raphael looks troubled, but sees Gabrielle, Xena and Eve's hopeful expressions.

RAPHAEL:

I don't know how much I'll be able to help, but I'll try.

XENA:

Thank you.

Raphael nods and then disappears as we:

FADE OUT

ACT FOUR

FADE IN

Raphael and Michael are standing on one of the cliffs. Raphael looks furious.

RAPHAEL:

This is getting beyond a joke!

MICHAEL:

I don't recall it ever having been a *joke*, Raphael. Some of us take our responsibilities seriously.

RAPHAEL:

And some of us just *take*. And take, and take. The power that was vested in you is corrupting your heart--or has done so already. You've lost sight of our Lord's way.

MICHAEL:

Your concern is touching, but quite unnecessary. Rest assured, I remain in our Lord's favor.



RAPHAEL:

It isn't your place to decide whom the Lord favors.

MICHAEL (short laugh):

Oh, is that so? Have you forgotten the consequences of opposing Him? I think you're about due for a reminder.

RAPHAEL (shakes head):

No, but I think you have.

They both draw their swords; a fight ensues.

MICHAEL (sneering):

You know, I thought better of you.

RAPHAEL:

I was about to say the same to you.

They fall silent, concentrating on parrying each other's blows. The fight heats up, until every blow looks set to kill. Michael manages to trip Raphael up, but just as he raises his sword to strike the killing blow, a burst of brilliant light surrounds them. As it fades, cut to Raphael's face--the look on it suggests that he has just had some kind of revelation. Michael blanches.

RAPHAEL (breathes):

My Lord!

He disappears.

CUT TO

The campsite. Raphael appears to Xena, Gabrielle, Eve and Callisto.

RAPHAEL (speaking quickly):

I may have figured out a way to defeat Michael and restore your War God.

XENA:

Which would be?

RAPHAEL:

I'll show you--come.

Raphael puts his hand on all four of them and they disappear.

CUT TO

Heaven. Raphael arrives with Xena, Gabrielle, Eve and Callisto. Out of nowhere, a golden trumpet appears in his hands. Raphael sounds the trumpet and the air around them fills with angels.



They land on the rocky cliffs surrounding where Raphael and the four women stand.

RAPHAEL:

Fellow servants of the Light--I have something to say, something that needs to be heard. Michael has been lying to you--to us. All this time, he has been deceiving us into thinking he alone controls what our Lord hears from us--but no longer. Our God stands for something that everyone has in their hearts: love.

Murmurs go through the crowd of angels.

RAPHAEL (continued):

By using that power, we can draw upon His goodwill. He favors no one--not Michael, not me, not anyone.

XENA:

All this time, Michael has been going against what the Light is all about. A child should be born of love, but Michael used that power to bring about the downfall of the Olympians.

CALLISTO:

It was Michael who gave Xena the power to kill gods, and ransomed their lives for the life of her child.

EVE:

And he corrupted me, the Light's own Messenger, into persecuting and murdering our own followers. He twisted Eli's words into nothing but power play.

CALLISTO:

He's deceived us all. Even me, by saying that if I got Ares, the Olympian God of War, to become an angel, I would be allowed to see my family.

GABRIELLE:

Michael is not to be trusted.

Suddenly, Michael appears, accompanied by Ares.



MICHAEL (looks at the angels):

Are you seriously going to believe that Xena (he spits the name out), the same person who is responsible for corrupting an archangel and casting him down into Hell, would actually tell the truth to you? She has no respect for our God--any god. (pause) You should be proud of what I've been able to accomplish. (puts a hand on Ares' shoulder, arrogant) I was able to redeem the God of War and turn him into a servant of the Light. What could be better than that--the very soul of war becoming one of us?

RAPHAEL:

We've heard enough, Michael! (to the whole gathering, loudly) Who is with me?

All of the angels glance at each other, murmuring. Then, one by one, they draw their swords and fly over to their respective sides, those that are loyal to Michael and those that are loyal to Raphael.

MICHAEL:

So be it!

With a fanfare, the sky explodes into a furious battle. Angels draw swords and take to the air; others fight on the rocky cliffs. There are screams as two angels fall into the abyss below, still locked in combat.

As the battle rages in the air above, the sound of swords clashing, several of Michael's minions alight on the plateau where Xena and the others are standing. Gabrielle draws her sais and engages one, while Xena takes on two others.

GABRIELLE (shouts to be heard):

Xena, behind you!

Xena manages to throw her assailants off the plateau and turns with her sword--to find herself face to face with Ares. His face shows no anger, but it is stern, his sword pointed at her; Xena's is blocking it. The sounds of the battle become almost silent, raging in the background, as they look at each other.

ARES:

Don't let this hate you have for Michael corrupt you, Xena. Let the Light into your heart and you will be redeemed.

Xena looks at his sword and then lowers hers, looking into his eyes.

XENA:

Ares, this isn't you. The world needs a God of War. You've always known that. Are you going to take second place and be Michael's lackey forever?

Ares' face begins to soften a little, it seems that he has begun to hesitate.

ARES:

Michael saved me. I owe him everything; I was drowned in darkness. The Light saved me from myself.

XENA:

No, Ares. You weren't evil.

Xena reaches out and touches his cheek, stroking it gently.

XENA:

You weren't evil... (continues to stroke his cheek, then his lips) You could love.

Ares slowly raises one of his hands to meet hers and holds it silently for a few moments. We zoom in slowly on his face, to see the real Ares break through the mask.



ARES (whispers):

Xena? I'm...free.



XENA (almost a sob):
That's right.

Ares lowers his sword, and comes over to stand at Xena's side. Neither of them says anything, they continue looking at each other.

The battle begins to slow as all the angels see Ares standing next to Xena. Uriel, who has been fighting side by side with Michael suddenly flares out of view--and reappears next to Raphael.

MICHAEL:
Uriel, what are you doing?! You're choosing to defy me?

Uriel just shakes his head.

URIEL:
You know what your problem is, Michael? You don't know when the game is up.

He does not budge from his spot beside Raphael. Slowly, the other angels look at each other and then begin to desert Michael, until he is finally left all alone.

The angels move away from him and begin to form a circle around him, with Raphael and Uriel leading them, stern expressions on their faces.

MICHAEL (looking at the angels surrounding him):
You are all fools! The Lord will not be happy about this!

An overhead shot of Michael standing in the middle of a circle of angels. Michael begins to look frightened. Raphael and Uriel raise their swords and direct them at Michael; a golden glow begins to radiate from Michael's body, flowing into the tips of their swords as they seemingly drain him of power. All the other angels do likewise. There is another overhead shot of Michael writhing in agony surrounded by a golden glow. After a few moments of this and him screaming in pain, he explodes in a blinding burst of golden sparks.

Gabrielle, Eve, Callisto, Xena, Ares and all the angels cover their eyes. When the light fades, Xena looks at Ares standing next to her and puts her hand on his arm. He now looks like himself again, dressed in his leathers; he is no longer an angel, though he seems a little dazed.

Gabrielle walks up to him, followed by Eve and Callisto. He eyes Gabrielle suspiciously.

GABRIELLE:

I don't suppose you get to keep the wings?

ARES:

No, thanks. This flight over the cuckoo's nest is *over*.

XENA (grins):

Welcome back.

Raphael flies over to them and looks at Callisto.

RAPHAEL:

Callisto, you're free to join your family in the Elysian Fields.

Callisto smiles, then looks at Xena.

XENA:

Callisto... Thank you.

CALLISTO:

For what?

XENA:

You were willing to give up the one thing you wanted most in order to help right a wrong you'd done. I'm grateful for that.

CALLISTO (nods):

Goodbye, Xena.

Xena nods. Callisto looks at Eve.

CALLISTO:

Eve, I hope you find your true path someday. Never give up looking for it.

Eve smiles slightly and nods. Callisto steps back from all of them and slowly begins to fade from view.

RAPHAEL (to Xena and Gabrielle):

I promise, from now on, things will be run differently. The Light will no longer try to expand its realm; there is no reason why we can't coexist peacefully with the other gods. We certainly have no quarrel with the Olympians.

XENA:

Thank you, Raphael. (sighs) Now, how about you get us out of here?

Raphael nods and they disappear.

CUT TO

The Elysian Fields. Callisto is walking through a meadow and a smile soon crosses her face as she sees the image of her mother and father in front of her. Her face lights up with joy as she runs toward them, they welcome her with open arms and tears in their eyes.

CUT TO

The campsite. Xena, Gabrielle, and Eve are sitting around the fire.

EVE:

You know, redemption really is a strange thing. (looking at Xena) You were trapped in that place, held there only by your guilt. How can one ever truly know when they have been redeemed?

XENA:

I guess you can never really know. As long as you believe it and believe in yourself, then that's all that counts.

GABRIELLE:

I don't think you can "be" redeemed. It needs to come from within you. Michael made it possible for you to see that, Eve, but I think it came from you.

EVE (considers):

You know, I think you're right. While I was Eli's Messenger, I was so focused on proving that the God of Love was worthy of people's worship...and I didn't feel worthy of His goodwill. I wanted to prove to Him that I was.

XENA:

Don't worry. (reaches out and strokes Eve's hair) You are worthy.

Ares appears. Xena looks at him caringly.

GABRIELLE (smiles):

Well, that was quite an adventure, wasn't it, Ares?

ARES (wryly):

Don't remind me. I just hope that you weren't recording all the things I said while I was an angel. That part of history is best left unsaid.

Ares looks at Xena, who is still watching him. Gabrielle glances thoughtfully at them.

GABRIELLE (to Eve; obviously as a diversion):

How about we go back to that zoo, Eve? You never did get to pet the zebra. (she jerks her head subtly at Xena and Ares)

Eve nods, following Gabrielle as they leave. Before they are gone, Gabrielle looks back at Ares.

GABRIELLE (mischievous look):

You know, Ares, you really do look good in white.

He gives her a teasing look.

ARES:

Not you as well--what is it with you three?

Gabrielle and Eve walk away. Xena and Ares look at each other, but for several moments, they don't say a word.

XENA:

Ares...I wanted to thank you for what you did trying to save me. (seems to want to say more, but then smirks) Not many war gods I know would do that. (she walks over to him)

ARES (raises an eyebrow):

You know other war gods?

Xena chuckles and shakes her head. Ares chuckles a little too, then becomes serious, looking into Xena's eyes.

ARES:

And I wanted to thank you as well...for bringing me back. To think that I could still be spouting that oh-come-to-the-Light stuff! (cringes dramatically)

XENA:

It might not have been so bad. (sighs melodramatically) Ooh...those wings...

ARES (raising an eyebrow):

You can't mean that.

XENA:

What if I did?

ARES:

Okay, who are you and what have you done with Xena?

XENA (grins):

I'm right here.

They once again become serious, looking deeply into each other's eyes. They both seem uncertain for a moment. Xena rests a hand on his cheek.

XENA (softly):

You really have changed, Ares.

ARES (grins):

Well, I think it would be best if we kept that between us. We don't want it getting out, now do we? Bad for my reputa--

Xena leans forward and ever so slightly, brushes her lips with his, then moves back.

XENA:

Not even the God of War has to be bad *all* the time.



They look into each other's eyes again and then she slowly places her hand at the back of his head, capturing his lips. They melt into a caring, tender kiss as we:

FADE OUT

THE END

[Callisto changed her mind about the aesthetic appeal of the zebra's stripes in the production of this motion picture.]