

# SHIPPER SEASON SEVEN



**Production #XWP154/SS20**  
**Episode #7.20**

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## **Logline**

As Xena and Ares help the Greeks battle the Persians, Xena recalls her history with the War God and confronts another dark event from the past.

## **Airdate**

May 21, 2002

## TEASER

**FADE IN**

**[MONTAGE OF PREVIOUS EPISODE]**

**ANNOUNCER:**

Previously on Xena...

A room in an abandoned house.

**XENA:**

You have been human, Ares. I think that human part of you is still inside you.

Xena and Ares are on a bed, kissing. Ares lifts up his head to look at Xena, who looks uncertain and a little confused. He starts to pull away, but Xena gently tightens her grip on his back. She pulls him down and they start to kiss again.

**CUT TO**

Xena and Gabrielle riding through the deserted streets of Athens.

**GABRIELLE:**

There isn't a soul in sight. What could have happened to all those people?

**CUT TO**

Xena and Gabrielle at the city gates, looking out an army headed toward the city.

**XENA:**

It's the Persian army.

**CUT TO**

The Persian camp.

**MARDONIUS:**

Xena, the legendary Warrior Princess... (to his lieutenant) You know what happened the last time one of our armies crossed her path?

**CUT TO**

Athena's quarter on Olympus.

**ATHENA:**

The Athenians and the Spartans have agreed to join forces to fight the Persian invasion.

**ARES:**

Really. (sarcastic) The beginning of a beautiful friendship?

**ATHENA** (leans forward on her elbows and stares at him intently):

Brother, I know that the hostilities between Athens and Sparta go a long way back. And I know you've had a hand in those hostilities. But this alliance is too important right now for you to mess it up. So I suggest you stay out of this.

**CUT TO**

A messenger pigeon flying over the Athenian army camp. It flies down into the hands of one of the soldiers, who carefully detaches a scroll from bird's leg and goes inside the command tent.

**CUT TO**

Xena and Ares sitting by a brook. Gabrielle stands facing them; she is out of breath.

**GABRIELLE:**

You know the Spartan army that was supposed to be on its way here? Well, it isn't. Pausanias, the Spartan commander, made the agreement with Tydeus. When he got back to Sparta, he was overruled by the governing council. Xena, they still mistrust the Athenians...they don't want an alliance.

**XENA:**

This will mean the destruction of Athens and Sparta...perhaps all of Greece.

**GABRIELLE:**

Unless we do something.

She looks from Xena to Ares.

**[END MONTAGE]**

The same scene as at the end of the previous episode: Xena and Ares sitting by the brook, Gabrielle standing in front of them and looking back and forth from Xena to Ares.

**ARES** (to Xena):

Well, I guess this is the point at which someone asks, "What's the plan?"

**XENA** (grimly):

There is no plan...as yet. But I do have an idea. And I'm going to need your help.

**ARES** (grins):

Poor Uncle Hades. It must be a cold day in Tartarus.

**XENA** (smiles a little):

Don't get too smug. I only need your help because there's no time to lose.

**ARES:**

Let me guess...shuttle service? Where to?

**XENA:**

Sparta.

## ***CUT TO***

The hall of the governing council in Sparta--a grand but very austere, minimally decorated interior. Seven council members, four men and three women in long dark blue robes with golden medallions on their necks, are sitting in armchairs on a circular platform, with Pausanias standing in the center.

### **COUNCILMAN #1:**

This is not satisfactory, Pausanias. We were hoping that the wall fortifications would be much further along by now.

### **PAUSANIAS** (looks exasperated):

With all due respect, Sir, we haven't had much time--the army had been preparing for a very different task.

### **COUNCILWOMAN #1:**

Joining the Athenians in their campaign. Yes, Pausanias, we know that you would much rather take that course of action. But the council has made its decision.

### **PAUSANIAS** (bitterly):

To put off the fighting until the Persians are at our gates.

### **COUNCILMAN #2:**

If the Persians meet the Athenian army in the field, the Athenians won't be able to defeat them, but the battle will surely weaken the Persian forces. If they attack us then, we will be ready for them. And we won't have anything to fear from Athens for a long time.

### **PAUSANIAS:**

I beg you, once again, to reconsider. If the report I have heard is true, Xena, the great Warrior Princess, has joined the Athenian army. With her on our side--

### **COUNCILMAN #1:**

Xena has never been a friend to Sparta. She fought for the Athenians in the last war.

### **COUNCILWOMAN #1** (sarcastic):

And if she's as good as everyone says she is, she should be able to lead the Athenians to victory without any help from us.

### **COUNCILWOMAN #2** (sadly):

Pausanias, you know I was on your side in this matter. But the council has voted, and there is nothing more to be said. You have to continue fortifying the walls.

## ***CUT TO***

The hallway. Pausanias comes out of the council room, looking grim. Xena and Gabrielle are walking toward him, accompanied by a guard.

### **GUARD:**

That's him.

Pausanias looks up, surprised.

**XENA:**

Pausanias?

**PAUSANIAS** (coldly):

That's me. And you are--

**XENA:**

Xena.

**GABRIELLE:**

Gabrielle.

**PAUSANIAS** (shocked):

Xena? Impossible! I was told you were with the Athenian army.

**XENA:**

We were.

**PAUSANIAS** (skeptical):

Unless you travel faster than a messenger pigeon--

**XENA** (smirking):

We took the express.

Gabrielle can't help chuckling.

**PAUSANIAS** (frowns):

If you really were with the Athenian army, then you must know this isn't a very good time for jokes.

**XENA** (bitterly):

That's exactly what I was going to tell *you*, Pausanias. Was it a joke when you pledged your support to the Athenians? No, wait--maybe the real joke is fortifying the walls in the hope that you can keep out a hundred thousand Persians.

**PAUSANIAS** (defensively):

It wasn't my call. The council overruled me.

**GABRIELLE:**

Then we'll talk to the council.

**PAUSANIAS** (looks at them hopefully but somewhat doubtfully):

I don't think you'll be very popular in there.

**XENA:**

That's just as well. We're not here to win a popularity contest.

**FADE OUT**

# ACT ONE

## **FADE IN**

Inside the council room. Xena and Gabrielle stand in the middle of the circle of council members while Pausanias stands in the back of the room.

### **COUNCILWOMAN #1:**

Why should we trust you, Xena? Everyone knows that you helped the Athenians defeat us.

### **XENA (impassive):**

I fought for Athens because I believed their cause was just. (a murmur among the council members.) Now, we have one cause--we are all Greeks.

### **COUNCILMAN #1:**

The Athenians are nothing but a bunch of cunning money-grubbers. The only kind of fighting they're really good at is backstabbing. Right now, they're pretending to be our allies because they need us. But do you think they'd hesitate to use this so-called alliance to spy on us and turn on us when it's more convenient?

### **COUNCILMAN #2:**

Our first duty is to the people of Sparta.

### **GABRIELLE:**

Don't you understand? It's by joining the Athenians that you can best serve Sparta's interests right now. We have seen the Persian army. You won't be able to stand against the Persians on your own.

### **COUNCILMAN #3:**

If you wouldn't listen to Pausanias, at least listen to them. They know what they're talking about.

### **COUNCILMAN #1:**

Our own commander couldn't persuade us, so we should listen to a couple of interlopers?

### **COUNCILWOMAN #1:**

Especially when one of them is said to be in the service of Ares, God of War.

Xena flinches and lowers her eyes; Gabrielle looks completely stunned, and several council members exchange shocked glances.

### **GABRIELLE:**

Xena, come on--say something!

### **XENA (troubled):**

Ares and I have sometimes...worked together. But I serve no one and nothing--except the Greater Good.

### **PAUSANIAS (speaks up from the back of the room):**

Maybe it wouldn't hurt to have the God of War on our side.

**COUNCILWOMAN #1** (vehemently):

Ares has never been a friend to Sparta. All he's ever done is get us into wars and help our enemies.

Xena stares down with a somewhat guilty look. Then, the familiar blue light flares next to her, and everyone gasps as Ares appears.

**ARES** (nonchalant):

Didn't you know it's not nice to talk about people behind their back? I think that goes for gods, too.

The camera pans over the stunned, frightened faces of the council members.

**XENA** (through clenched teeth):

Ares...I don't think you're helping much.

**ARES:**

Wait and see. (to the council) I'm only going to say this once, so listen good. (sarcastic) All this squabbling between Greek cities can be a lot of fun, but this is serious business. Normally, I may be a trifle allergic to the spirit of brotherhood, but I want to see those Persians get their asses kicked. And if the way to do that is for you to get warm and fuzzy with the Athenians, then you go right ahead. Do what she says and send your army to Eulexis, and who knows--maybe the next time you pray to me, you'll find me in a good mood.

He vanishes. The council members exchange doubtful looks.

**GABRIELLE** (quietly to Xena):

You think that helped?

**XENA** (quietly):

I don't know. Somehow, when Ares doesn't have any mischief up his sleeve, he doesn't make a very good sales pitch.

**GABRIELLE** (quietly):

Let me try. (steps forward and speaks up) Esteemed members of the Spartan council, listen to me. Even the God of War is willing to put internecine wars aside for the sake of Greece. Won't you do the same?

**COUNCILMAN #1:**

Why should we believe the God of War? Everyone knows Ares is only out to help himself.

**GABRIELLE:**

Maybe in this case, Ares can help himself by helping you. The Persians don't worship him--they have their own gods. If they overrun Greece, Ares will have no temples left. Maybe you can take a tip from him--help yourselves by helping the Athenians.

The council members exchange thoughtful looks.

**COUNCILMAN #1** (reluctantly):

I believe the circumstances call for a new vote.

**COUNCILWOMAN #1** (pointing toward Xena and Gabrielle):

You two, wait outside. You are not Spartan citizens.

**CUT TO**

The hallway. Xena is pacing around impatiently while Gabrielle leans against a pillar, lost in thought, her arms folded.

**XENA** (stops and turns to Gabrielle):

You really think that's the only reason Ares is doing this? To make sure he still has temples and worshippers?

**GABRIELLE** (snaps out of her reverie and looks at Xena, thoughtfully at first, then with a bit of mischief):

Well, that and...maybe he wants to fight on your side. It's kind of like foreplay for him, don't you think?

**XENA** (shocked):

Gabrielle!

**GABRIELLE** (smiles):

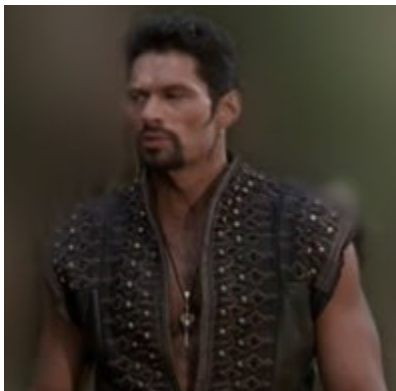
What? When will you realize that I'm not a little girl anymore?

**XENA** (embarrassed):

Come on, I'm serious. Why do you think he's doing this?

**GABRIELLE** (shrugs):

Ares always has his reasons for doing things. Maybe sometimes, they're good reasons. (she walks over to the other side of the hallway while Xena perks up suddenly, obviously sensing Ares' presence. Gabrielle turns around.) You know, I have to say one thing--I never thought I'd see Ares try to do the right thing.



**ARES** (materializes in a flash of light):

And I never thought I'd hear you saying good about me, so we're even.

He disappears.

**GABRIELLE** (shakes her head):

To think that he would travel through the ether just to deliver a supposedly witty one-liner...



Xena grins affectionately. Gabrielle is about to say something else, but just then, the doors of the council chamber open and Pausanias comes out. Xena and Gabrielle turn to him.

**PAUSANIAS:**

Well, it worked.

**GABRIELLE (excited):**

It did?

**PAUSANIAS:**

Last time, the vote was four to three against sending our army to help the opinions. Sometimes, all it takes is to change one person's mind.

**CUT TO**

A port near Athens, bustling with activity. Persian soldiers in large numbers are getting aboard ships while Mardonius surveys the scene atop his horse. A lieutenant rides up to him.

**LIEUTENANT:**

Everything is going well, my lord. We should be ready to embark in another hour.

**MARDONIUS (smiles gleefully):**

Good. Then it won't be much longer before we get to Salamis and seize our hostages.

The camera zooms in on a soldier galloping through the port toward Mardonius.

**SOLDIER:**

My lord! My lord! I have news!

**MARDONIUS:**

News of what?

**SOLDIER:**

The Athenian army, my lord. They are camped outside the town of Eulesis.

**MARDONIUS (smiles):**

Very good. By the time we have to face them, we'll have quite a surprise in store for them.

**SOLDIER:**

That's not all, my lord.

**MARDONIUS:**

What else?

**SOLDIER:**

The Spartans, my lord. Their army is on the move, and headed toward Eulesis too.

**MARDONIUS (turns grim):**

So the Spartans and the Athenians have decided to join forces. Well, well, well. We can't allow that to happen--their combined army would be almost equal to ours in numbers. (turns to his

lieutenant) Cancel the orders to sail to Salamis! Tell all our soldiers to disembark, right now! (to the soldier) Where is the Spartan army now?

**SOLDIER:**

This morning, our scouts saw them at the Merida pass.

**MARDONIUS** (thinking):

Then they will be at Eulesis in less than two days. No, that will never do. (to the lieutenant) We will cut them off at the Larissa River crossing before they can join the Athenians. Get the troops moving-- now.

**SOLDIER:**

My lord...one more thing...

**MARDONIUS** (impatiently):

Yes?

**SOLDIER** (reluctantly and almost fearfully):

Our scouts report that a woman warrior with dark hair, in black leathers, with golden decorations on her armor and a peculiar round weapon at her side, was seen riding with the Spartan leader.

**CUT TO**

The Spartan army on the march through a valley, with the cavalry units ahead and the infantry bringing up the rear. Pausanias rides at the head of the troops, flanked by Xena and Gabrielle.

**CUT TO**

The Persian army in the port.

**SOLDIER:**

It sounded, my lord, like a description of the legendary Xena. The one who--

**MARDONIUS** (obviously excited by this news):

Yes, yes, I know what she did. If you have nothing more to report, you're dismissed.

As the soldier rides away, Mardonius turns to his lieutenant.

**MARDONIUS** (an almost dreamy look on his face):

Xena. So we're about to meet again.

**LIEUTENANT:**

I understand, my lord. At last, you'll have a chance to avenge the humiliation our army suffered at her hands thirty years ago.

**MARDONIUS:**

Oh, it's about revenge, all right. But it isn't just about our army. It's personal.

**CUT TO**

Xena riding with the Spartan troops as we:

**ACT TWO**

**FADE IN**

The Spartan army continues its march through the valley, Xena and Gabrielle riding at Pausanias' side.

**SPARTAN OFFICER:**

Look! Who's that?

He points toward a hill. A black-clad figure, atop a black horse, is riding toward the army.

**PAUSANIAS:**

It could be a messenger.

**GABRIELLE** (looks close at the approaching rider and then gives Xena a puzzled glance):

It's...it's Ares!

**XENA** (lifts an eyebrow):

Ares? That's not his usual style of arrival.



**ARES** (rides up to Xena):

Hey. Mind if I tag along?

**XENA** (smiling):

Ares on horseback? I haven't seen such a sight since... (her smile turns wistful) ...since you were mortal.

**ARES:**

Well, I usually don't get into the fray myself--mine is more of a management position. But do you really think I'd miss a chance to fight side by side with you? Especially now?

Xena looks at him with a faint, fond smile, while Gabrielle turns away, obviously embarrassed.

**XENA:**

All right, then. Tag along. I'm sure it will be good for the soldiers' morale. It's not every day that they get to see an actual god in their ranks.

They ride side by side.

**ARES:**

So. Let's get this war on the road, shall we?

Xena gives him a tolerant smile and shakes her head.

**CUT TO**

The Persian army on the move at night, by torchlight.

**LIEUTENANT** (to Mardonius):

We're making good time, my lord. In less than two hours, we should reach the Larissa River.

**MARDONIUS:**

Excellent. We will camp out there and get some rest. By sunrise, we'll be ready for the Spartan warriors. (pauses, smirking) And for the Warrior Princess.

**CUT TO**

The Spartan army, riding through a valley at dawn. Two scouts gallop at breakneck speed toward the army's head column.

**PAUSANIAS:**

Something is wrong.

**SCOUT #1:**

The Persians, my lord. They are waiting for us at the river crossing.

**SCOUT #2:**

It looks like their army is at least twice ours in size.

**GABRIELLE** (alarmed):

They obviously wanted to stop Spartans from joining the Athenian army.

**PAUSANIAS** (glances at Ares, and a look of joy and relief flashes suddenly on his face):

What am I worried about? The God of War is worth fifty thousand men.

**ARES** (the smug look on his face quickly changes to worry):

Look, it's not that I don't appreciate the compliment, but there's a problem.

**XENA** (warily):

What?

**ARES:**

Xena, I can't use my special powers on the battlefield.

Xena and Gabrielle give him a skeptical look.

**GABRIELLE:**

What is it--some obscure clause in the Olympian rulebook?

**ARES:**

You know, I should check that rulebook. The part about turning pesky mortals into trees.

**XENA:**

Hey, can we cut the witty banter for now? Ares--

**ARES:**

Look, the point is, the Persians have their own war gods. If I start tossing fireballs at the Persian army, trust me, their gods are going to get involved. And then things are really going to get ugly.

**XENA** (grimly):

Well, it's not going to be very pretty if the Spartans have to face an army that outnumbered them two to one. (she looks thoughtfully at Ares and then, suddenly, her eyes are animated) Maybe there *is* something you can do.

**CUT TO**

The Persian troops waiting by the river crossing. A scout rides up to Mardonius.

**SCOUT:**

My lord, the Spartan troops have stopped two leagues from here.

**MARDONIUS:**

They must have spotted us. (strokes his beard thoughtfully) Is there any way they can reach Eulexis?

**OFFICER:**

No, my lord. This is the only river crossing within hundreds of leagues.

**MARDONIUS:**

Then they're just stalling for time.

**CUT TO**

The Spartan army. Pausanias, Xena and the other Spartans are waiting. There is a flash of light, and Ares and Gabrielle appear.

**XENA:**

Done?

**GABRIELLE:**

Yeah.

**ARES** (teasing):

Xena, one of these days I'll start suspecting that you only want me around as a means of transportation.

**XENA** (responds in kind):

Well, it *is* nice to see you make yourself useful.

**CUT TO**

The Persian army.

**MARDONIUS:**

Whatever they're planning, let's not leave them time to do it. We attack now!

The Persian army charges forward.

**CUT TO**

The Spartan army. Xena, Gabrielle, Ares, and Pausanias turn as a rumbling is heard in the distance.

**ARES:**

Sounds like the Persians are on the move.

**OFFICER** (points ahead):

Look there!

The Persian banners are now visible over the horizon.

**XENA:**

We have no choice but to fight now.

**PAUSANIAS:**

Charge!

Cut back and forth between the two armies moving toward each other.

When it seems that the armies are about to clash, Mardonius gives a sudden signal to stop and the troops behind him come to a halt. Pausanias does likewise and the Spartan army stops as well. The front ranks of the two armies are now at a stone's throw from each other.

**MARDONIUS** (sarcastic):

Pausanias. Long time, no see. I'm sure you're disappointed that your meeting with your new friends, the Athenians, has been cancelled.

**PAUSANIAS** (contemptuously):

I'm a soldier, Mardonius. I'm not here for a battle of wits.

**MARDONIUS:**

Of course not. You're not equipped for such a battle. (behind him, his lieutenants burst into laughter) Then again, on this occasion, I don't think you can handle the real thing, either. I'm offering you and your soldiers a chance to live--if you give up.

**PAUSANIAS:**

I think you know my answer.

**MARDONIUS:**

Yes, trying to reason with you Spartans is a mere formality. But before we go on... (turns to Xena) ...I wanted to pay my respects to the legendary Warrior Princess.

His eyes lock on the chakram at Xena's side.

**XENA** (sneering):

It's good to know the Persians still remember me.

**MARDONIUS:**

Oh, Xena, I have special reasons to remember you. That thing you're wearing at your side (points to the chakram) should have been mine.

**XENA** (sarcastic):

Really. You must have been five years old when I got it--what was it, one of the toys in your playroom?

**MARDONIUS:**

No, it was my father's rightful prize. (Xena stares at him blankly) Does the name Acadius ring any bells?

Xena's eyes widen; Ares looks grim. Gabrielle glances sideways and notices both their reactions.

**GABRIELLE:**

Xena--

**XENA** (cuts her off):

Later, Gabrielle. We have a battle to fight. (to Mardonius, sneering) Well, I guess if you want this toy, you're just going to have to come get it.

**MARDONIUS** (slightly nervous, despite his bravado):

With pleasure.

He raises his sword and abruptly brings it down in a signal to charge. Pausanias gives a similar signal, and the two armies charge each other. In a hazy montage of the battle, we see swords clashing, horses bucking and rolling their eyes in fright, people on both sides falling pierced by swords and arrows. Occasionally we see glimpses of Xena and Ares racing across the battlefield and slaying the enemy. At one point, they pass each other and pause briefly.

**XENA** (shouting over the noise of the battle):

You're not doing too badly, even without using your powers!

**ARES** (also shouting):

It's more sporting this way!

They ride on, continuing to fight. Despite their efforts, we soon see that the vastly outnumbered Spartan army is wavering and starting to retreat under the overwhelming pressure of the Persians.

**PAUSANIAS** (rides up to Xena and shouts):

We won't be able to hold on much longer!

**GABRIELLE:**

They should be here any minute!

The camera pans over to Mardonius.

**MARDONIUS** (yells):

Victory is ours! Just remember, men--no one kills Xena but me!

Behind him, cries of alarm go up suddenly in the Persian ranks. A wide shot of the battlefield shows troops attacking the flanks of the Persian army.

**MARDONIUS:**

What's going on?

**LIEUTENANT** (rides up to him):

A sneak attack, my lord! It's the Athenians!

**MARDONIUS:**

The Athenians? How is that possible? Someone must have gotten word to them in Euleis...

**LIEUTENANT** (scared):

That can't be, my lord--we had sentries posted everywhere--we even watched for messenger birds, just like you ordered--

**MARDONIUS** (hits him in the face):

Then you weren't watching well enough, because someone obviously got through!

**CUT TO**

Ares, riding up to Xena, Gabrielle, and Pausanias.

**ARES:**

They're here.

Another montage of the battle shows the Persians dying and running under the onslaught of the two Greek armies.

**MARDONIUS:**

Retreat! Retreat!

A wide shot of the battlefield, the Persians retreating.

**CUT TO**

Tydeus, riding up to Pausanias.

**PAUSANIAS:**

It's about time!

**TYDEUS:**

I could say the same about you.



They look at each other rather tensely and then exchange a nod, acknowledging each other's help.

**TYDEUS:**

They're on the run--shall we give pursuit and finish the job?

**PAUSANIAS:**

Our troops are too tired--we have many wounded. We need to rest and regroup.

**TYDEUS:**

All right. Then we'll call a retreat.

**CUT TO**

Inside a tent in the Greek army camp, sometime later. Gabrielle is tending to some wounded men.

**CUT TO**

Gabrielle coming out of the tent as Xena comes up.

**XENA:**

Hey. How's it going?

**GABRIELLE (sadly):**

More wounded than the army can handle...or than the healing potions can help. Victories come at a heavy price... You said it yourself--war is tough on the soul.

**XENA (nods):**

But sometimes, it's our only choice.

**GABRIELLE:**

Xena, what Mardonius said--about the chakram, and his father--

**XENA (guardedly):**

What about it?

**GABRIELLE (sighs):**

You don't need to talk to me about anything you'd rather not talk about...but you know, in all those years you've never told me how you got the chakram. Mardonius' father--what was he to you?



**XENA** (darkly):

Nothing, Gabrielle. Just a warlord with ambitions...as great as mine. He and I were both after the chakram.

**ARES** (comes up):

And you weren't the only ones. (puts his hands on Xena's shoulders) Maybe you should let the real expert tell this one. After all, if it weren't for me you wouldn't have ever gone after the chakram.

**FADE OUT**

## ACT THREE

**FADE IN**

**[FLASHBACK]**

We see the altar of the two chakrams. The camera circles around it as Ares tells the story.



**ARES** (voice over):

I had known about the two chakrams for quite some time. Remember, there were two chakrams--the chakram of light and the chakram of dark. You know why I wanted the light chakram. But, of course, only a mortal with the purest soul could retrieve it--not exactly the company I keep. And besides, the chakram of light could be removed only after the chakram of dark had been taken from the altar. And the chakram of dark in itself was a powerful weapon; it was told that a mortal warrior who carried it would be unstoppable. So of course I wanted it for my champion--the special warrior who would one day rule the earth in my name. There was a trick to retrieving the chakram of dark, too: it could only be taken by someone who had fully embraced the darkness within his soul. I had sent some of my best warlords, but they all failed. As soon as they put their hands on the chakram--

We see a warlord trying to grab the chakram of dark from the altar, an evil gleam in his eye.

**ARES** (voice over):

They were terrified of their own darkness and it led them to their destruction.



On the screen, we see the warlord's face twist in horror; he is seized by a red glare and then he is wiped out.

**ARES** (voice over):

The results were always the same. And then I found Xena.

Young Xena and Ares stand in front of the temple from "Chakram".

**ARES** (in flashback):

Here we are.

**XENA:**

So this is it. The world's most powerful weapon lies inside.

**ARES:**

Just remember, it's the dark one you want.

A voice interrupts.

**KAL** (off-camera):

Not so fast, Ares.

Ares and Xena look toward where the voice is coming from. Kal is standing at the top of the steps of the temple; next to him is a tall muscular man who somewhat resembles Mardonius.

**ARES** (rolls his eyes):

Oh, Kal, give it up. This time, the chakram is mine for sure.



**KAL:**

What, that girl? Oh please, enough with the jokes. This is my champion, Acadius of Persia. No one can surpass his darkness. He killed his own wife and his eldest son with his own hands.

**ARES:**

Why?

**KAL:**

To prove to me that he was worthy of the chakram of darkness. You have a problem with that?

**ARES** (slightly taken aback):

No, no--that's...very creative. But hey, this is Xena of Amphipolis. Don't underestimate her, either. You should have seen the number she did on the Northern Amazons.

Acadius gives Xena an interested look, which doesn't go unnoticed by Xena and Ares.

**KAL:**

Cut the small talk, Ares, and move out of the way!

**ARES:**

Kal, Kal, what happened to working together to retrieve the chakram?

**KAL:**

You call sneaking behind my back working together? I know you've been secretly sending men here trying to take it.

**ARES:**

Oh, and you haven't.

**KAL:**

Only because I know you can't be trusted.

**ARES** (mockingly):

Oh, Kal...now you really hurt my feelings.

**KAL:**

I'll hurt more than your feelings if you don't get out of my way!



**ARES** (suddenly conciliatory):

All right, Kal. You want to fight? I'll fight. You and me, right here, right now--one on one--no powers, no tricks, and let the best god win.

**KAL:**

No tricks, huh. I'm not that stupid!

**ARES:**

Well, that's debatable. Hey, take it or leave it.

**KAL** (looks at him warily and finally makes a decision):

Fine. But swear on your father's name that while we're ducking it out, that girl of yours won't try to sneak off with the chakram.

**ARES:**

I swear in the name of Zeus, my father, that Xena is not going to take the chakram off the altar while we fight. Now you swear that once I have the chakram, you'll never come after it again.

**KAL:**

I swear, in the name of my great heavenly father, that if you get the chakram of dark I will never try to get it from you.

**ARES:**

All right, then. Ready?

Ares and Kal take out their swords.

**ARES:**

You know, I've been waiting to kick your ass for a long time.

**KAL:**

You'll still be waiting when this is over.

Kal lunges toward Ares and the fight begins. They exchange blows over and over.

The camera pans over to Acadius and Xena watching the fight--he from the top of the temple steps, she on the ground below. Momentarily distracted from the fight, Acadius ogles Xena; she turns and catches his stare, and their eyes meet. Xena motions to Acadius by tilting her head. A little hesitantly, he comes down the steps. She motions to him again and they walk over to the side of the steps. Ares and Kal are no longer visible but the noise of their fight--clashing metal and loud grunts--can still be heard.

**ACADIUS:**

Well, well, well. Planning to use your feminine wiles on me?

**XENA** (scornfully):

Feminine wiles? Please. I'm a warrior. What I want is inside that temple. The power of the dark chakram.

**ACADIUS:**

Forget it. The chakram is mine. But (leers at her) if you're really nice to me, I can let you play with it once in a while.

He leans over to Xena and moves to kiss her, but she holds up her hand, stopping him.

**XENA:**

I have a better idea. You know, even if you manage to get the dark chakram, you will never be anything more than a lackey of that god of yours.

**ACADIUS:**

And that's not true for you and *your* god?

**XENA:**

Oh, it is. But if we grab the weapon together, then we don't need them. Together, the two of us can conquer the world.

**ACADIUS:**

With two pissed-off war gods on our tails? No thanks.



**XENA:**

Ah, but that's the beauty of my plan. The other chakram, the chakram of light, can kill gods. We get our hands on that, we don't need to worry about those two.

**ACADIUS:**

You think I'm stupid? The chakram of light can only be taken by the purest of souls. I doubt we qualify.

**XENA:**

No--but she might.

She beckons to Acadius and walks over to the bushes by the temples. She pulls out a terrified-looking woman in white robes, who is bound and gagged.

**ACADIUS:**

Who's this?

**XENA:**

A priestess from my land--a Hestian virgin. Ares kidnapped her and took her with us so that, once the dark chakram is removed from the altar, she could take the light one for us.

**ACADIUS:**

Very clever. I guess he didn't think you'd have the nerve to strike out on your own, did he.

**XENA:**

I think Kal underestimated you, too. So now what do you say? (Acadius hesitates) Come on, if we waste any more time they'll be done fighting and then we'll have missed our chance.

**ACADIUS:**

Count me in.

**XENA:**

Let's go. (looks at him curiously) Say--did you really kill your wife and your son just to prove to Kal that you had a soul dark enough to take the chakram?

**ACADIUS** (defiantly):

I did. You got a problem with that?

**XENA** (smiles seductively):

I'm impressed.

**CUT TO**

The interior of the temple. Xena and Acadius open the doors to the altar room. Xena drags in the Hestian virgin with her as Acadius walks up to the altar.

**ACADIUS:**

Those stupid gods out there are going to regret they ever brought us here.

**XENA** (smiles wickedly):

If they live long enough.

Xena walks over to the altar and reaches out toward the dark chakram.

**ACADIUS:**

Hold it. (Xena turns her head) Who said you were going to release the weapon?

**XENA** (hurt look):

You don't trust me.

**ACADIUS:**

No.

**XENA:**

Listen, if we keep arguing, those two will notice we're missing and come after us.

**ACADIUS:**

Nice try.

**XENA:**

All right, then. You go for it. How's that for trust?

**ACADIUS:**

Glad you see it my way.

Acadius places his hands on top of the chakram, which immediately begins to radiate a red glow. Acadius' eyes bulge and he screams in agony, but then suddenly becomes almost unnaturally calm. The light fades and he stands with the chakram in his hand. He throws his head back and laughs loudly.



**ACADIUS:**

I can feel its power!

Xena comes up to him and touches the chakram with her left hand, while reaching up to give Acadius a passionate kiss on the mouth. Her right hand slides down to her side.

**ACADIUS** (breaking the kiss):

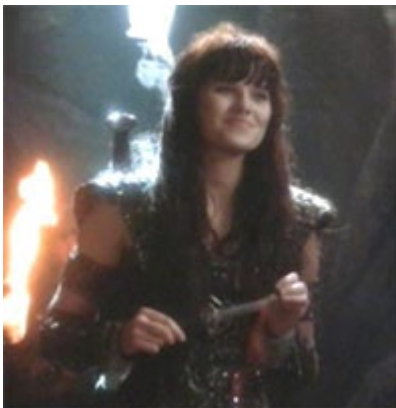
Come on, get your Hestian virgin to take the light chakram! Together, we'll-- (his eyes suddenly widen) Ugh--

Xena slowly backs away from him, a bleeding dagger in her hand.

**ACADIUS** (enraged):

You--

He lets go of the chakram as his hands clutch at the wound, and collapses to the floor. Xena looks down at him gleefully and picks up the chakram, smiling wickedly as he looks up in disbelief.



**XENA:**

Maybe you were right not to trust me. Did you really think I would leave Ares for you?

She goes over to the bound and gagged woman in white and raises the bleeding dagger to her face. Then she cuts the gag and proceeds to free the woman's hands.

**XENA** (to Acadius):

I guess the Hestian virgin idea was pretty convincing, huh? It's all in the strategy. Too bad she's of no use in retrieving the light chakram--I don't think a priestess of Ares is right for the job.

The woman smirks. Just then, Kal rushes in and sees Acadius bleeding on the floor and the chakram in Xena's hand. Ares follows him, looking very nonchalant.

**KAL:**

Ares! You lied in your father's name!

Ares strolls up to Xena, takes the chakram from her and draws an arm around her waist.

**ARES:**

What are you talking about? I promised you that Xena wouldn't remove the chakram from the altar. I believe it was your guy who actually did the honors. Isn't that true, Acadius?

Acadius can only groan. Kal's face hardens with anger.

**ARES:**

Just remember your promise. The chakram's mine, regardless of who took it off the altar. So you can't bug me anymore.

**KAL:**

You bastard! Some day, the light chakram will belong to me, and then you'd better watch out!

**ARES:**

Some day, Kal, you're going to get in over your head.

He laughs arrogantly and disappears with Xena and the priestess.

**CUT TO**

Xena and Ares standing in the middle of an open field. Xena is holding the chakram.

**ARES:**

Like it?

**XENA:**

How is it supposed to work, anyway? It's too small to use as a sword--

**ARES:**

Give it to me.

Xena hands Ares the chakram and he throws it at a nearby tree. The tree splits in half. The chakram makes a whooshing sound as it flies through the air and back to Ares.

**ARES:**

Now you try.

Xena imitates what Ares did. As the chakram flies back toward her she narrows her eyes to see its movement and catches it with a swift move. But she immediately drops it. There is blood flowing from her palm and we see a wide cut.

**ARES:**

Not bad. At least you caught it.

Ares picks up the chakram and hands it to Xena.

**ARES:**

Here, take it. It's yours. It'll strike fear into the hearts of everyone that you go up against. It will be the weapon by which you are known.



Xena takes the chakram and looks at it with a dark gleam in her eye. She and Ares kiss.

**[END OF FLASHBACK]**

**GABRIELLE:**

And that's how you got the chakram...

**XENA:**

I'm not proud of it, either.

**GABRIELLE:**

So Mardonius knows the whole story? Who could he have heard it from?

**XENA:**

Maybe Acadius survived. (looks at Ares, struck by a sudden thought) Do you think my soul was dark enough to take the chakram off the altar?

**ARES:**

I wasn't about to put that to the test.

Xena nods and sighs.

**GABRIELLE:**

Xena, no matter how you got it--

A soldier comes running toward them.

**SOLDIER:**

I beg your pardon, but you're wanted at the command tent. A messenger from the Persian army has arrived.

**ACT FOUR**

**FADE IN**

The command tent. Tydeus and Pausanias are seated; King Nicosias of Thessaly stands in front of them. Xena, Gabrielle and Ares come in.

**XENA** (looks at Nicosias):  
This is the Persian messenger?

**TYDEUS:**  
Actually, it's King Nicosias of Thessaly. He has just arrived from the Persian camp.

**GABRIELLE:**  
A Greek king allied with the Persians?

**NICOSIAS** (a look of profound shame on his face):  
I cooperated with the Persians because Mardonius was--is holding my wife and children hostage. Mardonius made me deliver his messages to the leaders of other Greek states to intimidate them--to let them see that he could force a Greek king to run his errands for him.

**XENA:**  
Charming sense of humor.

**NICOSIAS:**  
But I won't put up with it anymore. I've escaped from Mardonius' camp and I'm here to help you.

**PAUSANIAS:**  
Help us, how?

**NICOSIAS:**  
I've overheard something that I think you should know. The Persians are camped some ten leagues west of here. In three days, they are expecting reinforcements. You have to break their back now, or they will be twice as difficult to defeat!

Tydeus, Pausanias, Xena, Gabrielle and Ares exchange thoughtful looks.

**XENA:**  
Then tomorrow, we must attack.

**CUT TO**

Xena and Gabrielle in their tent. It is night and the tent is only dimly lit by an oil lamp.

**GABRIELLE:**  
Xena, I've been meaning to ask you something...

**XENA:**

About the chakram?

**GABRIELLE** (uncomfortably):

Yes.

**XENA:**

Go on.

**GABRIELLE:**

If the chakram represented darkness...why did you keep it after you changed your path?

**XENA** (looks at her):

At first, I wanted to return it.

**[FLASHBACK]**

A shrine to Ares. Xena strides in resolutely, takes the chakram off her belt and throws it down on the altar, then turns around to walk away. In a flash of blue light, Ares materializes in her path.

**XENA:**

What do you want, Ares?

**ARES** (nods toward the chakram on the altar):

What do you think you're doing?

**XENA:**

Returning your gift.

**ARES:**

Oh no, you don't. You earned it.

He makes a lazy motion with his hand, and the chakram is back at Xena's hip.

**XENA** (looks down at it):

I don't want it anymore. (she takes off the chakram and hands it to Ares) It's everything I'm trying to get away from.

**ARES:**

Oh, you can get rid of the chakram of darkness, Xena. But can you get away from the darkness inside you quite so easily?



**XENA** (flinches slightly and lowers her eyes):

No, not easily. But I'm trying. And the last thing I need is a chain that binds me to you.

**ARES:**

You'll need it again.

**XENA** (bitterly):

Because you don't believe I'll stay on my new path.

**ARES** (sarcastic):

As a matter of fact, you're right--I don't. I think too highly of you for that. But even if you don't have the brains to reconsider, the chakram may come in handy. You're still a warrior, Xena, even if you're fighting for different reasons. It will always be a part of who you are.

He raises a hand and lightly strokes her face with the back of his hand.

**XENA** (shivers a little and steps back):

Don't you want to give it to one of your favorites? To some special warrior?



**ARES:**

Xena, you can do whatever you want with the chakram--but you are always going to be my favorite warrior.

He disappears. Xena looks thoughtfully at the spot where he vanished. Then she hooks the chakram to her belt again and walks out of the temple.

**[END OF FLASHBACK]**

**XENA:**

Ares was right, Gabrielle. My darkness is always going to be a part of me, as long as I keep it in check.

**GABRIELLE (thoughtfully):**

Xena...I'm glad you didn't try to take the dark chakram off the altar.

**XENA (looks at her warily):**

Because it would have been the final proof that my soul was completely lost to evil?



**GABRIELLE:**

Because I don't believe it was.

Xena wordlessly squeezes her hand and nods, her eyes getting misty.

**CUT TO**

The next day. The combined Greek armies are on the march, moving toward the Persian camp. Once again, Tydeus and Pausanias are riding at the head of the troops along with Ares, Xena, and Gabrielle. The front columns of the troops ride over the ridge of a hill and see the Persian camp below.

**PAUSANIAS:**

Charge!

**TYDEUS:**

To victory!

A wide shot of the Greek troops streaming down the hill and attacking the camp. Then, the camera closes in on the battle as the two armies clash once again.

At a distance, Pausanias spots Mardonius atop his mount. Mardonius sees Pausanias as well. They glare at each other intensely and then kick their horses and charge toward one another.

A montage of the battle. The Greek troops seem to be gaining the upper hand, as we see some Persian soldiers falling and others running. The camera closes in on Xena and Ares, who are now fighting on foot.



A Persian soldier runs his sword through Ares' abdomen. He blanches in shock and fear when he sees that he has not drawn blood and Ares is unfazed by the blow. Ares grins at him, and the soldier screams and runs away.

**XENA** (smirks):

Are you sure that doesn't count as using your special powers?

**ARES:**

What, that? (grins at her) I suppose it would have been good manners to fake some blood.

**CUT TO**

Pausanias and Mardonius fighting. Pausanias seems to be growing tired, and finally Mardonius knocks the sword out of his hand and knocks him down with a kick. Mardonius raises his sword over Pausanias. Just then, there is a "whoosh" in the air, and the chakram knocks the sword out of Mardonius' hand. Mardonius whips around to see Xena, the chakram already in her hand again.

**MARDONIUS** (furious):

You again!

**XENA:**

I'm the one you want, isn't it?

**MARDONIUS:**

Let's finish what you started forty years ago.

Mardonius and Xena fight. They seem to be more or less evenly matched in strength, and neither is gaining the upper hand.



**XENA** (a little breathlessly):

Tell me something, Mardonius. What are you really seeking? Revenge for your father?

**MARDONIUS:**

You bet I am! He survived your cowardly attack, but he was forever a broken man after that. He never went back to being the warrior he had been. (he strikes out at Xena) You robbed him of the chakram--when I take it from your dead body, his honor shall be restored.

**XENA** (strikes back):

And what about honoring your mother, Mardonius?

**MARDONIUS** (blocks her thrust):

What are you talking about?

**XENA** (parries his attack):

Didn't you know? Your father killed your mother and your elder brother just to prove to his war god that he was worthy of the chakram of darkness. (Mardonius looks shocked for a moment but then quickly recovers) Is that the legacy you would honor?

**MARDONIUS:**

Liar! My mother and brother were slain by a Greek assassin--Father told me all about it!

He is slightly shaken and his blows become less coordinated.

**XENA:**

Your father's the liar, Mardonius. I heard him brag about it with my own ears.

**ARES** (off-camera):

And I heard his god brag about it to me.

**MARDONIUS** (whips around):

Who are you?

**ARES:**

Ares, God of War. I expect Dear Old Dad had a few choice words to say about me, too.

**MARDONIUS** (his face distorted with fury):

You're immortal. But at least I can kill one of you!

He charges toward Xena, but his rage makes him lose focus, and Xena's sword runs him through. Xena yanks out the sword, and Mardonius falls to the ground, a look of disbelief on his face.

**MARDONIUS:**

This isn't over, Xena. (dies)

Xena gazes sadly at his body, and then looks up at the Persians who are on the run everywhere.

**XENA:**

It is for now.

**CUT TO**

Xena, Gabrielle, Ares, Tydeus and Pausanias, riding through the now-empty Persian camp.

**XENA:**

It shouldn't be difficult now to chase the Persians out of Greece.

**TYDEUS:**

We couldn't have done it without you, Xena.

**PAUSANIAS:**

My lord Ares--when I get back to Sparta, the first thing I'll do is make sure that the city builds a large temple in your honor.

Ares looks pleased and Xena gives him an amused look.

**GABRIELLE:**

And what about the friendship between Sparta and Athens? Is that going to crumble as soon as the Persian threat is gone?

**PAUSANIAS** (uncomfortably):

I wouldn't call it a friendship. More of a strategic alliance.

**XENA** (to Gabrielle):

I guess that answers your question. (to Pausanias) Come on, a man of your character can do better than that. There is no reason for Athens and Sparta to be enemies. The first step toward overcoming hostility and mistrust is the most difficult to make, and you have done that already. Why not continue on the road of peace?

**GABRIELLE** (pointedly):

If Ares lets that happen, of course.

**ARES** (with semi-mock indignation):

Me? Listen, half the time, I have nothing to do with starting the wars I get the credit for. Just look at Sparta and Athens--their last war started when I was mortal. It's just like you mortals to get yourselves into one mess after another and blame it all on the gods.

**TYDEUS:**

I can't promise anything, Xena. But the Spartans have helped us, and we won't forget it.

**PAUSANIAS:**

Neither of us could have beaten the Persians on our own.

They turn to each other and shake hands. Xena and Gabrielle exchange pleased looks while Ares adopts an impassive demeanor.

**CUT TO**

Xena and Gabrielle riding down a wooded road.

**GABRIELLE:**

You think it will last?

**XENA:**

Hard to tell what will happen next time either the Athenians or the Spartans think they've been wronged by the other side. The road to war is paved with good intentions.

**GABRIELLE** (nods thoughtfully):

You know, Xena, there was something else I wanted to tell you. I'm glad you kept the chakram.

**XENA:**

So am I. You can't get away from something that's a part of you...all you can do is use it for good or evil.

**GABRIELLE:**

The training you got from Ares in the old days helped make you who you are today. (Xena nods) Oh, I appreciate that. It's just...weird to see you two together.

**XENA** (quickly):

We're not "together."

A flash of blue light. Ares materializes, standing directly in Argo's path, arms folded on his chest.

**ARES:**

Really. You could have fooled me.

**XENA:**

Well--not all the time.

**ARES:**

Oh, right.

**XENA** (after a brief pause):

Ares, I wanted to thank you for your help.

**ARES:**

Who knows, maybe there really is something to be said for that Greater Good thing. (gives Gabrielle a pointed look) Like having a new temple built in my honor.

**XENA** (teasingly):

That's what it was all about, wasn't it?

**ARES** (suddenly serious):

Hey, it was a pleasure fighting by your side again.

**XENA** (softly):

Same here.

**ARES:**

So--what happens now?

**XENA** (smiles):

Don't be a stranger.

**ARES:**

I'll see you around.

As Gabrielle starts moving ahead at a trot, Ares blows Xena a kiss--one that momentarily causes a red glow to appear in her chest, just like in "Path of Vengeance." Xena closes her eyes and sighs. Ares grins at her and disappears. Xena shivers, shaking off her pleasurable trance, and moves on, catching up with Gabrielle.

**GABRIELLE:**

So you caught the chakram on your first try, did you?

**XENA (nods):**

Uh-huh.

**GABRIELLE:**

I guess you really do have many skills.

**XENA:**

I was just about to say that!

Their voices and laughter gradually fade. The camera pulls back to show Ares standing at a distance, watching Xena and Gabriele ride away and smiling affectionately as we:

***FADE OUT***

**THE END**

*[Gabrielle gathered more material for Xena's complete biography during the production of this motion picture.]*