

SHIPPER SEASON EIGHT



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Logline

Still watching their "what if" lives unfold before them, Xena, Gabrielle, Eve and Ares finally come to the conclusion that everything really does happen for a reason.

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TEASER

FADE IN

[MONTAGE OF PREVIOUS EPISODE]

ANNOUNCER:

Previously on Xena...

Ares stands on a cliff over a battlefield, Zeus and Hera standing beside him.

ZEUS:

You, Xena, Gabrielle and Eve braved Hell itself to bring us back. Your mother and I felt that you all deserved a--reward.

In the temple of the Fates. The three Fates each point a finger at a wall, where a silver-white glimmering portal appears.

LACHESIS:

Each of you can go back--

ATROPOS:

To one moment in your past--

CLOTHO:

--and choose to do one thing differently.

ATROPOS:

Then, you will watch your life--

LACHESIS:

--as it would have unfolded from then on.

LACHESIS:

And if you all agree that one of the lives you see would be better--

CLOTHO:

--you can choose to make it real.

In the portal, a scene from RETURN OF CALLISTO. Xena leaps and flips in the air so that she is between Callisto and Perdicus, and then slams her boots into Callisto, sending her staggering toward her horse just as Perdicus gets up. Callisto looks around, then flips onto her horse with a loud cry and rides away.

GABRIELLE (gives Xena a stunned look):

That was your choice? To save Perdicus?

XENA:

Maybe this way, you can have the kind of life you deserve.

CUT TO

GABRIELLE (whispers):
The Horde.

Xena stands on the battlements of the Athenian fort. She brandishes a Horde axe.

XENA:

We're gonna kill 'em all!

The soldiers cheer, brandishing their swords, as Xena looks ahead, a glint in her eye.

A grim-faced Xena walks into the supply room with Menticles. A captured Horde warrior sits chained by the wall.

HORDE WARRIOR (looks up and moans):

Kaltaka... kaltaka...

MENTICLES (shrugs):

Must be their god of war.

GABRIELLE (murmurs tearfully):
No! No! It's water. He's just begging for water.

XENA (a cruel smile on her lips):

Well, Kaltaka won't help you now, whoever he is. (backhands the Horde warrior across the face, making his head snap to the side)

CUT TO

Xena stares intently at Ares.

ARES:

I have an army camped just a few hours' march from here. One word from me, and they'll be here by sunrise.

The battle. A Horde warrior on his knees, holding out his hands and obviously begging for mercy. The camera pans up to Xena, wearing a helmet, her eyes sparkling, her lip curled in a sneer. She runs the man through with her sword.

After the battle: While soldiers cheer, Ares appears behind Xena. He takes off her helmet, in a shot reminiscent of the Illusia scene in THE BITTER SUITE after she has "killed" Gabrielle; Xena has the same dazed, "lost" look. Ares wraps his arm around Xena's waist, his lips almost brushing her ear.

ARES (in a soft, suave voice):

Welcome home, Xena. Welcome home.

GABRIELLE (screams):

Stop it! *Stop it!*

The temple from THE DELIVERER. Gabrielle turns to see Meridian rushing at her with a sword. She ducks and the sword strikes the altar. Gabrielle turns as Meridian raises the sword again. Instead of stabbing her with the dagger, she kicks her in the midsection. Meridian goes flying toward the wall and lands hard on the floor.

Outside the village from MATERNAL INSTINCTS, Xena and Gabrielle and saying good-bye to Solan, Ephiny and Xenan.

SOLAN (to Xena):

Come back soon, okay?

XENA (a little wistfully):

I'll try... (she grins, obviously suppressing her emotion, and slaps his shoulder) You be good, now.

Xena stares at the portal, smiling through tears.

XENA (to herself):

My baby...

A town square. Xena and Gabrielle are talking to a slender, brown-haired young woman in a simple sleeveless white gown.

YOUNG WOMAN (smiles at Gabrielle):

Would you like to know more about our god?

GABRIELLE (a little uncertainly):

Maybe.

YOUNG WOMAN:

My name is Hope.

ARES (to Gabrielle):

What are you, some sort of evil-guru magnet?

Xena and Ares in a field.

XENA:

What about Hope?

ARES:

She's a vessel for Dahak.

Hope, Khrafstar and Gabrielle sit around a campfire.

KHRAFSTAR:

Gabrielle, tomorrow, we plan to take over the temple of Ares in this town. There, we will conduct a ceremony that will allow our god to enter the world.

GABRIELLE (with a dreamy smile):

You're going to use his temple to usher in a world without war...

Xena's room at the inn. Xena sits on the bed, Goewin on a chair across from her. She listens, a skeptical look on her face.

GOEWIN:

We saw the signs that the Child of Darkness was about to be born. When we tracked her down, it was too late; the child was too powerful.

Night. Outside the camp of Hope's followers.

XENA:

Gabrielle, the whole story--it's *exactly* like what happened to you at the temple, except that you didn't kill Meridian!

GABRIELLE:

Hope--she's shown me the promise of a new life. A life without war, without violence, without hate. Don't try to take that away from me.

Ares' temple. Xena and Goewin face Ares.

XENA (reluctantly):

I'm willing to join you.

CUT TO

In a flash of light, Xena and Ares appear inside the temple, now crowded with Hope's white-robed followers, whose chants fill the air. Hope stands before the altar, at the top of some steps.

CUT TO

Xena and Gabrielle on the steps of the altar; Xena has the Hind's Blood dagger in her hand.

GABRIELLE:

You're going to commit murder for Ares?

Xena and Gabrielle struggle over the dagger and tumble down the steps.

Gabrielle stares in horror at her bloodied hands and the dripping dagger. Xena sits up, clutching at her stomach just below the armor. There is blood seeping through her fingers, her face is contorted with pain.

Gabrielle looks up at Hope in agony; Xena's dead body is slumped down in her lap.

GABRIELLE:

I murdered her...

A wide shot of the temple. Gabrielle is still kneeling over Xena's dead body.

HOPE:

This bloodletting will open the way for Dahak's entry into the world!

GABRIELLE (screams):

Noooooooooooo!

Her scream reverberates through the temple.

The picture cuts off with a CLICK, like switching off a TV.

[END OF MONTAGE]

Temple of the Fates. Eve, Gabrielle, Xena and Ares are seated on the couch, looking like a shell-shocked version of the intro from "The Simpsons"; Ares has his finger on the 'remote control' (the thin wire with the golden bead on it). A beat. Some life comes back into their faces. Ares lowers his hand.

ARES:

Well. I take it we're not choosing this one.

XENA:

No. (feels movement, turns) Wait--Gabrielle! Where are you going?

GABRIELLE (stands):

This isn't a good idea. At all. Xena, please--let's just go, now. I've seen enough. (almost whispering) Haven't you?

On the couch, Ares and Eve both turn to Xena, who looks up at Gabrielle in sympathy.

XENA (softly):

What about them?

Gabrielle glances guiltily at Ares, then Eve.

ARES:

Hey, I'm fine right here. (puts his arm around Xena demonstratively and gives Gabrielle a smug grin) You want to wimp out on this, I won't hold it against you.

EVE (tentatively):

Gabrielle... Perhaps I could try? We can always stop it, if it's--like the last time.

GABRIELLE (after a pause):

Sure. Sure, go on. (with a shaky half-smile) It can't get any worse, right?

ARES:

Famous last words. (off Xena's elbow in his ribs) Oomph!

There's a reshuffling as Gabrielle sits down again beside Xena, while Eve walks up to the portal shimmering in the air in front of them. On Eve. She closes her eyes and lays both hands on the silver square. It fills with an image:

An extreme close-up of Xena's face, making cooing noises, looking slightly distorted and swimming in and out of focus. Tilt back to show the forest canopy and night sky; a baby's murmur in the background.

EVE:

I don't understand. It's not working!

ARES:

Sure it is. That-- (points) --is a perfectly good baby monitor.

Eve tries again, another image appears:

An extreme close-up of the back of Xena's neck, being jolted up and down like a handheld camera.

XENA (disappointed):

I thought you had a better view from that sling.

The image swings around, to an extreme close-up of Xena's breastplate.

GABRIELLE (in a low growl to Ares):

Don't even think about saying it...

Ares moves closer to Xena, widening his eyes at Gabrielle in a show of insulted innocence.

Zoom out to show the Fates' loom. The three of them are trying not to look too amused.

XENA (to the Fates):

What's going on? (glances at Eve by the portal) Eve--what was your choice?

EVE:

I wished that you'd brought me up, Mother.

GABRIELLE:

Oh Eve...

On the Fates.

CLOTHO [Maiden] (spinning a thread):
We regret that...

LACHESIS [Woman] (weaving):
...that isn't...

ATROPOS [Crone]:
...possible. (snips the thread with her shears. The image on the screen disappears).

XENA:
Why not?!

CLOTHO (continues spinning):
The choice must be...

LACHESIS:
...made by one...

ATROPOS:
...who can choose. (snips another thread in satisfaction)

GABRIELLE (getting it; to Eve):
And you were just a baby then. There was nothing you could have done that could have changed things. (to the Fates) So the choice has to be made by one of us?

CLOTHO:
Yes.

The two elder Fates look irritated by Clotho's unfairly short sentence. Lachesis, who had been about to speak, shuts her mouth with a snap.

On Xena's frown, then on Ares:

ARES:
I think I can do something here.

Camera follows Ares up as he strides over to the screen. Eve moves out of his way and returns to the couch; Ares pauses for a moment, then lays a hand on the portal thoughtfully.

Dissolve into the image:

The same shot as Eve's first attempt, a close-up of Xena's face. There is a very quick zoom-out, and we see Xena sitting alone on a log in a forest, feeding baby Eve. We are in a flashback to ETERNAL BONDS. Xena is singing a lullaby to the baby.

XENA (sings):
Hush now, my little one, please don't you cry...

GABRIELLE:

Wait a minute. Why aren't I there?

XENA (recognizing it):

You were taking Joxer to the mandrake tree--it's when he was poisoned.

EVE:

Poisoned?

GABRIELLE (remembers now):

One of Apollo's warriors. There were three armies after us at the time, trying to destroy you before you could fulfill the prophecy and bring about the Twilight of the Gods. (she glances over at Ares, who looks uncomfortable; then back at Eve). I'd taken Joxer to ride ahead; Xena was following on foot, with you.

XENA (somewhat grimly):

And Ares was following *me*.

Eve nods to the explanation; Xena takes her hand in reassurance.

The lullaby continues, but the camera pulls back slightly. We see feet in heavy boots, stepping stealthily around the clearing where Xena is feeding Eve. Then another pair of feet, then another. She is surrounded.



On Xena's face as she sings. There is a noise in the trees. Xena breaks off mid-note without looking up. She gives baby Eve a weary smile.

XENA:

You know, it never fails. E-v-e-r-y time you sit down to eat...

There is an explosion of noise; a fireball slams into something behind her. Xena whips around, releasing Eve in the same motion; the baby is swept up to safety in her sling. One of the temple warriors is lying dead, with a smoking sizzling hole through his chest.

Pan up to follow Xena's gaze--Ares is standing a little way back, lowering his hand. She is stunned momentarily.

Ares takes his hand off the portal, comes back and sits down.

EVE:

You saved me...

ARES:

Not exactly--your mother did have the situation firmly in hand, that time. What she didn't have was a reason to trust me.

XENA:

So that's how you knew how to get to me in that dream...

GABRIELLE:

What dream?

ARES (turns scarlet):

You're missing the fight scene.

There is a scream behind Xena; she spins around with a kick, catching the next attacker in the ribs. He collapses, but more warriors are already streaming into the clearing, yelling. Xena's sword and chakram are on the ground; she stamps on the blade to bring the chakram into her hand, and whips around to face the attackers. She throws her chakram, taking up the sword; there are two men behind her. As Xena engages one, the other collapses, and we see Ares, yanking back his sword from the warrior's back.

XENA (through gritted teeth, still fighting):

What do you think you're doing?

ARES (dispatching his man and taking on another):

What I do best.

Xena punches the warrior so that he flies back into the two men behind him, taking them down; she stabs back with her sword, and we hear a groan as another man collapses. There is a metallic clink, and Xena catches her chakram on the rebound--it took out two of Artemis' warriors in the meantime--just as another man comes at her.

XENA (using chakram to parry an opponent's blow; viciously to Ares):

Can't you take a hint?

ARES:

You have a point--this is not what I do best. (he stops suddenly, and puts his hands together) This is.

The man he'd been fighting has one moment to look terrified. Ares laughs and shoots the white-hot fireball, which splits into several shots like fireworks. There are screams and hisses as several of the nearest warriors are hit. The remaining ones run off, back into the forest.

Xena lowers her sword, breathing heavily after the battle. She stares incredulously at Ares, who brushes off his hands with a smirk. Above them, Eve starts crying; Xena kicks

at the stone that's holding the rope of her sling, and the contraption comes down, so that the baby falls into her hands. She looks down anxiously.

XENA:

Eve! (relieved) You're all right.

She sets Eve down into the blankets and looks back at Ares, who now seems somewhat nervous.

XENA:

You...saved her.

On Ares' uncertain look as we:

FADE OUT

ACT ONE

FADE IN

From end of teaser:

XENA (impossible to believe):

You...saved her.

ARES:

No. The spring you rigged saved her, I just pitched relief.

XENA (shakes head):

But Eve means your death...

ARES:

You still don't get it. (comes closer) All I want to do is end my life the way it really started-- (and closer) --fighting side by side-- (takes her hand gently) --with you.

XENA:

You forget-- (nods bitterly at the bodies) --I'm fighting against the gods now.

ARES:

Then so will I. (off Xena's disbelief) A fight is a fight, no matter which side you're on.

XENA (scowls):

Is that what you said last time, when you sold out to Dahak?

ARES:

This isn't like that!

XENA:

Isn't it? Seems to me that's exactly what you're doing--now that you fear you're checking out, you've decided to jump ship. (disgusted and hurt) I'm not going to fall for your seduction routine, Ares. I know all your talk is lies. You're only in this to save your own skin.

ARES (she's getting to him):

Why do you never believe me when I'm trying to be sincere?

XENA (rolls her eyes):

Sincere!

ARES:

I'm trying, okay? (getting a grip, intensely) Every god on Mount Olympus is targeting you and your child. Even now, three temple armies are on your trail. How long do you think you can keep running?

XENA (he's making sense, she tries not to show it, turns away):

As long as it takes.



ARES:

I meant what I said back in Tartarus. I'm more than willing to fight beside you, be a father to Eve... (Xena glances at him; she didn't expect him to continue the romantic stuff) ...if you--

XENA (finishes caustically):

If I give you a child.

ARES:

...if you let me. What do you say?

XENA (surprised):

What happened to that baby demand?

ARES:

I guess I never thought of it, this time around. In our time, you didn't believe me when I offered to fight beside you against the gods, so I came up with another reason to--to be with you... And screwed up.

XENA:

And this time, you didn't just offer--you chose to join the fight, to prove yourself...

ARES:

Actions speak louder than words. Wish I'd figured that one out when it counted...

GABRIELLE:

It counts now.

XENA (softening):

An alliance? You side with me against the other gods to protect Eve?

ARES:

Yeah.

They are very close for a moment, their hands touching, eyes locked on each other.

XENA (suddenly businesslike):

All right.

Ares is slightly taken aback, as though he didn't really believe that she'd agree.

XENA:

But if you ever so much as touch a hair on her head, I swear...

ARES (indignant):

I gave you my word! And I do not go back on my promises.

XENA (whispers):

Didn't I say that?

ARES:

Seems I beat you to it.

EVE:

Shhh...

They look back to the screen.

XENA:

You can start by taking Joxer and Gabrielle to the mandrake tree.

ARES:

Oh yeah, I can see it now: the God of War appearing out of the blue just to rescue two warrior wannabes...

GABRIELLE:

Hey! I resent that.



ARES (smirks):

But you don't deny it. (to Xena) 'Out of the blue' was good, I should remember that one.

EVE:

Shhh...

XENA:

Are you saying it's beneath you to help my friends?

ARES:

I'm saying--they're not gonna trust me, are they?

XENA (grudgingly):

I'm coming with you. We'll get the remedy and get out of this valley before those armies can reach us.

ARES:

Now we're talking! How about a temple? I'm thinking Epirus: great views, cliffs, a fresh breeze from the sea... (off Xena's hesitation) Go on, pick a place, any place--though on second thoughts, I'd stay clear of Amphipolis for a while.

XENA (startled):

Why's that?

ARES:

Athena's armies are headed that way.

XENA:

What?!

ARES:

Oh yeah. Her elite archers, knights from Britannia, even Cleopatra's royal guard...

XENA:

Then that's where we're going.

ARES:

To *Amphipolis*? If you want to go out in a blaze of glory, there's three perfectly good armies right here in this valley.

XENA (sarcastic):

Thanks for the vote of confidence. Are you in on this or not?

ARES:

You're making a mistake.

XENA:

You're wasting my time.

ARES (throws up his hands):

Fine--Amphipolis it is. I'll take you and the blonde to my temple.

XENA:

No. My mother's inn.

ARES:

Aren't we moving a bit too fast?

XENA:

Don't get any ideas, Ares. I'm your ally, not your girlfriend.

Eve whimpers, Xena picks her up in the sling and puts it on, turning automatically to let Ares fasten the straps. His hands linger on her waist a moment. Xena freezes when she realizes what she did, and turns back with a scowl.

ARES (patting Eve's back as Xena turns):

There you go.

Eve gives a loud burp.

ARES:

I think she likes me.

XENA (tense):

Let's go.

There is a blue flash and they disappear.

GABRIELLE:

Wait a minute, I--want to see something.

She reaches for the bead and touches it. The image wavers and changes to a road in the forest.

As in ETERNAL BONDS, Gabrielle and Joxer are riding. Joxer is starting to look very ill.

EVE (uncomfortable):

Joxer...

JOXER:

If you wanna go then by all means, you should go. I'm fine, I feel good.

Gabrielle looks as if she's been waiting for him to say it.

XENA:

You were just going to leave him there?!

GABRIELLE (low voice):

Joxer, I'm sorry. I'm so sorry...

Eve glances at her, then drops her eyes hastily, pained.

JOXER:

You're so beautiful, Gabrielle--I ever tell you that?

ARES (groans):

Oh, come on!

He gives the bead a flick, it slides along its thread. On the screen we see a "fast-forwarded" series of scenes--Xena getting the mandrake leaf, Xena and Gabrielle fussing over Joxer, then what looks like more sensitive talking between Joxer and Gabrielle...

GABRIELLE:

Hey, I wanted to see that! (lunges for the remote, Ares holds it away)

XENA:

Ares!!

ARES (keeps control of the remote with some difficulty):

What? I didn't see you waste your choice on this stuff! (mimics) Oh Joxer, I don't love you that way... The melodrama...

GABRIELLE:

Give me that!

EVE (jostled off the couch):

Stop it--Don't--Ooh!

XENA (roars):

Stop this right now!

Everyone freezes. Ares grabs the bead to stop the fast forward.

On the screen, we see the banners of an army and the marching troops.

ARES:

That's more like it.

Eve sulkily gets back onto the couch next to Gabrielle, who is still glaring at Ares, on Xena's other side.

The camera pans down to show Athena and her Champion, Ilainus, riding side-by-side.

ILAINUS:

Amphipolis is completely surrounded.

ATHENA:

Excellent. You know my mind better than I do, Ilainus.

XENA (fed up):

Hand it over, Ares.

Ares obediently puts the remote into her palm. He tries to grin, but Xena purses her lips and touches the bead.

Cyrene's inn. There are customers sitting around at tables, a lot of noise, the place looks busy. The door opens and Xena and Gabrielle rush inside. There is a barely-noticeable flash of blue behind them.

GABRIELLE:

Wait! Wait, hold it. I just thought of something... Ares knew about Athena's army, in our time. (accusing) You knew she was going to attack Amphipolis, and you just let Xena walk into her trap!

ARES:

You saw it, Xena went to Amphipolis anyway.

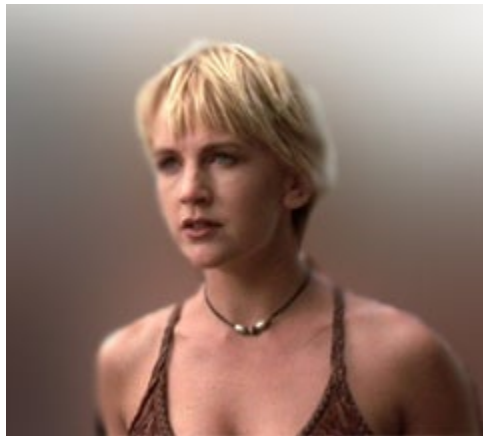
XENA:

Gabrielle has a point--that army must've taken quite a while to assemble. We could've evacuated the town if we had warning.

ARES:

I was preoccupied, okay? (looks from Gabrielle's angry expression to Xena's uncertain one) Look, Xena--I swear, I had no idea Athena was moving her troops to Amphipolis until it was too late. If I'd known, do you think I would have bothered trying to trap you with the three armies?

Xena recoils as if slapped.



GABRIELLE:

You set those armies on Xena's trail...

ARES (defensive):

I was the God of War! What was I supposed to do, write sonnets?!

EVE (explodes off the couch; Livia scream):

Shut up!!!

Silence.

EVE (sobs):

Mother, please--Gabrielle... (glances at Ares, then back at Xena) I know it was a-hard--time for you, all. But can't we just see how things work out, this time around? Please.

Ares and Gabrielle look abashed. A beat, Xena nods as well. She draws Eve down to the floor to sit in front of her.

XENA:

Sweetheart, I'm sorry... You're right. (she gives the bead to Eve) Go on.

Eve touches the bead and we see:

Cyrene's inn. The door slams. Cyrene turns around to see Xena and Gabrielle rushing towards her, Xena carrying Eve.

XENA:

Mom!

CYRENE (beaming):

Xena! (takes Eve from Xena and Gabrielle) Well! It's about time you brought my new little granddaughter for a visit.

XENA (urgent):

Listen, Mom, there'll be time for a family reunion later on. Right now we have to get you to safety--come on!!

Cyrene continues to baby-talk to a delighted Eve.

EVE (wonderingly):

Grandmother...I wish I could've met her.

Gabrielle's eyes soften, she puts her hand on Eve's shoulder.

GABRIELLE:

Maybe you still can.

XENA (tears in her eyes; she misses Cyrene):

Maybe we all can, this time around. (looks sideways at Ares) If Ares comes through for us.

Ares touches the bead, and we see:

Overhead shots of Athena's army from AMPHIPOLIS UNDER SIEGE.

CUT TO

The defenders of Amphipolis manning the barricades. Gabrielle is directing two soldiers securing a wooden shield in place.

CUT TO

Xena is walking along the line of barricades, looking preoccupied and frowning. Pan back along the barricade to show Ares standing there, watching her.

ATHENA (off-camera):

Sad, isn't it? To be mortal.

ARES:

Keep this up, Sis, and you just might find out.

Ares turns around to see Athena standing near the barricades. None of the defenders show any signs of having seen her.

ATHENA:

The prophecy says Xena's child will destroy all of us! You think that by joining Xena and her friends you can escape?

ARES:

See, I know Xena. Prophecy or not, if you keep hunting her kid, you're dead. So be smart, pull back your army, and I'll take them away someplace safe.



ATHENA (laughs incredulously):

And where would that be? Oh, you're thinking with your codpiece again, brother. Do you really think Xena will be yours if you can save the child?

ARES (grabs her wrist furiously):

Have you considered that maybe this prophecy is fulfilling itself? Think about it. What can Xena's baby do to us, really? Yet the more we fight amongst ourselves because of one tiny child, the more vulnerable we become.

ATHENA:

Because of this one tiny child, Zeus is already dead!

ARES:

If he'd let well enough alone, Hercules wouldn't have killed him.

ATHENA:

And what if you're wrong, Ares? Is it worth the risk for one child--or one woman? (decisive) There will be no compromise.

Athena disappears; Ares looks after her in exasperation.

CUT TO

Cyrene's inn. Xena is looking at a map; Cyrene and others are tending to the wounded.

A gold glow signals Athena's arrival; Xena looks around quickly, puzzled that no one notices.

ATHENA:

They can't see me. I came to talk to you.

XENA:

Very well then, let's talk. Why are you doing this, Athena? Of all the Olympians, you were the only one who ever seemed to deserve my respect...

ATHENA (ironic):

Touching. But flattery is for priests and lovers, Xena; it is meaningless here. Believe me, I take no pleasure in this--the people of Amphipolis have always been loyal to me--but you leave me no choice. I don't want any of them to suffer, any more than you do. Give me the child, and Amphipolis will receive my blessing.

XENA:

You're asking me to give up the future. Well, I won't do that, even if it means sacrificing my life!

ATHENA:

And what if it's your mother's life? Or Gabrielle's? Or any of them? (motions around the room full of wounded people) I know about the deal you made with my brother--but do you really think Ares can help you now? You're a warrior, Xena. You should know better than to count on a traitor to keep his word.

Xena looks troubled.

CUT TO

Xena strides into Ares' temple.

XENA:

Ares! Ares--I need to talk to you.

ARES (appearing):

No luck, huh. Don't feel bad--after all, you're up against the goddess of wisdom *and* warfare.

XENA (dryly):

Don't forget weaving.

ARES:

So. I guess we're back to the old plan. I get you and Eve out of here, Athena pulls out, this whole thing will be over.

XENA:

No it won't--don't you see? She's ransoming these people's lives for Eve's. If we go, she will destroy Amphipolis. And the blood will be on *my* hands.

ARES:

How about I throw your mother into the bargain?

XENA:

And leave the town to Athena? No.

GABRIELLE (comes up beside Xena):

I have an idea.

CUT TO

The barricades, daytime. As in AMPHIPOLIS UNDER SIEGE, Athena and Ilainus are watching a small detachment of the villagers embroiled in a fight with the army. Gabrielle is among them, fighting with a long-handled mallet. She swings it like a staff, taking out two attackers, but they are quickly replaced. It's obvious that the villagers are heavily outnumbered.

ILAINUS (to Athena):

Gabrielle tried to charge our lines. We have her trapped.

ATHENA:

End it for me, Ilainus. Before all of Amphipolis is destroyed, put an arrow in the young bard. We'll see how long Xena will resist while her companion slowly bleeds to death.

Ilainus is already nocking her bow, taking aim at Gabrielle.

Xena appears in the distance, carrying a cloth-wrapped bundle.

ATHENA (startled):

Stop the attack!

ILAINUS (to the soldiers):

Stop the attack!!

SOLDIERS' VOICES:

Hold it! Halt!

Xena approaches Athena.

GABRIELLE:

What are you doing?!

XENA (jostles past):

Get out of my way, Gabrielle. I'm going to save those people--and you.

ATHENA:

A wise decision, Xena.

XENA:

Pull back your army.

ATHENA:

Of course. (to Ilainus) You heard her.

ILAINUS:

Pull back!

The soldiers disengage from the fight and move back, regrouping. Xena lays the baby bundle at her feet and steps back, looking anguished.

ATHENA:

It's for the best, Xena. (raises sword) You might want to look away.

XENA:

If my daughter's to be sacrificed to save these people, the least I can do to honor her is to remember every detail.

Athena shrugs and raises the sword higher, taking aim--then brings it down.

ARES (appearing):

Not so fast, Sis. (blocks her sword)

ATHENA:

Ares! Get out of my way!

Ares and Athena's swords clash, setting off sparks.

XENA:

Gabrielle, *now!*

GABRIELLE:

Attack!!!

Villagers come out of their hiding places, pouring into the midst of Athena's unprepared troops, taking them by surprise. The battle continues as in AMPHIPOLIS UNDER SIEGE, Ares keeping Athena away while Xena battles Ilainus.

CUT TO

Ilainus collapses, clutching her wound. Xena jerks her sword free, a mixture of regret and relief on her face. Athena sees Ilainus fall.

ATHENA:

Ilainus--no! (she kneels and cradles Ilainus' head) Your wound is beyond my healing.

ILAINUS:

Do I still have your favour, Athena?

ATHENA:

Always. (Ilainus smiles, then dies) Take a good look Ares. We're next--all of us! (she disappears with Ilainus)

Deprived of its high command, the army falls apart quickly and retreats. We see soldiers fleeing into the hills beyond the town. The villagers cheer their victory, headed by Gabrielle.

Ares comes up to Xena, sheathing his sword. They exchange a look of camaraderie, then clasp hands.

XENA:

Thank you--for saving my daughter. (picks up the bundle gently)

ARES (grins):

Technically, I just saved your dolly. (pulls down the wrap on the bundle to reveal the doll's painted face)

Cyrene comes up, carrying the real Eve, safe and sound. She looks from Ares to Xena.

CYRENE:

I don't understand. Xena--you planned the whole thing?

XENA:

Another of Gabrielle's brilliant ideas.

She tosses the doll to Gabrielle as she comes up; Gabrielle catches it and grins back.

GABRIELLE:

I learned from the best.

XENA:

Thanks. (takes Eve from Cyrene)

GABRIELLE:

Actually I meant the story of Cronos, how he swallowed a cloth-wrapped stone thinking it was a baby--

XENA:

Well, it worked.

ARES:

Not for long. Xena, you have to move Eve into my temple. Athena will be back, and even without her army, she's bound to cause trouble.

GABRIELLE:

Why the temple?

ARES:

It's an honor thing--gods don't go around destroying each other's temples. Right now, it's the safest place there is.

XENA (after a pause):

All right. (to Cyrene and Gabrielle) Let's go.

CYRENE (looks at her doubtfully):

But Xena--relying on the gods' honor at a time like this-- (meaningful look at Ares) --is that wise?

XENA:

It's the best chance we've got.

CUT TO

Inside Ares' temple (the one seen in AMPHIPOLIS UNDER SIEGE). Ares stands waiting by the altar. Xena comes out of a back room.

ARES:

All set up?

XENA:

Well, it's not a place I would have picked for a nursery, but... (sighs) ...thank you.

She comes closer to Ares and he comes toward her until they face each other, now seen in profile in a scene reminiscent of the first temple scene in AMPHIPOLIS UNDER SIEGE. The tension between them is palpable.

XENA:

Ares... When we were fighting side by side--

ARES:

So you felt it too. It was as if we were one.

XENA (wryly):

I was going to say--you kept your word.

ARES:

Good to know I can still surprise you.

XENA:

You did. But you realize the other gods will be after you too, now.

ARES:

Guess you're stuck with me, then.

XENA:

Guess so.

She moves in and kisses him, then pulls back slightly to watch his face.

ARES (grins):

Who needs Olympus?

He returns the kiss and a moment later the two of them are lost in each other, the kiss becoming more passionate and urgent. Xena's hands fumble at Ares' waist and in a moment his swordbelt falls to the floor. He unhooks her breastplate, letting it fall with a thud.

Cyrene appears in one of the doorways with Eve.

CYRENE:

Xena, are you--

XENA:

Mom! (pulls back from Ares)

CYRENE (taking in the scene):

Well, I suppose it could be--worse. After all, he *is* a god...

ARES:

And you know, this *is* a very large temple...

CYRENE (taking the hint):

I'll put Eve to bed.

XENA:

Uh. Thanks.

Cyrene leaves.

ARES:

So--where were we?

Xena hesitates a moment, then grins and moves to kiss him passionately. Ares is about to respond, but Xena grabs the front of his vest and throws him to the couch, landing over him.

ARES:

Whoa!



Xena opens his vest and dives for his nipple, making him gasp, then comes back up to kiss him.

EVE:

Mother!

Close-up of the couch, Xena, Ares and Gabrielle looking extremely embarrassed and Eve looking flustered and uncomfortable. A beat.

ALL (consensus):

Fast-forward.

FADE OUT

ACT TWO

FADE IN

Night at Ares' temple. Xena and Ares are in bed, under silk black covers (as in SUCCESSION). Xena is asleep with her head against Ares' chest; Ares has his arms around her. He is awake, looking up into the darkness with an expression of pure bliss.

GABRIELLE:

I can't believe it--you really were willing to give up Olympus, even back then.

ARES:

Looks that way, doesn't it.

XENA (somewhat bitterly):

Sure--if you got something in return. (sighs, off Ares' look) It's okay.

Xena opens her eyes, stares at Ares' chest for a moment in incomprehension, then winces and starts to move away. Ares catches her hand.

ARES (kissing her wrist):
Good morning.

Xena's face softens; she touches his face, then smiles.

XENA:
Mm. That was--quite an alliance.

ARES:
We're gonna make a great team.

XENA:
You think?

ARES:
Oh, I know.

XENA (sultry):
Prove it.

ARES:
With pleas---

They are interrupted by a baby's wail.

GABRIELLE (wryly, to Eve):
Timing!

Eve can't help a small smirk.

ARES (resigned):
That'd be time for breakfast.

CUT TO

Xena enters a back room in the temple, Ares a step behind. It has been converted to a nursery, Eve's cot is in the center, surrounded by some chairs. There are toys all over the floor, and a mobile of birds over the cot. Gabrielle is sitting in one of the chairs, holding Eve, who is still crying.

GABRIELLE:
Xena! I think she's hungry.

Xena takes Eve, who quiets immediately, and prepares to feed her.

XENA:

Thanks. (looks around) Where's Mom?

GABRIELLE:

She went to--

ARES (also looking around):

--to pick up more baby toys?

GABRIELLE:

As a matter of fact... (clears her throat) --yes. Xena...we're going to have to think of something. We can't just keep Eve cooped up forever in Ares' temple.

ARES:

I hate to say this, but she has a point. Eve's safe here for now, but the gods aren't going to give up this easily.

Eve starts crying.

XENA:

Oh Eve... What happened to regular meals?

GABRIELLE:

We're making her restless.

XENA:

She'll be all right. You hear that, Eve? Everything's going to be fine.

Eve quiets down, looking curiously past Xena, to Ares.

XENA (solemnly):

Eve, meet Ares.

ARES (uncertain):

Hi.

XENA:

Ares, meet Eve. (passes the baby to him; Ares hesitates before taking her) Hold her head, like that.

Ares holds her carefully, staring at her in wonder. Suddenly, Eve gives him a broad grin.

ARES (thrilled):

See? I told you she likes me.

GABRIELLE:

So what's our plan?

ARES (looking up):

We can run--or we can stand and fight.

XENA:

I'm not leaving these people to be slaughtered by the next god who comes along. And--we can't run forever.

ARES:

In that case, we're gonna need my armies.

GABRIELLE:

You want to bring another army to Amphipolis?

XENA (vehemently):

What other choice do we have? (takes Eve from Ares) As long as my daughter lives, they're going to keep coming. I can't let her die, Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE:

No--no, of course not. (takes a deep breath) All right. We stand and fight.

CUT TO

Ares and Xena come out into the main temple area.

XENA (glances at Ares with wry amusement):

You were right--Eve does like you.

ARES (shrugs):

The kid obviously has good taste.

XENA (gives him a nudge):

I think you like her.

ARES (grins):

We-ell...let's just wait until she's old enough to hold a sword.

XENA (shoots him a suddenly wary look):

Don't get any ideas.

ARES:

What, you don't like it? (lifts up his palms in surrender) Okay--a chakram, then. (off her glare) A whip?

Xena is about to say something when they are interrupted by a flash of golden light and a "whoosh." Xena quickly draws her sword and assumes a battle stance. The light clears, however, to reveal not Athena but Aphrodite.

ARES (guardedly):

Sis.

APHRODITE (to Xena):

Hey, lighten up, Warrior Babe! (looking slightly embarrassed, Xena puts away her sword) I just wanted to congratulate you two.

XENA (sarcastic):

On what? Being the target of a bunch of angry gods?

APHRODITE (pouts):

On *what*? Come on, honey, you're talking to the Goddess of Love here. This is *my* department. (rolls her eyes) I mean, it took you long enough to figure this out.

ARES (uncomfortably):

Figure what out?

APHRODITE (beaming):

That you two were like totally, head over heels--

ARES (holds up a finger, stopping her):

Sis, I'm warning you--

APHRODITE (sighs prettily):

Oh look, he still doesn't want to admit it. (sighs, her face clouding over a little) Listen, I should get going--wish I could stay, but if Athena and the others find out I'm here... (she makes a face)

ARES (slowly):

So. I'm a pariah on Olympus now.

APHRODITE (uneasily):

Let's face it, Ar--this whole Twilight thing is a pretty big deal. I mean--what if we all become mortal? I tried it for like, one day and it was totally gross.

XENA (caustic):

So I guess we shouldn't be counting on your support.

APHRODITE (looks somewhat embarrassed, then smiles brightly):

'Course you should. My *moral* support. It's the best kind there is.

ARES (dryly):

That means a lot.

APHRODITE (beams at him, obviously missing the irony):

Aww...thanks, bro. Well, good luck, you two. And remember, love always wins out in the end.

She waves at them and vanishes in a flash of golden light.

ARES (shakes his head):

Good old sis.

Ares and Xena appear in an army camp. Soldiers shy away from the blue flash, shielding their eyes, then snap to attention.

SOLDIER #1:

My lord Ares!

COMMANDER (ingratiatingly):

The campaign is going perfectly to plan. With your support, we'll have Laotia on its knees within days...

ARES:

The plan's changing. (at Xena) You've got bigger fish to fry.

Soldiers mutter uneasily.

COMMANDER:

But lord Ares--Laotia's just sold a shipment of salt; there's gold there for the taking...

ARES (barks):

Forget Laotia!!

XENA (steps forward, catlike):

I don't think he can do that, Ares. He's got his heart set on that gold. (the commander is nodding to her words) Looks like your armies are nothing but a bunch of worthless looters who think a battle is a brawl in a bordello.

COMMANDER (snaps up):

What?

ARES (insulted and hurt):

Hey, hey, wait a minute--

COMMANDER:

I'll have you know that these are the best troops Greece has seen since the Trojan war! Whoever it is you want us to fight, they're as good as gone.

XENA:

Excellent. Then we can move out, now. You're going to Amphipolis.

COMMANDER (salutes):

Yes, lady. (salutes Ares, then leaves) You heard the orders! Move out!!

ARES (relieved and impressed, to Xena):

You've still got it.

XENA (grins):

And I still know how to use it. (sobering) One down, three to go.

ARES:

Four.

XENA:

You got another army?

ARES:

Didn't I tell you? It was when--

Still talking, they disappear.

GABRIELLE:

Xena, I don't like where this is going. They'll get to Amphipolis and you'll end up leading an army again and joining Ares.

ARES:

Have a little faith, will ya? Xena's not that easily seduced. (flashes a grin at Xena) Besides, we've already done our joining here. I'm on your side.

XENA (to Gabrielle):

It's not like the last time. We're all in this together, and we know exactly what we're fighting for. Eve.

EVE (ashamed):

The Bringer of Twilight.

GABRIELLE (warmly):

No--the Messenger of Peace.

Gabrielle touches the bead.

Gabrielle opens the temple doors to find a middle-aged woman on the doorstep.

WOMAN:

Excuse me--but we've heard rumors, of a miracle baby in this temple--a baby who ended the siege.

GABRIELLE (hedging):

It was Xena who ended the siege...

WOMAN:

Eli used to say the baby would be a sign--that the age of the Olympian gods is over. Is it true?

GABRIELLE:

It is true. The gods ruled us in fear; Eli fought them with love.

WOMAN (exclaims):

Of course! And Ares, the same god who struck Eli down-- (looks up at the temple) --is now on your side. We heard he'd abandoned Olympus to side with Xena.

GABRIELLE:

That's true...

WOMAN:

Then Eli's prophecy is fulfilled! The baby will usher in a new world. (calls over her shoulder) It's true!! The miracle baby is here!

Before Gabrielle can react, dozens of people are pouring into the temple forecourt.

VOICES IN THE CROWD:

--It's a miracle!

--Eli was right!

GABRIELLE (struggling to keep the crowd back):

What--uh--stop, you can't come in!

Cyrene comes up behind Gabrielle, holding Eve.

WOMAN:

The baby!

The crowd surges forward with a roar.

CYRENE:

Gabrielle! What's going on?

GABRIELLE (gasping):

These--uh--people--heard about Eve and the Twilight... They want to--see her!

CYRENE:

Not like this they won't. (to crowd) Neighbors! Stop. (the people start to quiet down) Eve is only a child, she needs peace and quiet. (the crowd calms down further) Now, you can all see her--if you have a little patience.

ARES:

Why don't I like the sound of that?

Xena touches the bead.

Xena and Ares materialize in front of the temple, smack in the midst of a long queue of people that snakes all the way from the temple and around the corner, and presumably continues into the town.

ARES:

What in Tartarus is this?

XENA:

I have no idea.

WOMAN IN LINE:

What do you think you're doing? You can't just push in!

MAN BEHIND HER:

Yeah! We've been waiting since dawn!

XENA:

Waiting for *what*?

MAN:

You mean, you haven't heard? This is the temple of the miracle baby--the messenger of peace!

ARES ("say what?"):

This morning it was the temple of the God of War.

WOMAN:

Not any more.

She points to a handmade sign in Greek over the doors. A translation appears onscreen:

"Miracle baby gifts--line starts here.

Worship hours: noon to 3 pm"

Gabrielle is sitting at a trestle table underneath the sign, holding a laughing Eve (in an imitation of a "Madonna and child" tableau). There is a growing pile of gifts around her, everything from loaves of bread and pottery to flowers and wooden toys.

XENA (runs to the table):

Gabrielle!

GABRIELLE (embarrassed):

I hope this was Cyrene's idea.

Xena and Ares jostle through the crowd to Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE:

It was Cyrene's idea. Xena, these people came to pay their respects to Eve--

XENA:

Their respects--Gabrielle! Remember what happened last time?

GABRIELLE:

They can't all be assassins.

XENA (growls):

I want to talk to my mother!

GABRIELLE:

She's gone back to the inn--seems they couldn't do without her.

BLONDE WOMAN:

Ohh--is that Ares?

Ares whips around, startled.

WOMAN #2:

The god who chose love over Olympus!

Ares scowls and turns around.

WOMAN #3:

Can you sign my baby? (folds out a toddler and a quill)

ARES:

All right, that does it! (turns to crowd, creating a blue fireball in his palm) Start running!

People look curious. Nobody moves.

ARES:

I said, scram!

No movement.

ARES (screams):

Aaaarrggh!!!

He pitches the fireball into the crowd; the people scream, scattering in all directions. Within moments, the forecourt is empty.

XENA (dryly):

Very impressive.

GABRIELLE:

Did you have to do that? (holds up a bewildered-looking Eve) She was having fun.

ARES:

She was not. She's tired and cranky and the last thing she needs is a bunch of Elijan fanatics fawning over her. (takes Eve) C'mon, kid. We've got maps to look at.

Gabrielle casts a look in Xena's direction, but finds no support. Xena is shaking her head, watching Ares carry Eve inside. Gabrielle sighs.

GABRIELLE:

I'm sorry. They started mobbing the temple, I didn't know what else to do.

XENA:

It's okay. The armies are on their way, we should get some guards for the place soon. (smiles a little absently, still looking after Ares and Eve)

GABRIELLE (resigned):

Let's go inside.

XENA:

Yeah. (alert, looks at Gabrielle warmly) I think things are finally looking up for us.

GABRIELLE (returns the smile, but her expression remains guarded):

I hope so.

Xena heads for the door; Gabrielle watches her, her face unreadable--then follows.

EVE (to Xena):

That was kind of...insensitive. Gabrielle was only trying to help.

XENA:

I'm sorry.

GABRIELLE (laughs ruefully):

No, you and Ares are right, Eve is not a showpiece.

XENA:

Still. I shouldn't have taken you for granted like that.

ARES:

Are we going to have a group hug or are we going to watch the show? That army plan has potential; if it works we could be on to something this time.

Xena moves the bead forward.

The main area of the temple. There is now a low map-table in the center, with a pile of parchment maps over it. Xena, Ares and Gabrielle are standing around it, deep in discussion.

XENA:

How can you be so sure they'll attack? These armies aren't going to be cheap to feed if they have to sit out here for months, waiting.

GABRIELLE:

The gods could just starve us out.

ARES:

I doubt it. They're too eager to get their hands on Eve now. But if they try-- (shrugs) -- we can always move on. Leave a garrison here and take the rest of the army.

GABRIELLE:

Or we could force their hand. Xena, you could get the Hind's Blood Dagger, or the Dagger of Helios, or anything else that can kill gods...

XENA (horrified):

Gabrielle!

ARES (glances at Gabrielle):

Was it something you ate?

GABRIELLE:

Why not? The gods believe Eve can kill them anyway. At least this way we'd have insurance.

ARES:

Or a bunch of dead gods and a fulfilled prophecy.

XENA:

We're not going to force anything. Let's wait and see what happens.

A golden glow appears beside them. In the next instant, Xena and Ares have their swords drawn and Gabrielle her sais--all point-first at Athena's neck.

ATHENA (amused):

I'm not mortal yet. Put those away. I came to talk.

ARES (sarcastic):

We're all ears.

ATHENA:

Gabrielle, would you excuse us? I'd like to speak with my brother and Xena in private.

GABRIELLE (with a worried look at Xena):

All right.

She picks up Eve and goes to the nursery. Athena sits down in the chair vacated by Gabrielle; Ares and Xena sit down as well.

XENA (wryly):

So, why are you here? To explain to me why I should let my child be slaughtered?

ATHENA:

No. To offer you a compromise. (Xena looks interested but suspicious) This fighting can only destroy us all. (she pauses)

ARES:

All right--we're listening.

ATHENA (to Xena):

We're willing to call off our armies and leave your child in peace. But you must agree to some conditions.

XENA:

You expect me to trust you?

ATHENA (pointedly, with a slight sarcastic raise of the eyebrows):

You were willing to trust Ares.

ARES (ignoring the barb):

So what are those conditions?

ATHENA:

We don't want Eve to be an icon for the Eli cult.

ARES:

Hey, I couldn't agree more.

ATHENA (to Xena):

You have to take her someplace where no one knows who she is.

EVE (gives Xena a hopeful look):

Maybe this *is* going to work out.

Xena stares intently into the portal.

XENA (slowly shakes her head):

I don't like this. Athena's up to something.

GABRIELLE (struck by a sudden, obviously disturbing thought):

Wait...

She touches the bead.

The nursery. Eve is sitting on her cot, gurgling and playing with a stuffed toy. The camera pans to Gabrielle, who is staring into the air, a dismayed look on her face.

GABRIELLE (in a quiet, intense voice):

No! No, she can't be! (whirls around) Go away!! You're lying! (she puts her hands over her ears and closes her eyes) I said, go away! (opening her eyes, she turns to Eve and

stares at her; her face crumples.) Oh no...it's true... (decisive) I'm not going to let Xena down again. This time, I'll stop you myself. (she bends down and starts pulling a sai from her boot) Good-bye, Hope.

XENA:

The Furies!



Horrified, she grabs the bead.

The main temple room. Xena and Ares are still talking to Athena.

ATHENA:

Believe me, Xena, you are not going to get a better--

Eve's cry slices through her voice.

XENA (leaps to her feet, her face changing):

Eve!

She rushes out into the nursery. Ares looks suspiciously at Athena, who gives him a smug, chilly little smile.

ATHENA:

I got the idea from you, brother. (off his questioning look) Using the Furies. Only my method was--more subtle.

CUT TO

Gabrielle, with her back to the camera, stands over Eve's cot, raising the bloodied sai. She starts to bring it down.

XENA (screams):

Noooooo!!!

She throws her chakram at Gabrielle; it hits her in the head. Gabrielle collapses.

XENA (jumps to her feet and steps toward the portal):
Stop it! Enough!

ARES (intensely):
Wait.

Xena pauses.

Ares runs in after Xena and finds her crouched on the floor wailing over Gabrielle's cooling body, covered with blood. She is clutching a small bundle--presumably Eve's body wrapped in a blanket--to her chest.

XENA (realizing):
You could heal them.

Ares gives a tense nod.

Ares goes to Xena's side, trying to touch her shoulders. Xena shrugs him off.

ARES (gently):

It wasn't your fault. Xena, it wasn't your fault, it was Athena and the Furies. (with genuine feeling) I'm going to hunt them down and leave nothing behind...

XENA (snaps):

If you care so much, why don't you heal them?

ARES:

Gods can only heal with Athena's blessing. (sighs) Xena--I'm sorry...

Xena hunches over Gabrielle's body, sobbing wretchedly--then abruptly grabs her sai and falls on the blade.

XENA (gasps):

Go back to your family. Tell them it's a package deal--they get me, too.

Paralyzed by shock, Xena, Ares, Gabrielle and Eve watch in complete silence.

Ares lays Xena's body into an ice coffin in the cave, next to the bodies of Gabrielle and baby Eve.



ARES (leans over the coffin):
I love you, Xena.

He kisses Xena's dead lips.



XENA (whips around, staring furiously at Ares):

You didn't do it. You didn't give up your godhood; you didn't heal them! You let them die! (Ares looks down, not knowing what to say. Xena turns abruptly to the Fates) Why? Why did it happen differently?

ATROPOS:

Everything happens--

LACHESIS:

--in due time.

ARES (irritated):

Meaning what?

CLOTHO:

You weren't ready yet--

LACHESIS:

--to give--

ATROPOS:

--selflessly.

The camera pans to Xena, who is comforting a distraught Eve.

XENA (softly):

Eve...I'm so sorry you couldn't get your wish...

ARES (stares at them thoughtfully):

Maybe she still can.

FADE OUT

ACT THREE

FADE IN

Xena stares incredulously at Ares. Eve looks up, wary but hopeful.

XENA (warily):

What do you mean?

ARES:

I still get *my* choice. This one wasn't really mine--it was Eve's, remember?

He rises, walks toward the portal and places a hand on its edge.

The portal fills with colors, and in a moment the images in it take shape. We see the scene near the end of LOOKING DEATH IN THE EYE, on the beach. Ares' arms are encircling Xena; she has a hand pressed against his chest.

XENA:

Join your family. Tell them it's a package deal. They get me, too.

She drinks Death's Tears from the vial. Ares watching with horror as she slumps in his arms and seems to die.

EVE (uncomfortably):

Didn't we just see this?

XENA:

No, this was when Gabrielle and I drank Death's tears so that the gods would think we were all

dead--Gabrielle and me--and you... (looks intently at Ares, as if trying to figure out what he's going to change)

Ares gently puts Xena down, looks around and walks toward the burning wreckage of the wagon.

XENA:

Ares--what are you doing?

Ares does not answer, focused on what's happening in the portal.

XENA (raises her voice):

Ares! What do you want to change?

His concentration disrupted, Ares looks at her and takes his hand off the portal. The camera pulls back and the images in the portal grow hazy.

ARES:

I was going to look for (glances uneasily at Eve) the body of your child. If I saw that she wasn't there--

XENA:

You'd figure out that Gabrielle and I were alive?

ARES:

Give me *some* credit.

XENA (abruptly):

Ares, don't do this.

ARES (puzzled):

Why? This way, there would be no ice cave--no twenty-five-year sleep...

XENA (pleading):

I'll explain--just stop it before it's too late.

Hesitantly, Ares looks over to the Fates, who are standing by the loom looking at him, looking imperturbable as ever.

ARES:

What say the Fates? Do I get to retry this?

The three Fates exchange thoughtful looks, then turn to Ares.

ATROPOS:

Since you did not get your wish--

LACHESIS:

--yet--

CLOTHO:

--you may go back to another time.

The Fates step forward and each extend a hand toward the portal; it goes blank.

ARES (looks at Xena):

So?

XENA:

Ares--remember, you can change one thing. After that, you're on your own back there (nods toward the portal). What do you think would have happened after Gabrielle and I woke up? (Ares stares at her, starting to understand) You just saw me take poison and die in front of you. And you were about to find out that it was a setup. Somehow, I don't see us getting off to a very friendly start. (bitterly) And I'd rather not listen to you tell me that if I don't accept your *offer* (she spits out the word with angry sarcasm), you're going to tell the gods we're alive.

There is a pause. Ares looks at her, defensive bitterness and guilt struggling in his face. Then he nods almost imperceptibly, pursing his lips, and turns toward the portal, placing his hand on its edge once again and closing his eyes.

XENA:

What are you going to do?

ARES:

Just watch.

Night. A street in Rome outside the palace, lit by a couple of wall-mounted torches. Xena and Ares are facing each other; she looks the way she did at the bacchanalia in LIVIA, with her hair pulled back.

ARES:

See, I figured out, whatever you did to cheat death, I must've slowed it up by putting you and Gabrielle on ice--but not Eve. And so for 25 years, she kept growing--into Livia--champion of Rome.

XENA (walking away from Ares):

Keep out of my way.

ARES (disappears and reappears in front of her):

The moment it hit me, I knew. I don't know why I didn't see it before, but I didn't, I swear.

XENA (incredulous):

And that's supposed to make it Okay?

ARES:

No--it's supposed to make you see that it wasn't personal.

XENA (bitterly):

It doesn't get more personal than when you corrupt my daughter the way you did me.

ARES:

See? That is just my point. It's not the same. Nobody's the same as you, Xena, not for me.

XENA (pleading):

Then let me take her away. Ares, the other gods don't need to know.

There is a long pause as Ares ponders her offer.

ARES:

All right.

Xena looks at him, almost in disbelief.

A close-up of Xena's face. Her eyes widen in a flash of joy and she smiles a little.

ARES:

On one condition.

The look on Xena's face changes to shock and incomprehension.

Xena's face stiffens in disappointment, as if she's been expecting this but hoping it wouldn't happen.

XENA:

What?

ARES (after a pause):

You have to let me help you.

Xena's face relaxes and she breathes a quick sigh of relief. Ares takes his hand off the portal, walks back and sits down.

XENA (her eyes narrow):

Give me one good reason why I should.

ARES (frustrated):

Look, Xena, you'll get a lot further with me on your side than without. You think it's going to be easy to take her away? (he sighs, getting a grip on himself) I'm just offering you my help, okay? No strings.

XENA (looks at him thoughtfully and then nods):
No strings.

CUT TO

Livia's chamber. She is furious, throwing around vases and furniture and yelling at the top of her lungs.

Xena enters and Livia draws her sword. Xena knocks it out of her hand with the chakram.

XENA (calming):
I didn't come here to fight. I came to talk.

LIVIA:
About what? Ares? Well, you can have him--

She takes a dagger from her belt and throws it at Xena's face.

LIVIA:
--If you live long enough.

Xena catches it right before it hits her.

XENA:
It's not about Ares. I want to talk about you.

LIVIA:
Me? You don't know the first thing about me!

XENA:
But I do. I know your first laugh, your first tears. I know your first breath. I'm your mother. You're my daughter. Your name is Eve.

LIVIA (shaking her head):
Well, Ares was right about one thing--you're incredible.

XENA:
It's an incredible story--but the bottom line is, if the gods find out I'm your mother, you're in grave danger.

LIVIA:
You're insane! Why would I believe you?

Ares appears. Livia glares at him furiously.

ARES:
Because it's true.

Livia looks back and forth from Ares to Xena with a mix of disbelief and rage as it slowly dawns on her that they are telling the truth.

LIVIA (nodding sarcastically):

How sweet. The woman who gave birth to me and abandoned me, and the god who had a little fun with me and dumped me for an old flame. Are we all going to kiss and make up?

XENA:

Eve--it wasn't like that--

LIVIA (coldly):

My name is *Livia*.

ARES:

Listen, you can sort out all that mother-daughter stuff later. Xena is right. You need to get out of here.

LIVIA:

Oh, no. You've already done a pretty good job of ruining my future; I'm not going to play along while you finish it off. I'm not going anywhere. I'll rule this empire with or without your help.

XENA:

You won't be around long enough for that if you don't listen.

LIVIA:

When I want your opinion, (sarcastic) *Mother*, I'll ask for it. In the meantime, let's see just how much of a "Roman wannabe" I really am, shall we? (she directs a nasty look at Ares before turning back to Xena) Tomorrow, in the arena. Just you and me.

She turns on her heel and imperiously walks out.

CUT TO

The arena, the next day.

AUGUSTUS:

The first match will be fought by Livia, defender of Rome, against the champion of the followers of Eli--Xena.

There are a few brief clips of the fight between Xena and Livia. It is closely contested, but Xena eventually gains the upper hand. She puts the pinch on Livia.

XENA (pleading):

I'm not going to kill you, Eve. You're my daughter. I love you.

LIVIA (choking):

Then let me die.

Xena takes off the pinch. Livia coughs. People mill from the stands all around the two of them and Livia disappears into the crowd.

XENA (trying to find her again):
Eve!

CUT TO

Early morning. Xena, Gabrielle and Virgil are riding through a field, with a forest visible in the distance. Xena is lost in thought, clearly debating something with herself.

XENA:
Gabrielle, Virgil--ride on ahead. I'll catch up with you.

GABRIELLE (gives her a puzzled look, then suddenly understands):
You're going to call on Ares, aren't you...

XENA (stares back at her, bitter but calm):
We have no other choice.

Gabrielle nods. She and Virgil ride on while Xena stays behind a cluster of trees.

XENA (resignedly):
Ares. I need to talk to you.

Ares appears.

ARES (casually):
I was wondering when you'd finally decide you needed help.

XENA (ignoring his attempt at conversation):
Where's my daughter, Ares? She's up to something, I know it. She wants to show us both she doesn't need us.

ARES:
She's not too far away from here, actually. She and her company are gearing up to attack a village called Camdos on the other side of that forest. (points to the forest)

XENA:
Camdos... (she pauses) It's an Elijan village.

ARES:
I'm guessing this is something we want to stop.

XENA (briskly):
Thanks. (she gives Argo II a quick nudge in the sides)

ARES:
It would be much faster--

Xena is already galloping away at full speed.

ARES (finishes, shaking his head):

--if you let me take you there. (rolls his eyes in exasperation)

CUT TO

The village we saw at the start of EVE. Livia and her soldiers are on a rampage, killing some villagers and capturing others, while a few soldiers are busy building crosses. Livia, on foot, spattered with blood, cuts down a man who is trying to shield a small child.

Eve looks very troubled. Xena puts an arm around her for support. Ares looks away uneasily.

XENA (soothing):

You don't have to watch this, you know.

EVE (quietly but firmly):

Yes, I do.

A screaming man is dragged toward a cross and laid out on it; a soldier puts a nail against his palm and raises a hammer.

The sound of Xena's chakram whizzing through the air is heard, and the hammer is knocked out of the soldier's hand. Quick pan to Xena catching the chakram.

XENA:

All right, boys. That's enough arts and crafts for today.

Xena, Gabrielle and Virgil attack Livia's soldiers. Pan to Livia, who stands spattered with blood, her sword raised above a terrified woman. Livia turns abruptly and sees Xena, Gabrielle and Virgil.

LIVIA (scowls):

Don't you ever go away? (to her men) Get them!

Two Romans on horseback charge at Xena; she flips in the air, lands in the saddle behind one of them and throws him off his horse, then flies up in the air, flipping as she does so, and slams her boots in the other Roman soldier, kicking him off his horse. She runs toward Livia.

XENA:

Eve, listen to me...



LIVIA (holds out her sword, holding Xena at bay):

I'm glad you came back. Killing you must be part of my destiny. (charges at Xena)

XENA (imploring):

No, your destiny isn't to kill. Your destiny is to find a new way beyond the killing!

LIVIA:

Shut up and fight me!

She attacks Xena but Xena only parries the blows instead of attacking. In the background, Gabrielle and Virgil are fighting the other Romans. Livia gives Xena a kick that sends her flying and landing hard on her back. With a fierce scream, Livia flips and lands on top of Xena, straddling her and pinning her down. She raises a dagger over Xena.

LIVIA:

Still want to tell me you love me, Mommy?

XENA:

Eve--listen to your heart--

LIVIA (shouts angrily):

My heart is a traitor!

She starts to bring the dagger down. Xena manages to push her off, throwing her down. Xena and Livia both rise and face each other. There is a flash of blue light, and Ares appears next to them.

LIVIA (shoots him a nasty look):

Well, look who's here. Are you going to tell me to look for the love in my heart, too?

ARES:

No, I prefer a more efficient approach.

He raises his arm; blue light shoots out of his hand, hitting Livia. She collapses, unconscious.

The Romans who are fighting Gabrielle and Virgil stop and gape in terror, then mount their horses and gallop away.

Quick pan back to Xena, who stares at Ares, clearly appalled.

ARES:

Don't worry, it's not permanent. (off her exasperated "and that makes it okay?" look)
Come on, Xena, your methods weren't exactly doing wonders.

GABRIELLE (comes up to them, out of breath from the fight):

Is she going to be okay?

XENA:

I hope so.

An old woman--the same one who spat at Xena in EVE--approaches her.

OLD WOMAN:

Thank you! If it weren't for you, we would all be dead--my husband, my children...
(Xena smiles distractedly) That monster would have killed us all! (she spits at the unconscious Livia)

Xena's face hardens; she grabs the woman's shoulder and spins her around.

XENA:

She's no threat to you now. Leave her alone.

Frightened, the woman scurries away. Xena kneels over Livia and gently pats the side of her face. Livia remains unconscious.

GABRIELLE:

Xena, I think we need to get out of here.

XENA (still preoccupied with her daughter):

Good idea. (she gets up, picking up Livia in her arms, and speaks brusquely) Let's get going.

Xena walks toward Argo, carrying Livia, with her back to Ares.

ARES (with pretend nonchalance):

Where to?

XENA (pauses a moment and half-turns her head):

Joxer and Meg's tavern.

ARES (calls out after her as she walks on):

Xena! You know, you *could* let me take you there.

While he speaks, Xena mounts Argo and hoists Livia up in the saddle with her. She whips around and gives him a hard mistrustful stare.

ARES:

That was the deal, right? You let me help you?

XENA (glances at the unconscious Livia; she obviously has mixed feelings about what Ares did):

You've helped enough for today.

ARES (frustrated):

Do you have to be so stubborn? Dammit, Xena--what are you going to do when she wakes up along the way?

GABRIELLE:

Xena... (reluctantly) ...I think Ares is right.

ARES (smirks at Gabrielle):

Never thought you'd live to say that, did ya?

XENA (unsmiling):

All right. Come on.

Ares puts his hand on her leg and they disappear in a flash.

CUT TO

Outside Joxer's house. Ares, Xena (on horseback), and a still-unconscious Livia appear. Xena glares at Ares' hand, which is still resting on her leg above the rim of her boot; he quickly removes it.

XENA (looks around):

What about Gabrielle and Virgil?

ARES (shrugs):

They should be here in a day or so.

XENA (through clenched teeth):

Ares! You bring them here *now*!

ARES (sighs theatrically):

See what happens when you do one good deed? Suddenly, I'm supposed to be the Olympian Shuttle Service.

He vanishes in a flash. Xena shakes her head with an exasperated but indulgent smile; then she dismounts, with Livia in her arms.

Old Joxer comes out from one of the outbuildings.

Eve looks down sharply, then forces herself to look up again.

JOXER (seeing Livia):

Is she...?

XENA:

She'll be fine, Joxer. She'll wake up in a little while.

JOXER (relieved):

Oh, good. It would be a shame if you went to all that trouble to get her back and then had her die on you--I mean, literally die on you. (he snickers but gets no response from Xena) Hey, what happened to Gabrielle and--

XENA:

They'll be here any minute.

JOXER (glances at Livia a little nervously):

I got the room ready just like you said. Come on in.

XENA (nods curtly):

Thanks, Joxer.

CUT TO

A small room in the back of the house. It is sparsely furnished, with a bed, a table with a jug of water and a glass on it, a chair, and a small window. Livia is lying on the bed, still unconscious, with her armor off, with no cloak and no weapons. Virgil is sawing a rectangular opening in the door. Xena, Gabrielle and Joxer stand by the bed, while Ares stands leaning against the wall with a studied air of nonchalance.

JOXER:

Well, it's not much, but it'll have to do.

XENA (looks around):

It's perfect. (she looks at the window) Wait a minute...she's thin enough to get out through that window.

JOXER:

I guess we'll have to fatten her up real fast. (he snickers, then sighs as the joke falls flat) What do you want me to, board up the window? She won't be able to breathe.

ARES:

Good thing your friendly neighborhood God of War is here. (he waves his arms and metal bars appear on the window.) She won't get through there anytime soon.

GABRIELLE:

I thought that was more in Hephaestus' line of work.

ARES:

Yeah, well (nods toward Xena), I guess she's not the only one with many skills. (theatrical sigh) This should do wonders for mother-daughter bonding.

JOXER (dead serious):

Yeah, 'cause--you know, she won't be able to get out, so she and Xena are gonna have a chance to get to know each other a little better.

ARES (rolls his eyes, then nods, pretending to be serious):

Um--yeah.

Livia sighs weakly and moves her head but remains unconscious.

XENA:

Come on, we should leave her to wake up on her own.

GABRIELLE (smiles at Eve and pats her hand):

Things might still work out all right.

Outside the house. Xena and Ares walk out from the main restaurant area.

ARES (glances back at the restaurant and mutters):

Tell me again why that man is not insane.

XENA:

Ares, it's only a restaurant. (pauses) With decorations.

ARES:

I can only look at so many pictures of Gabrielle at a time.

XENA (joking rather uncomfortably):

Maybe we could get him to put up a few of you, too.

ARES:

So you could look at them whenever you miss me? (there is a long, rather abrupt pause. They stare awkwardly at each other. Then Ares speaks again, trying to appear casual) Of course, if you ever do...all you need is to call.

XENA (deliberately changes the subject):

Ares...thank you for keeping your promise. I don't think we could have gotten her here without you.

ARES (speaking before he thinks):

Good thing one of us can keep a deal.

Xena's face instantly hardens and she steps back.

XENA (coldly):

Anyway, I wanted to thank you.

She turns to leave, but Ares pulls her back.

ARES (furiously back-pedaling):

I didn't mean that, okay? (Xena snorts and looks away) Look--I don't blame you for not going through with that deal in Amphipolis. I should have offered you my help with no strings attached. (Xena turns and looks at him. Ares moves a little closer to her, speaking gently) It's much better this way, isn't it?

XENA (mellowing):

I'll let you know when this is over.

They move a little closer to each other.

ARES (softly):

Deal?

XENA:

Deal.

They seem to be about to kiss when Gabrielle comes running out of the house.

GABRIELLE (worried-looking):

Xena! You need to come in here!

Ares rolls his eyes in exasperation.

ARES (gives Gabrielle a mocking look):

I guess some things never change in any destiny.

XENA (moving quickly away from Ares):

What's wrong?

GABRIELLE:

Eve's awake.

Xena looks back at Ares, who pushes her to go.

ARES:

If you need any help...

XENA (her mouth curves into a small, regretful smile):

Yeah.

She and Gabrielle leave. Ares watches them and frowns before disappearing.

CUT TO

Outside Livia's room. She is banging loudly on the door.

LIVIA (her voice slightly muffled):

Let me out of here! I swear, you are going to regret this!

GABRIELLE:

She woke up a few minutes ago and it's been like this ever since. We didn't want to try to calm her down without you.

XENA (hands Gabrielle the key):

I'm going in there. Lock the door after me. I'll tell you when I want to come out.

GABRIELLE (nods and unlocks the door):

Good luck.

As the lock turns, the pounding stops. Xena pushes the door and walks in.

CUT TO

Inside Livia's room. Xena comes in, quickly closing the door behind her. The key is heard turning in the lock.

Livia, who has taken a few steps back, runs at Xena with a piercing yell and slams into her, the sheer momentum of her body knocking them both to the ground. Gabrielle's face appears in the slot in the door.

LIVIA (looks up and yells):

If you don't open this door right now, you can forget about ever seeing my dear mother again.

They roll around on the floor for a short time, before Xena manages to pin Livia's hands above her head and straddle her. Livia is still struggling.

XENA:

Eve, stop this. We don't want to hurt you.

LIVIA:

Then let me hurt *you* and we'll both be happy.

XENA:

Please don't do this to yourself. You have a family, a mother that loves you.

LIVIA:

Rome is my mother. You're nothing to me.

XENA:

Please, Eve...think about it.

She releases Livia and gets up. Livia rises and tries to charge her again; this time, Xena stays alert and instantly pushes her away to the far side of the room.

XENA (in a harsh, businesslike voice):

Gabrielle, open the door!

The door opens just wide enough for Xena to slip through and Gabrielle locks it again.

CUT TO

Outside the room. Xena and Gabrielle stand looking sadly at the door. Joxer and Virgil stand behind them.

Livia's face appears in the slot.

LIVIA (sarcastic):

What do you intend to do, keep me in here until I see the light?

XENA (calmly):

If that's what it takes.

LIVIA (sneers):

You'll be waiting a long time for that.

XENA:

Doesn't matter. I'm not going to let you kill any more innocent people.

LIVIA (makes a face):

How about if I kill a few who really deserve it, then?

Her face disappears, and the pounding starts again.

LIVIA (off-screen):

Let me out!

Xena sighs and shakes her head.

JOXER:

You know, maybe we need to get her some handcuffs.

XENA:

Only if you volunteer to put them on her.

GABRIELLE:

Joxer...thank you. (smiles affectionately at Joxer) Sorry about all the trouble.

JOXER:

Ah, what are friends for. Just because I feel like I'm, um, giving room and board to a Fury...

VIRGIL:

Good thing we got Mom to go off to Athens to visit her relatives with Kara and

Theon... (gestures toward the door) So are we just going to keep her in there until she gives up?

XENA:

That's the idea...assuming she does give up.

CUT TO

The hallway outside Livia's room sometime later. It is now quiet. Gabrielle comes up to the door bearing a plate of food and a few scrolls. She stops and listens for signs of life.

GABRIELLE:

Eve? Are you still in there?

Livia's face appears in the slot.

LIVIA (sounding very Callisto-like):

Did you think I'd find a way to escape? I'm flattered. But sadly (pouts fretfully), I'm still here.

GABRIELLE (holds up the plate):

I brought you some food. Are you hungry?

LIVIA (snapping):

No.

GABRIELLE (making an effort to keep her voice even):

Well, it's just some bread and cheese, so it will keep until you are. Here. (she holds up the plate to the slot. Livia doesn't move.) Look, if you plan on breaking out of here, your chances are a lot better if you aren't half-starved.

LIVIA:

So why are you feeding me, then?

GABRIELLE:

Because we don't want you to starve either. We want you to be our Eve again.

Livia's only response is a pitying eyebrow-raise.

GABRIELLE:

I, uh, brought you something to read too.

LIVIA:

Let me guess. "How to hold a heart-to-heart conversation with someone you can't wait to kill."

GABRIELLE (sighs):

It's some scrolls about your mother. And about you--when you were a baby.

LIVIA (suddenly curious though still authoritative):

Let me see.

Gabrielle smiles and pushes a scroll through to Livia. She peers through the slot as Livia unrolls it and begins to read. It is now evening; the small, barred window is dark, and the room is lit by an oil lamp on the table.

LIVIA (reading):

"I sing the song of two mighty heroes, the Son of Zeus and the Warrior Princess, and how they defied Zeus himself and helped set in motion the Twilight of the Gods." (she looks at Gabrielle with a rather timid smile on her face and beckons her closer.) Did my mother really do that?



GABRIELLE (leans in even further, pleased):

I wouldn't have written it if it weren't true.

Livia suddenly slams the metal end of the scroll into Gabrielle's face. Gabrielle shrinks back, crying out in pain and shock.

LIVIA (smirks at her):

Well, I hope you're not going to mince words when you go running to my precious mother to tell her how I bruised your pretty little face.

GABRIELLE (trying not to show her anger and pain):

Eve, just listen to me. We're all on the same side here.



LIVIA:

Are we, now? Funny (she pouts), I thought I was the one behind the locked door and the barred window.

GABRIELLE:

Eve, this is--

LIVIA (grins):

...for my own good? (yawns conspicuously) If you say so, Auntie Gabrielle. I think I'd like that food after all.

Gabrielle hands her the plate, and watches as Livia walks to the table and sits down. Then she pushes the rest of the scrolls through the slot.

CUT TO

Some time later, in Livia's room. She goes to pour herself some water (the now-empty plate is on the table with the jug). Then she looks at the pile of scrolls on the floor and picks one up. She takes it over to the table, sits down and unfurls the scroll.

Xena and Eve exchange hopeful looks as we:

FADE OUT

ACT FOUR

FADE IN

Morning. Livia is crouched on her bed reading--she is near the end of one of the scrolls. There are two piles of scrolls at the foot of the bed, one much smaller than the other. Livia finishes the scroll and, after a moment's pause, puts it on top of the larger pile.

Xena enters and the door locks behind her. She is carrying a breakfast tray.

XENA (wary; testing the waters):
Good morning.

LIVIA (with fake sympathy):
Mother, you look tired. I hope I didn't keep you up worrying all night.

XENA (ignoring the comment):
I see you've been reading these scrolls.

She seems to be about to say more but doesn't.

LIVIA (smirks):
I just want to know my enemy better.

XENA (anguished):
Eve...I'm not--

LIVIA (rises abruptly to her feet):
I am *not* Eve!

Xena puts down the tray, her lips tightening, and raps quickly on the door. The door opens and Xena slips out.

CUT TO

Evening, inside Livia's room. Through the slot in the door, Livia takes a plate with a burger and vegetables from Gabrielle.

LIVIA (looks bored):
Do you have any more scrolls? If I'm going to be stuck here, I might as well have something to read. Even if it's about Mommy Dearest.

GABRIELLE (looks into the slot and smiles):
Sure.

CUT TO

Livia sitting at the table, reading.

CUT TO

Morning, inside Livia's room. Livia smashes a cup, screaming.

LIVIA:

My name is *Livia*!

Resigned, Xena raps on the door. The door is opened and Xena walks out. Livia bounds toward the door and grabs it, keeping Xena and Gabrielle from closing it. After a brief tug-of-war, the door is released on the other side. Unprepared, Livia yanks it hard toward herself; the momentum causes the door to swing and Livia to stumble backwards. Xena quickly slams the door shut. The sound of the key turning in the lock is heard.

LIVIA (her face full of rage):

Let me out!

CUT TO

Evening. Livia sits at the table, reading a scroll.

CUT TO

Morning. Livia sits on the bed, combing her hair. Xena comes in with a breakfast tray.

XENA (cautiously):

Good morning. (nods toward an open scroll on the bed) Still reading?

LIVIA (there is a change in her face; she seems suddenly vulnerable):

I wanted to ask you about something...

XENA (watching her daughter closely):

What?

LIVIA:

Did I really get baptized into the Amazons?

XENA:

Yes, you did. Everything in those scrolls is true. You're an Amazon Princess.

LIVIA:

Really... (her face grows pensive)

XENA:

Maybe you'll get to meet the Amazons one day.

Livia looks very thoughtful. Xena watches her for a moment and smiles.

CUT TO

The main room in the restaurant. There are no customers as yet. Xena and Gabrielle are at a table eating breakfast; in the background, Joxer and Virgil are laying tables in preparation for the restaurant's opening.

XENA:

Gabrielle, I think we're getting through to her. Your scrolls are doing the job.

GABRIELLE (chuckles):

I was half expecting her to rip them to shreds.

Joxer comes over with a few sets of cutlery and starts laying the table next to Xena and Gabrielle's.

XENA:

I missed her whole childhood. I hope she'll let me try to make it up to her.

JOXER:

Hey, at least you didn't miss the temper tantrums.

Xena and Gabrielle smile at each other; Eve is happy too, though she still looks doubtful. Ares doesn't look as impressed as everyone else, but he is clearly happy for Xena.

GABRIELLE:

I knew you were still under there somewhere, Eve.

EVE (smiles):

Looks like it, huh?

XENA (smiles):

Funny if it turns out that Ares is the only one of us who made the right choice.

Ares snorts, pretending to be insulted.

Daytime. Xena is in the pen, brushing down Argo II.

LIVIA (off-screen):

Hello?

Xena turns sharply and sees Livia's face pressed to the barred window. She jumps over the fence and strides toward the house.

LIVIA (shyly):

Could you come in? I'd like to talk to you.

Xena looks at her, her face a mix of wariness and hope.

CUT TO

Inside Livia's room. Livia sits on the bed. Xena stands in front of her.

XENA:

What's wrong?

LIVIA (her face suddenly vulnerable):

I'll tell you what's wrong. You did everything you could to give me a good life...and I repaid you by becoming a murderer.

There is a flash of incredulous joy on Xena's face, followed by anguish at her daughter's guilt.

A close-up of Xena's face, expressing a mix of joy and anguish much like her "old" self in the portal.

XENA (comes up to Livia and puts her hands on her shoulder):

Oh, Eve...

LIVIA (vehemently):

How can you call me that, after all the things I've done?



XENA (leans down and looks tenderly at Eve, tearing up):

Eve, I've done some terrible things too. I'll always love you. You're still my baby--you're still Eve.

LIVIA (smiles timidly):

It's a beautiful name...Eve. (almost in wonderment) My name is Eve.

Xena sits down on the bed next to her and they hug.

Xena and Eve clasp hands, looking tenderly at each other.

LIVIA (drops her head on Xena's shoulder):

I have this ache now--inside me--and I feel like it's going to take me over.

XENA:

That will always be there, Eve. But if you do good, you can start to atone for the wrongs you've committed. (she strokes Livia's hair) And remember, you have a family that loves you.

LIVIA (starts crying softly):

What have I done?

XENA (soothing her and holding her close):

Ssh, ssh, it's all right...mama's here.

CUT TO

Evening. The main restaurant, now empty except for Xena, Gabrielle, Livia, Virgil and Joxer, who are seated around a table eating. Livia has a brown wrap around her shoulders.

LIVIA (indicates her plate):

This is excellent.

VIRGIL:

Thanks. I'm glad you like it.

LIVIA:

You made this? You're a good cook.

JOXER (slaps Virgil's shoulder):

He's a good everything. Cook, fighter, blacksmith, bard--isn't that right, boy? (grins)
He's good at flirting with the girls, too.

VIRGIL (grins in embarrassment):

Dad!

LIVIA (smiles at him):

You're a bard?

VIRGIL (smiles back shyly):

I try... I'm not really good at it--not like Gabrielle.

LIVIA (turns to Gabrielle):

Gabrielle, I've been meaning to tell you...your scrolls are wonderful. You have such talent...

GABRIELLE (grins proudly):

Thank you. But it's hard to go wrong with such great material. (she nods at Xena, smiling)

LIVIA:

Thank *you*. You preserved Xena for all the ages in these scrolls.

Gabrielle looks at her with a warm smile.

CUT TO

Outdoors. It's night; the lights are still on in the restaurant. Xena stands by the fence of Argo's pen, feeding her a carrot.

XENA (pats Argo on the neck):
That's a good girl...

She shivers suddenly. Ares appears next to her.

ARES:
Hey.

XENA (turns to him, smiling):
Hey.

ARES:
Tearing your hair out yet?

XENA (smiles):
No, no, we're getting somewhere with her. (she pauses and smiles dreamily) She said her name was Eve.

ARES:
Well, I guess that's a good thing.

XENA:
I think we can stop locking her in.

ARES (shakes his head in mock hurt):
After I made you those lovely bars...

There's a brief silence.

XENA:
Ares...thank you. I--I couldn't-- (trails off)

ARES:
Couldn't have done it without me? (cockily) Yeah, I know.

Xena laughs affectionately and shakes her head. Then she grows serious.

XENA:
Your family doesn't know anything?

ARES:
They heard that you were back and that you fought Livia in the arena. (Xena looks

worried) Don't worry, I covered for you. I told Athena I checked you out and you were an impostor.



XENA (with a sigh of relief):

Thank you. (she stares at him almost incredulously) I never thought-- (she trails off)

ARES (reaches out and brushes the back of his hand against her face):

That I would make good on my promise?

XENA (smiles):

That you would help me and--ask for nothing in return.

ARES (leans closer to her, teasing):

Why, what could I *possibly* want from you?

They tilt their heads, leaning closer and closer to each other until their lips touch--gently at first, then melting into a passionate kiss.



After a moment Xena pulls away.

XENA:

This isn't a good idea... (uneasily) Eve could see us--

ARES (slightly sarcastic):

And we wouldn't want to waste all that hard work, would we?

XENA (gives him a smile, wry yet tender at the same time):

I'll see you later, though.

She kisses him again briefly, and they clasp hands for a moment before Xena turns around and walks back to the house.

ARES (glances at Xena):

Now we're getting somewhere.

Xena smiles back at him.

Xena walks into the now-empty main area of the restaurant, where Joxer and Virgil are cleaning up.

XENA:

Need any help?

JOXER:

Nah, we're all done. (to Virgil) Go off to bed, son. I'll put out the lights.

VIRGIL (wipes his hands on his apron and takes it off):

Good night, dad.

XENA:

Good night, you two.

The camera follows Xena as she goes into the back of the house. She stops outside Livia's room and looks in through the slot in the window. The lamp is burning dimly on the table; Livia lies on her side, sleeping.

XENA (smiles tenderly):

Good night, baby.

She stands for a moment looking at the lock, then walks away. The sound of a door closing is heard.

CUT TO

Joxer comes up to the door of Livia's room and stops, thinking. Then he gets the key out of his pocket, puts it into the lock and turns it.

JOXER:

Better safe than sorry...

CUT TO

Livia sleeping in her room, curled on her side. All is quiet. A close-up of Livia's face. Suddenly, her eyes fly open.

The camera pulls back. Livia glances around, sits up very quietly and throws off the blanket. Lying on her bed is a table knife. She picks it up.

Xena and Eve exchange quick startled looks.

Livia stands up and tiptoes to the door. She tries to open it only to find it locked. She pouts.

LIVIA (softly):

I guess Mommy still doesn't trust Evie.

She puts the tip of the knife into the lock. After a few turns, it springs open and she smiles.

LIVIA:

Mommy's right.

CUT TO

Livia is sneaking through the main restaurant, flooded with moonlight. A side door opens with a creak, and Joxer comes out, squinting at her in shock. Livia turns and slowly advances toward him.

JOXER:

Wha--

LIVIA (presses a finger to her lips, still advancing toward him):

One more sound and you're dead.

Joxer opens his mouth. Just as he starts saying "Hey!", Livia throws the knife at him. It slices through the air and strikes Joxer in the chest. He falls down with a gasp.

Eve stares in horror and whimpers slightly.

LIVIA (comes up to Joxer):

Told ya. (she yanks the knife out of his chest) You should have kept an eye on the silverware.

Another door opens. Gabrielle runs out, wearing a nightshirt, and freezes in shock.

LIVIA (with a mock wave):
Hi there.

GABRIELLE (whispers):
Eve...

LIVIA:
Gotta run.

She sprints toward the door.

GABRIELLE (screams):
Noooo!

She runs after Livia and tackles her. Livia twists around, grabs her head and slits her throat just as Xena runs out, in her leather tunic, sword in hand. Xena's eyes widen in disbelief and horror. Livia, covered in blood, cradles Gabrielle's body in her arms.

Eve slumps against Xena, hiding her face in Xena's shoulder. Xena's hand drops limply on the bead.

LIVIA (makes a sad face):
Oh, Mommy. I'm afraid Auntie Gabrielle has had a little accident.

XENA:
Gabri--

Livia pushes Gabrielle's body toward Xena, leaps to her feet and makes a dash toward the front door. Horrified, Xena kneels over Gabrielle, pressing her hands to Gabrielle's neck and trying to stop the bleeding.

Virgil runs in and screams at the sight of his father's body.

VIRGIL:
Dad!

He kneels over Joxer's body, crying and shaking him.

As the front door creaks, Xena looks up and sees Livia opening the door.

XENA (in a broken voice):
Eve...

LIVIA (smiles brightly):
Nope, it's still Livia. (tilts her head with an air of mock regret) Did you really think you were getting through to me? (clicks her tongue) Sorry to disappoint you.

Xena stares at her; she has no words left.

LIVIA (raises her eyebrows and sighs):

Well, I've really enjoyed these past few days, but I'm afraid I have to go. Good-bye, *Mother*. (smirks) Oh, by the way--you can have Ares all to yourself.

She runs out, slamming the door. In a moment, she can be heard galloping away.

Xena kisses Gabrielle's forehead and gently lays her head on the ground.

XENA (tearful):

Gabrielle...you were the purest thing in my life... (she pauses, looks at Virgil, who is still crying over Joxer, and then speaks up again in a dull voice) I'm going after her, Virgil. (she rises to her feet and pauses again, struggling to get out the next words. Her face hardens.) I'm going to kill her.

VIRGIL (viciously):

Good. (he gets up) I'm coming with you.

XENA (heavily):

No. I've got to do this on my own.

CUT TO

Xena is riding through a forest, her face set. There is a flash of blue light and Ares appears. Xena halts Argo and looks at him blankly.

ARES (grim):

I know what happened.

XENA (still stunned):

She killed Gabrielle. My daughter killed Gabrielle...and Joxer. My Eve. (her face and her voice harden suddenly) No. *Livia*.

Ares has no idea what he is supposed to say; he settles for taking Xena's hand. She listlessly squeezes his hand back.

ARES:

It wasn't your fault.

XENA (gives him a harsh stare):

I let my guard down because I wanted to believe my daughter had changed. And now, my best friend... (pauses) ...my two best friends are dead--and who knows how many more are going to die. What part of that isn't my fault?

She lowers her eyes.

ARES:

Is there anything you want me to do?

XENA (looks up at him; there are tears in her eyes but her mind is made up):

You should have turned her over to the gods.

Xena, Gabrielle, Ares, and Eve sit frozen. Eve lifts her tear-stained face and sniffles. Ares slowly raises his hand. A blue fireball forms in it. He shoots the fireball at the portal, which instantly dissolves in a burst of light.

Xena hugs Eve tightly.

EVE:

You should have killed me.

XENA:

No, no--don't even think that. That wasn't you.

EVE (bitterly):

No? Well, who was it?

GABRIELLE:

Eve, it didn't really happen.

EVE:

But it might have.

XENA:

There are lots of "might have beens." They don't count.

She gets up and turns around to face the Fates, who still stand in front of the loom, their faces imperturbable as ever. Eve rises and turns as well, followed by Gabrielle, and finally Ares. He turns and waves at the couch; it shimmers out of existence.

ATROPOS:

There are no more choices to make.

CLOTHO:

Now you must decide--

LACHESIS:

--whether to make one of these lives--

ATROPOS:

--real.

ARES (raises eyebrows):

I'm pretty sure I know the answer to that...

XENA:

No thanks.

GABRIELLE (smiles and nods):

We'd rather stick with what we have.

EVE (somewhat exasperated):

Is there anything we could have chosen that would have worked out well?

The Fates look at each other.

LACHESIS:

Nothing was set in stone.

CLOTHO:

If you had made a different choice--

ATROPOS:

--there would have been--

LACHESIS:

--a different outcome.

ARES (sarcastic):

Well, that clears everything up. (looks at the three women) Let's get out of here.

GABRIELLE (to the Fates):

Thank you.

CLOTHO:

It was --

LACHESIS:

--our--

ATROPOS:

--duty. We are sorry--

LACHESIS:

--you didn't get--

CLOTHO:

--what you wanted.

GABRIELLE (smiles):

Don't be. (she looks at the others) We have what we want.

CUT TO

Outside the temple. It's sunrise. Xena, Ares, Gabrielle and Eve come out; they stop and look around, as if they can't quite believe they're back in the real world. Then they look at each other, clearly uncomfortable.

XENA:

Well, I guess we just pick up where we left off.

CUT TO

A crossroads. Xena and Gabrielle are facing Eve, all of them on horseback.

XENA:

Are you sure you don't want us to ride with you all the way to Amazon lands?

EVE (shakes her head):

It's too far out of your way. You're headed to Rome, aren't you? To see Agrippina and Nero?

XENA:

Yes.

EVE (with a wan smile):

I'll be fine on my own. It's only a few days' journey.

XENA (speaking with an obvious effort):

Eve, about what happened back there...don't torment yourself over it. You're a good person now. There's no point in dwelling on the past...least of all a past that could have been.

EVE (smiles wistfully):

I know that in my mind, Mother. That doesn't change how I feel.

GABRIELLE (smiles and touches her arm):

You and Virgil are going to work things out.

CUT TO

A campsite at night. Xena and Gabrielle sit by the fire.

GABRIELLE (stares into the fire):

I think from now on, I'll do a lot less second-guessing of the choices I've made. Who knows what might have happened if I had done something differently.

XENA (picks up a stick and stirs the fire with it):

There's never any point in second-guessing the past.

A brief silence.

GABRIELLE:

Xena...thank you.

XENA:

For what?

GABRIELLE:

Of all the things you could have changed--you chose something for me.

XENA (quietly):

You deserved no less.

Close-up on Gabrielle, her face dreamy in the reflections of the campfire.

GABRIELLE:

It was strange...seeing Perdicus again--seeing him and *me*--knowing I could have been a

grandmother now... (she shakes her head, misty-eyed) I loved him, Xena...we would have been happy together. But without you, I would have always had an emptiness in my heart.

XENA (turns and smiles at Gabrielle):
Thank you for being in my life.

Gabrielle smiles back. Then, her face clouds over and she looks away.

GABRIELLE:
When I think that I could have shed your blood...

XENA (takes her hand):
Remember what you told Eve. It didn't happen.

Gabrielle gives her a troubled look. Finally, she nods, smiling but still a little doubtful.

They hug, their eyes closed; Xena rests her cheek on the top of Gabrielle's head. After a moment she pulls back and looks tenderly at Gabrielle. Then her face changes and she tenses a little, obviously sensing Ares' presence. Breaking apart, the two women turn and look as Ares shimmers into view.

XENA:
Hello, Ares.

Ares walks closer to them, sits down and stares pensively into the fire.

ARES (sighs):
Isn't that just like Dear Old Dad. To offer a reward that you end up wishing you'd never accepted.

XENA:
Oh, I don't know. I'm glad we did this.

ARES (looks up at her):
Because now we know things could have been even worse?

XENA (smiles):
Something like that.

GABRIELLE:
You mean, *this* is the best possible life we could have had.

XENA:
Maybe...

GABRIELLE (thinks a moment):
And that's a *good* thing...right?



Xena stares at her, obviously struck by her words. Then she turns toward the fire again, a distant look on her face.

ARES (shrugs, raising his eyebrows):
Maybe...

The camera pulls back for a long shot of the three of them staring into the fire as we:

FADE OUT

THE END

[A new record for tragic deaths per episode was set during the production of this motion picture.]