

SHIPPER SEASON EIGHT

“Promised Land”

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Logline

When a great prophecy of the centaur nation is set in motion by the birth of an unusual child, Xena and Gabrielle get involved in order to help Xenan fulfill his destiny and help the mother of the child find her true place in the world.

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TEASER

FADE IN

We open in a large army camp, just before dawn. Here and there torches are burning. The camera pans around to reveal soldiers preparing for battle. A guard beckons to another man quietly and points at something in the distance. The camera pans to follow his line of sight--a large field, and the enemy army camp beyond it. The sun is beginning to rise. The morning is cold and foggy.

GUARD:

Sun's up. Won't be long now.

The bugle sounds.

SOLDIER #1:

Here we go. (grumbling) They don't pay us 'nuff for this, I tell ya that. Can't see the end of my nose in this fog. Bitter cold, too.

GUARD:

Y'know what they say: you want the gold, you take the cold.

Soldiers scramble to form lines. Zoom out to show that the enemy forces have formed up opposite them. The commanders of each army ride out to meet. One, a stocky, broad-shouldered middle-aged man with cropped, graying black hair and beard, is wearing red armor; the other, a taller, lankier younger, blond man, is in black armor. The two men shake hands, then ride back to their own lines.

COMMANDERS (in unison):

Charge!!

The men charge forward, shouting, while their commanders remain behind them. But as they race forward the fog begins to thicken. They slow down gradually as the fog grows so dense that they can no longer see what is in front of them. Finally they stop all attempts at pursuit.

The men look around in bewilderment at each other, realizing that the other army has effectively vanished from the field. Befuddled muttering is heard amongst the men as they try to figure out what is going on, cuing the sound of ominous music.

We see the commander in red look into the fog, frowning. He rides out among the confused soldiers.

COMMANDER:

What's the matter, you scoundrels?! Afraid of a little fog? What's white to us is white to them--get in close and cut 'em down! Attack!!

The men look at each other, then back at the commander and finally begin slashing at the fog, some of the men shooting arrows into it. But no matter how they try, there are no sounds that come from behind the fog that would indicate that the other army is there. There is nothing but silence.

SOLDIER #1:

There's no one there!

SOLDIER #2:

Something's not right! This is no normal fog.

OTHER SOLDIERS:

The gods are interfering! Let's get out of here!

COMMANDER:

STOP! I said, stop! Where do you think you're all going! I say we stand and fight! Stop!

But there's no help for it, the men are panicking. Within seconds they have broken ranks completely, running in different directions, all looking terrified. Finally the commander digs his heels into his horse's flanks and follows his soldiers, looking extremely frustrated.

COMMANDER:

The gods be damned!

CUT TO

A damp, sunny morning. The air is shrill with birdsong. Two horses are plodding along a muddy dirt track in the forest; the camera pulls back to reveal the riders: Xena and Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE:

I bet Darion's grown...

XENA:

In the month since you last saw him? Not likely.

GABRIELLE (ignoring this):

Do you think he'll recognize me?

XENA:

I should hope so, seeing how it's been only--

GABRIELLE:

--one month and two days since I last saw him, yes. I hope he's not mad at me for leaving.

XENA:

You didn't "leave." You found his sister. They are each other's only family now; it's right that they should be together.

GABRIELLE (sighs):

I know. You're right. I know!

XENA (smiles a little):

We'll be there soon.

GABRIELLE:

Not quite as soon as I'd like. (points) Here comes trouble.

As she speaks, a blonde-haired girl in a green peasant dress half-runs, half-stumbles into view, closely followed by a scattered mob of villagers. They are shouting and throwing things at her; some have pitchforks that they swing in her direction, trying to prod her. She shrieks and tries to block her face, but the bundle of rags she's holding is in her way. Her arms and face are severely scratched and bruised, her dress torn--it's obvious that she's been on the run for a while.

GIRL:

Help me! Please, help!

Xena draws her sword, sliding off Argo's back; Gabrielle draws her sais at the same time. The villagers shrink back.

XENA:

All right, that's enough. (a villager swings a stick) I said, enough!

Gabrielle grabs the girl and stands in front of her protectively.

XENA (nodding at the sobbing girl):

What's she done to get all of you out of bed so early in the morning?

VILLAGER WITH PITCHFORK:

She's a witch and a harlot! We're going to bring her to justice.

Yells of agreement from the others.

GABRIELLE (disgusted):

A witch? What kind of witch lets herself get lynched?

VILLAGE WOMAN:

A sorceress she is, a filthy half-breed who confuses our beasts and couples with horses!

XENA (low and dangerous):

Know what I think? I think she's not a witch at all. Because if she was, then she might have summoned some protection against all you good folk, don't you think?

The villagers are muttering angrily, but with growing uncertainty. Xena aims her sword at them; they take a step back.

XENA:

Then again, maybe she *is* a witch. Maybe-- (she takes another step towards them, sword pointing) --maybe she's summoned me and my friend here to get her out of trouble.

GABRIELLE (playing along):

Maybe while you're here chasing this girl, your milk's turning sour. (The villagers mutter). Your bread's not rising. Maybe your wells are not water any longer...but are filled with--blood!

The villagers look terrified, they step back as Xena and Gabrielle advance.

Suddenly a young man emerges from the forest and comes around the crowd. He looks very pale. The girl gives a soft cry when she sees him.

GIRL:

Phillamon...

They share a long look--the girl silently pleading, the man anguished.

PHILLAMON (to the villagers):

Let her go.

The villagers look from Xena's scowling face, to her sword, to Gabrielle's sais, to Phillamon's pale face, back to Xena's sword...

XENA:

Boo.

The villagers scream and run, scattering into the forest.

Phillamon holds the girl's eyes a moment longer, then catches sight of the bundle in her hands. His look darkens, and he gives a small shake of the head.

PHILLAMON:

The gods keep you, Lysippe--for I will not. Go in peace.

He waves a hand and walks away, back into the forest. Lysippe watches him go, sobbing, clutching her bundle. Gabrielle lays a gentle hand on the girl's shoulder; before she can react, Lysippe thrusts the bundle into Gabrielle's hands and tries to run.

Xena catches her by the collar.

XENA:

Not so fast.

LYSIPPE (struggling):

Let go of me! Let me go! Phillamon!! Husband, wait!

There is no answer, she subsides. Xena releases her.

XENA:

You want to tell us what that was all about?

LYSIPPE:

Nothing.

XENA:

The entire village comes out to mob you and you call it nothing? Do you start all your mornings that way?

LYSIPPE:

I don't have to tell you.

GABRIELLE:

Uh--Xena...?

Both Xena and Lysippe turn; Gabrielle has unwrapped part of the bundle. It is a baby's face. The baby promptly starts wailing.

Lysippe gives a cry and snatches the baby from Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE (to Lysippe):

I think I understand... This isn't your husband's child.

LYSIPPE (suddenly furious):

It is! I swear it on all that's sacred, on the altar of my father's gods and my mother's goddess, on everything I have... (bitterly) Well, why should you believe me? He won't believe me either. But this is my husband's child.

The baby starts to wiggle in her arms, the swaddling cloths come loose. Lysippe tugs them into place, but not quickly enough--the baby's lower half is revealed. It has four legs covered with thick chestnut-colored horsehair.

XENA and GABRIELLE (gasp):

A centaur.

FADE OUT

ACT ONE

FADE IN

On the same scene. Xena and Gabrielle are staring at the centaur baby. The baby opens its eyes, smiles and gurgles at them happily. Lysippe quickly turns away and wraps the baby in the swaddling clothes.

GABRIELLE (bewildered):

A baby centaur...how is that possible?

XENA (eyes widening slightly):

Maybe this means there are other centaurs who are still alive... (She turns toward Lysippe and puts a hand on her shoulder) What's your name?

LYSIPPE (mumbles, staring down):

Lysippe.

XENA:

Lysippe, we want to help you but you have to tell us the truth. You say that man was your husband...

LYSIPPE (tearfully):

Yes.

XENA (incredulous):

And this is his child.

Lysippe stares grimly ahead of her as we dissolve to:

[FLASHBACK]

A field with a village visible in the distance. A group of men and women are stacking hay; Phillamon is among them. Lysippe approaches him.

LYSIPPE:

Phillamon...

He turns around and looks at her expectantly and eagerly.

PHILLAMON:

What did the midwife say?

LYSIPPE (beaming):

I'm having a baby.

Phillamon looks at her, his face filled with joy, and then sweeps her into an embrace.

PHILLAMON:

A baby...our baby. A new life that you and I made.

CUT TO

A hut. Lysippe is in labor. She screams as a midwife wipes her forehead with a damp cloth.

MIDWIFE:

Here it comes!

Lysippe (now in close-up) screams again, then stops screaming and breathes hard, a small smile coming onto her sweat-glazed face, her eyes half-closed. A moment later the midwife screams. Lysippe's eyes fly open in shock.

LYSIPPE (frightened):

Is something wrong with the baby? What is it?

MIDWIFE:

It's--it's a monster! A horrible beast!

The baby starts wailing as the midwife runs screaming out of the hut. Lysippe sits up and looks at the baby, which is lying on top of the blanket, whimpering its horse legs tucked under it. Her eyes widen.

LYSIPPE (whispers):

Oh no...

She quickly picks up the blanket and wraps the baby in it. Just then the door opens and Phillamon comes in. Lysippe looks up at him defensively, clutching the baby to her breast.

PHILLAMON (confused and worried):

Lysippe, what's wrong? Is the baby-- (his voice breaks off) The midwife... (he sees the baby, only its upper half visible now; it stops whimpering and smiles. A smile spreads across Phillamon's face.) Oh, Lysippe--it's beautiful! A beautiful healthy baby-- (he comes up to the bed and reaches out to pick up the child) Is it a boy or a girl?

LYSIPPE:

Wait... it's --

PHILLAMON:

It's--what?

LYSIPPE:

It's...different.

PHILLAMON (frowns):

Different--what do you mean?

He pulls at the blanket, uncovering the baby, and stares at it in shock.

PHILLAMON (in a strangled voice):

An abomination!

LYSIPPE (suddenly angry):

How can you say that about our child?

PHILLAMON (steps back):

Our child? This is no child of mine!

LYSIPPE:

What are you saying?

PHILLAMON (continues to back away):

I've heard of this mongrel race, half-man and half-horse. I know the beasts sometimes-- (stammers) --mate with human women and produce offspring like this.

LYSIPPE (blushes furiously):

You mean--you think that I--

PHILLAMON (backs toward the door):

Good-bye, Lysippe.

Lysippe covers up the baby and reaches out toward Phillamon.

LYSIPPE:

Wait! Phillamon--*please*--

PHILLAMON (stops and looks at her with some sympathy):

What?

LYSIPPE:

I... (swallows) I have something to tell you.

PHILLAMON (harshly):

What?

LYSIPPE:

I'm--I'm descended from a-- (stumbles and points to the baby)

PHILLAMON:

From a centaur?

LYSIPPE (nods):

My grandfather--my mother's father--was a centaur.

PHILLAMON (heatedly):

I don't believe you! (quick pan to Lysippe, who hangs her head in despair) And even if it's true--why did you hide this from me when we were married?

LYSIPPE (sniffles):

I didn't know--I didn't think something like this could-- (she breaks into sobs) Besides, I know a lot of people hate and despise the centaurs--I was scared-- (continues to sob)

Phillamon seems to soften a bit and steps toward Lysippe hesitantly, reaching out to stroke her hair. Just then the baby gurgles and moves, kicking off the blanket and uncovering its legs again. Phillamon jerks his hand away, as if burnt, and steps back abruptly.

PHILLAMON (shakes his head):

I don't know what to believe anymore, Lysippe. Either way, you lied to me. And I can't--I won't accept this--this *thing* as part of our family.

He walks out of the hut, slamming the door behind him, as Lysippe continues to sob and the baby starts crying again.

[END OF FLASHBACK]

Lysippe is sitting by a tree, crying. Her baby lies at her feet. Xena and Gabrielle stand nearby, looking sympathetically at Lysippe.

LYSIPPE (wipes her eyes):

I was going to take it to the woods and leave it there... I thought that maybe if I got rid of it he would take me back. But the midwife had already told all the villagers that I'd given birth to a freak--that I myself was a freak, a witch... (her voice breaks off)

GABRIELLE (puts a hand on her shoulder):

It's all right...we know what happened next.

XENA (shakes her head):

Your grandfather was a centaur--and you married an ordinary man and had a centaur child? I've never heard of such a thing...

LYSIPPE (angry and bitter):

Then maybe I *am* a freak.

The camera pans away from her and to Xena and Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE:

No, no. Maybe that's just the way it works sometimes. (reflectively) Centaur blood could lie dormant for a generation, and then show itself against in a centaur's grandchild, or great-grandchild.

XENA (dryly):

Fascinating. But it's not going help Lysippe and her child. (turns) Lysippe-- (her eyes widen in shock)

The camera pulls back to show Lysippe running away.

GABRIELLE (yells):

Lysippe, wait! Stop! Where are you going?

LYSIPPE (without turning back):

Home!

Xena runs after Lysippe, easily catching up with her, and grabs her shoulders, turning her around.

XENA:

You can't go back there!

LYSIPPE (her face tearful):

If I can just talk to Phillamon--maybe if I try--

XENA:

What about your baby?

LYSIPPE:

That *thing*? It has ruined my life! You can have it for all I care!

XENA (reproachfully):

Your own child. How can you?

Gabrielle approaches with the crying baby in her arms.

GABRIELLE:

I think he wants to be fed.

LYSIPPE (turns away):

Get it away from me!

The baby cries louder.

GABRIELLE (gently):

Look, Lysippe. If you don't want to keep this baby, we know a couple that would take him. (quick pan to Xena, who gives her a puzzled look) A centaur and his wife. We can take the baby to them. But you have to feed him or he won't survive.

Lysippe hesitates, then takes the baby from Gabrielle's arms and sits down on a log, putting the baby down in her lap. She starts lifting her blouse.

Quick pan to show Lysippe from behind, sitting on the log and breastfeeding the baby. Gabrielle smiles uncertainly at Xena.

CUT TO

Xena and Gabrielle riding along a forest path, with Xena in front and Lysippe riding with Gabrielle, sitting behind her, holding the baby in her arms.

LYSIPPE:

Are we going to them now? Your friend the centaur?

GABRIELLE:

No, we're going to see--someone else first.

XENA (grimly):

Look, Lysippe...we're going to another village. Maybe it's best if they don't know--

LYSIPPE (nods bitterly):

I understand.

Xena glances back at her with a guilty expression.

CUT TO

The outside of a temple. We cut to the inside, where we see Ares lounging on his throne, one leg hanging over the armrest, his hand up by his chin, running his fingers along his goatee, looking very unimpressed. In front of him is the commander in black armor whom we saw on the battlefield in the teaser. He is visibly nervous.

COMMANDER (stammering):

My lord--

Ares rolls his eyes and lets out a frustrated sigh, making the commander shrink back fearfully.

ARES:

Let me guess. You've lost a battle. Make that--you've lost *another* battle. So what else is new.

COMMANDER (sheepishly):

L-lord Ares--it wasn't my fault.

ARES (sarcastic):

Oh--and *that's* new?

COMMANDER:

Well--this time it's true. (Ares lifts his eyebrows wryly) We had no choice but to retreat because--the battlefield--just disappeared! (Ares perks up, looking at him with a mix of curiosity and disbelief) One moment we were charging toward the enemy--and the next thing-- (throws up his hands) --there was nothing but fog. Neither my men nor I could see anything. We shot at the fog with arrows, chopped at it with our swords, and it did no good. We couldn't even pass through it. It was like...like something inside this fog was pushing us back.

ARES (looks at him thoughtfully, then leans back, his face again assuming a sarcastic expression):
Now that's a new one. A fog ate my battlefield.

COMMANDER:
It's true, my lord! There was nothing more we could do.

Ares glares at him.

ARES:
Well, just because I'm feeling generous today I'm going to let you keep your army...

COMMANDER (bows):
Oh, thank you, my lord!

ARES:
...but I *really* should have some standards for those who want to serve me. Like, I don't know--they should be able to actually lead an army? Now, get out of my sight.

COMMANDER:
Thank you, my lord!

The commander turns around and runs out of the temple. Ares looks after him with a bored expression. Then he gets up from his throne, stretches, and walks down the steps of the throne, disappearing in a flash of blue light as he walks.

CUT TO

The tent of the commander in red armor. The commander sits at a table, examining a map. In a flash of blue light, Ares appears. The commander jumps to his feet.

COMMANDER (nervous):
My lord Ares! I--I wasn't sure--if we had your favor--

ARES (arms folded on his chest):
I favor those who serve me well. So tell me--how did the battle go today?

COMMANDER (nervously):
My lord--something very unusual happened...

ARES:
Let me guess. You tried to fight but some spooky fog stopped you and then you ran away like little kids from a monster under the bed. That about the size and shape of it?

COMMANDER (shocked):
How did you--

ARES:
Hello. God, remember?

COMMANDER (agitated):
My lord--was that a sign from you?

ARES:

No--but it's something I'm going to look into. (pause) And by the way--I do expect more of my favored warriors than to get lost in a fog.

Ares disappears in a flash of blue light as the commander cowers.

DISSOLVE TO

A wide shot of Xena, Gabrielle and Lysippe ride into a village. It's the village we saw at the start of "The Bonds We Choose" --Darion's village. From a distance, as the camera starts to zoom in, we see Xena ask a question of a village woman who points them down the street. They ride on as the camera zooms closer, toward a shack that looks rather hastily cobbled together.

GABRIELLE (a little nervously):

This must be it.

She dismounts, walks on the door and knocks. After a few moments steps are heard inside.

LYKIA (off-camera, sullenly):

Who is it?

GABRIELLE:

Lykia--it's me, Gabrielle.

DARION'S VOICE (inside the house):

Gabrielle!

Close-up of Gabrielle's face; she has a look of nervous joy.

After a moment the door slowly opens. Lykia stands in the doorway. She is wearing a drab, greenish-gray peasant dress. Her face has a sullen expression.

LYKIA:

Hello, Gabrielle.

There is a noise as Darion runs up to the door and pushes his way past Lykia and toward Gabrielle.

DARION (beaming):

Gabrielle! (he hugs her waist, pressing his cheek to her stomach) I've missed you!

GABRIELLE (strokes his hair, obviously moved almost to tears):

I've missed you too, sweetheart...

Xena gives her a slightly worried glance.

DARION (steps back, collecting himself, and looks at Xena):

Hi, Xena.

XENA:

Hi yourself.

DARION:

You're here... (to Gabrielle) I wasn't sure I'd see you again.

GABRIELLE:

You didn't think I would just leave you like that! We... (she frowns a little as bad memories come back to her) ...we didn't even have a chance to say a proper good-bye.

DARION (crestfallen):

Good-bye? You mean you're just here to say good-bye and then you won't come back again?

GABRIELLE (nervously):

No, no--of course not-- (glances anxiously at Xena) --we'll--I'll come back and visit you... (off Darion's pleading look) ...a lot.

DARION (beams):

Great! Can I go on some more adventures with you?

GABRIELLE (slightly at a loss for words):

Uh--we'll talk about that later, Darion, okay? (to Lykia) So--they've rebuilt your house.

LYKIA (listlessly):

Yeah. The Amazons really helped. (sighs) Darion and I were just going to have lunch--do you want to join us?

XENA:

Sure we do. Thanks.

DARION (notices Lysippe):

Hey, who's she? A friend of yours?

GABRIELLE:

Just someone we're helping out.

The baby stirs in Lysippe's arms and starts whimpering.

DARION (excited):

A baby!

XENA:

Come on, let's go inside.

Lykia goes back into the house. Darion tugs at Gabrielle's hand, pulling her inside. Xena takes Lysippe by the shoulders, steering her toward the door.

CUT TO

Inside the house, where everything looks poor and drab. There's only a single room with two cots against the walls in a corner, a stove in another corner, and a table with a couple of chairs. Gabrielle looks around and purses her lips worriedly.

DARION (excited):

We can move the cots up to the table. That way, we can all--

The baby starts crying louder, squirming in Lysippe's arms.

GABRIELLE (to Lysippe):

Maybe he needs to be changed.

Lysippe says nothing, hugging the baby tighter to her chest.

XENA (gently):

Here--let me see. (She reaches out but Lysippe backs away. Darion looks on curiously, and Lykia seems mildly puzzled as well. Xena thinks a moment, then turns toward Lykia) Lykia...this baby is--unusual. We'll only be staying here a short time--so it's probably best if you don't tell any of the other villagers--

LYKIA (with a touch of bitterness):

I don't talk to them much anyway.

DARION (excited):

Unusual? What do you mean, unusual? Does he have, like, horns, or--

As he speaks, Lysippe clutches the baby even tighter, making it wail again.

GABRIELLE (puts a hand on his shoulder):

Darion, hush!

XENA (to Lysippe):

Come on--let me see.

She comes closer and holds out her hands. Reluctantly, Lysippe gives her the baby; Xena takes it over to one of the cots and unwraps it as the others look on. Lykia gives a gasp and lifts her hands to her mouth.

DARION (thrilled):

Cool! It's one of those horse people you told me about!

Xena bends over the baby, looking at it.

XENA:

Wait a minute...

GABRIELLE:

What is it? Is he all right?

Xena stands up and turns around toward Gabrielle and the others, a strange expression on her face.

XENA:

She is just fine.

Xena and Gabrielle look at each other in bewilderment as we:

ACT TWO

FADE IN

The same scene as before. Gabrielle stares at Xena in shock.

GABRIELLE:

A girl? Is that even possible? I thought the centaurs were all male--

XENA:

Until now.

LYSIPPE (muttering):

A freak...

XENA (brusquely):

Don't say that.

LYSIPPE (bitterly):

You have no idea, do you?

GABRIELLE:

No idea about what?

LYSIPPE:

What it's like--always to know that you're--different. (Quick pan to Lykia--she gives Lysippe a thoughtful, sympathetic look. Lysippe continues vehemently) When I was five years old, my mother took me to visit my centaur grandfather--he was ill and she wanted him to see his grandchild before he died. My father got suspicious...see, she had told him that all of her family was dead, and when she said she wanted to visit an old friend, he--he decided to follow. I guess maybe he thought there was-- (she blushes) --another man or something. So he followed us to the centaur village and found out the truth. When we got back, he shouted at us--called her a filthy half-breed and me a mongrel--and then he walked out--we never saw him again. He told everyone else in the village too... I still remember how the kids made fun of me--the names they called me....

[FLASHBACK]

A small girl--Lysippe--faces a group of boys and girls who are laughing at her.

BOY:

No, you can't play with us, horse girl.

GIRL:

It's humans only.

The other children laugh. Lysippe starts crying and runs away.

CUT TO

Lysippe is walking down a village street.

VOICE (off-camera):

Hey, Lysippe!

Lysippe turns warily. An older boy is standing next to a horse.

BOY (pats the horse's muzzle):

Come kiss your granddaddy hello!

[END OF FLASHBACK]

DARION:

I would have trashed them.

Lysippe chuckles bitterly.

GABRIELLE:

Lysippe--maybe all this has happened for a reason.

LYSIPPE:

And that's supposed to make me feel better?

XENA:

Probably not. But if we find out what the reason is--it might make things better for your little girl.

LYSIPPE (shivers):

Little girl...

GABRIELLE (gently):

I think you should name her.

Lysippe gives her a strange look and says nothing.

XENA (businesslike):

All right. After lunch, we're going to rest a little and then we're off to find Xenan and Nika.

GABRIELLE (impulsively):

So soon? But I've barely had time to-- (trails off, looking uncomfortably at Darion)

DARION (crushed):

You're leaving *already*?

GABRIELLE (looks pleadingly at Xena):
Maybe we can stay until tomorrow?

XENA (looks sympathetically from her to Darion, then at the grim-faced Lysippe):
Gabrielle...do we really want to run the risk of the people in this village finding out that we brought a centaur child here?

Gabrielle sighs and lowers her eyes.

DARION (in a sudden outburst):
Can I come with you?

GABRIELLE (shakes her head):
Darion--you've got your sister now...we can't just take you away from her and--

DARION (passionately):
Please? I'll be good, I promise...you told me I could go on some more adventures with you guys--

GABRIELLE (uncertainly):
I did?

DARION (not too sure of himself):
Yeah...

Gabrielle looks at Xena, who shakes her head; close-up on Gabrielle as she lowers her eyes, biting her lip.

LYKIA (off-camera):
You can take him.

The camera pulls back to show Xena and Gabrielle looking at Lykia in shock; there is a flash of joy on Darion's face.

GABRIELLE:
Lykia, are you sure?

LYKIA:
Yeah, I'm sure. (She looks away, obviously struggling with what she's going to say next, then looks up at Gabrielle and Xena) Can I come with you too?

Xena and Gabrielle look at her in shock.

CUT TO

A long shot of Xena, Gabrielle, Lykia, Darion, and Lysippe and her baby riding along a road in the countryside. Lykia and Darion are riding with Gabrielle (Lykia sitting behind her, Darion in front of her holding the reins); Xena rides slightly ahead, Lysippe sitting behind her holding the baby who is now sleeping comfortably. It's early evening and the sun is starting to set.

LYSIPPE (hesitantly):
Xena...

XENA:

Yeah?

LYSIPPE:

You know a lot about centaurs, don't you.

XENA:

I do.

LYSIPPE:

Can you tell me about them? I--I've never really known any centaurs except that time when I was in the centaur village... I've heard some really bad things about them from people, but... (sighs) ...my mother always told me how good my grandfather was. I want to know?

XENA (sighs):

I can tell you something about centaurs.

[FLASHBACKS]

From PAST IMPERFECT:

XENA (handing her baby to Kaleipus):

Take this child. He's my son, and the son of Borias. If he stays with me, he'll become a target for all those who hate me...he'll learn things a child should never know. He'll become like me. Please...

KALEIPUS (takes the baby and lifts it up):

The son of Borias--will be raised as my own.

CUT TO

From HOOVES AND HARLOTS:

TYLDUS:

Why am I to trust you? At one time we would have rejoiced in each other's blood.

XENA:

Look inside yourself for that answer. Are you still the same Centaur I met at Corinth?

TYLDUS:

You killed a half of my Centaur army. My friends.

CUT TO

XENA:

You wanna settle it, Tyldus? Very well. You've won. You won a long time ago, Tyldus. You said that I taught you the meaning of war. You taught me that greatness doesn't depend on fighting. It's the battles you choose and the people you protect.

CUT TO

From IS THERE A DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE:

Xena delivers Ephiny's baby.

XENA:

Come on. It's heavy. You have a son. He's heavy, all right.

CUT TO

From ORPHAN OF WAR:

KALEIPUS:

If I die today, I--I want you to take care of him. No matter what you decide to tell him, I know he'll be safe with you.

XENA:

You should never have been my enemy.

KALEIPUS:

This Xena never *was* my enemy.

CUT TO

From MATERNAL INSTINCTS:

Xena tends to the dying Kaleipus.

[END OF FLASHBACKS]

LYSIPPE (glances at Xena, surprised):

So the centaurs raised your son?

XENA (struggling to keep her emotions under control):

Kaleipus was the finest parent Solan could have had.

LYSIPPE:

And this centaur friend of yours that we're going to see now--

XENA:

Xenan. He was the Centaur baby I helped deliver. (her voice softens) His mother named him after me. (she clenches her jaw) You want to know something else, Lysippe? The rest of his tribe was murdered--by a misguided man who thought they were freaks. The father of Xenan's wife.

[FLASHBACK]

From LAST OF THE CENTAURS:

Xena and Xenan stand by the pit full of dead centaurs.

XENA:

Belach's men must have encircled your brothers and driven them into this pit. There was no escape.

CUT TO

Xena facing Belach in his palace.

XENA:

Xenan didn't kidnap her. She's carrying his baby. They're in love, Belach. Do you have any idea what you have done?

BELACH:

I want a grandson to be loved and cherished--not some bastard offspring of a centaur!

CUT TO

Outside Xenan's cabin.

BELACH:

This is over. She belongs with him! Forgive me, Nika. (takes off a necklace) Give this to your son. When he is old enough to understand--tell him--

NIKA:

No--when the time comes, you tell him. We have given him a name--Borias.

[END OF FLASHBACK]

Lysippe gives Xena a shocked look.

Pan back to Gabrielle, riding with Darion and Lykia.

DARION:

Wow--I can't believe I'm going to meet real--what do you call them? --centaurs! (pauses to think) It must be really cool to be part human and part horse--right, Gabrielle? It's like--you can be your own transportation!

GABRIELLE (chuckles affectionately):

Well, that's one way to look at it...

DARION:

How come people don't like them?

GABRIELLE (sighs):

Not all people, sweetie...just some of them. There are people who just don't like anyone who's--different.

LYKIA (brusquely):

That's for sure.

Gabrielle glances back at her quickly and uneasily.

DARION:

But you and Xena--you're friends with the centaurs, right?

GABRIELLE (smiles slightly):

Right.

DARION:

Are there a lot of centaurs where we're going?

Gabrielle shakes her head, sadness coming over her face.

GABRIELLE:

Just one centaur...and his son.

As she speaks, the shot of her, Darion and Lykia cross-fades into one of a curly-haired, grinning centaur child grinning as he gallops across a yard.

VOICE (off-camera):

Catch!

A multicolored ball flies toward the centaur boy, who catches it, laughing. The camera pulls back to show a smiling Xenan, in front of a house. Nika sits on the porch breastfeeding a baby.

XENAN:

Come on, Borias--throw it back to me!

The boy throws the ball back to Xenan; the two centaurs, father and son, race each other around the yard. Then Xenan throws the ball back to Borias but tosses it too high; Borias misses and the ball flies off-camera.

XENA (off-camera):

Hello, Xenan.

The camera pans back to Xena holding the ball. She smiles and tosses it to Xenan, who catches it, looking at Xena curiously.

XENAN (smiles):

Xena! Gabrielle!

NIKA (looks up, smiling):

Xena! It's so good to see you.

Xenan trots up to Xena and holds out his hand, which she clasps, smiling. Borias follows him.

DARION (gapes at Xenan and Borias):
Wow...

XENA (warmly):
Borias has grown.

XENAN:
He keeps us busy--doesn't he, Nika?

NIKA (comes up to them, smiling):
He certainly does. And now he has a baby sister, Ephiny.

XENA (smiles warmly):
Congratulations. (she notices Belach's necklace on Nika and frowns a little) Your father--

NIKA (nods sadly):
He died a few months after-- (turns away) --after what happened. He never really forgave himself for what he did to the centaurs...he was always a broken man after that.

XENAN (obviously trying to change the subject, looks at Lykia and Darion, then at Lysippe):
You have new friends.

GABRIELLE:
This is Darion. And Lykia, his sister.

XENAN:
You're all welcome in our home.

LYSIPPE (brusquely):
I don't want to stay here. (off Xenan's startled look) I just want you to take my child. (She thrusts the baby at him)

XENAN:
Your child? Why?

LYSIPPE:
I can't raise her. Maybe you can. (pauses) She's--she's--like you.

The baby opens her eyes and starts whimpering.

XENAN (shocked):
A centaur? *She*?

XENA:
It's true, Xenan. Lysippe's baby is a centaur--a girl centaur.

Xenan looks from her to Lysippe to the still-whimpering baby, an awed look on his face.

XENAN (mutters, almost as if to himself):

Then it's started...

XENA:

What's started?

XENAN:

The prophecy.

Xena, Gabrielle and Lysippe stare at him, with a mixture of bewilderment and curiosity, as we:

FADE OUT

ACT THREE

FADE IN

Inside Xenan and Nika's house. Xenan is kneeling on the floor by a table, looking very thoughtful. Lysippe sits on a chair, holding her child. Xena and Gabrielle stand by the table; the door of the house is open and we see Lykia sitting on the porch with her back to the camera. The laughter and shouts of Darion and Borias are heard from outside.

Nika comes up to the table and puts down a plate of fruit.

XENAN:

I never thought the story could be true.

NIKA (a little nervously):

What story?

XENAN:

When a centaur girl child is born, the centaur race can return to its homeland.

GABRIELLE (confused):

Homeland?

XENAN:

It's a tale I heard from some of the older centaurs of my tribe. They told me that the centaurs came from another world--a world inhabited only by centaurs. (gives Nika a strange look) Three nights ago, I saw that world in a dream...maybe that was no coincidence.

As he speaks, we dissolve to:

[FLASHBACK]

An overhead shot of a beautiful valley bathed in golden sunlight, with green rolling hills on one side and a forest on the other. A village is seen at the foot of a hill. A small river runs past the village and through the valley, the sunlight dancing off of its clear blue surface as the camera slowly zooms in. The air is filled with the chirping of birds; it's a calm and peaceful scene. Then, the sound of voices is heard as the camera pans over to the village. We see that its inhabitants are centaurs.

XENAN (voice-over):

Centaurs were both male and female at that time, and they all lived in peace...

Centaur children, boys and girls, are playfully chasing each other in the streets of the village. A male centaur trots up to them and sweeps one of the girls up in his arms, laughing as he ruffles her hair and she kisses him on the cheek. A female centaur, wearing an embroidered blue shirt and with bright ribbons in her hair, joins them and lovingly puts her hand on her husband's shoulder. The camera pulls back to show other male and female centaurs.

XENAN (voice-over):

Our legend has it that a group of centaurs--led by Ixion--plotted to establish their tyrannical rule over the centaur nation. They killed several members of the council of elders before they were subdued...

We see a large, sparsely but beautifully decorated hall where pandemonium reigns as several centaurs attack a group of mostly middle-aged male and female centaurs. We see a quick succession of shots: a centaur's hand holding a club is brought down; a female centaur screams; a rebel centaur runs another centaur through with a sword. Then the doors burst open and other centaurs burst in and tackle the rebels. We see some of the rebels being bound and pushed to the floor.

XENAN (voice-over):

Their crimes were grave, but putting them to death would not have been the centaur way. So the centaurs appealed to their gods, who decided on a proper punishment...

Several centaurs pray in a temple. In a flare of light, a centaur god and goddess appear before them.

XENAN (voice-over):

The gods created a doorway into the world of humans, and the centaurs who were a part of the plot were banished through that doorway.

The screen goes white, and then the camera pulls back to show that the white is a cloud of thick fog in a green valley. A group of about two dozen centaurs are driven toward the fog by other centaurs and then driven into it. They disappear into the fog.

CUT TO

A meadow. A group of human women, carrying bundles of firewood, are standing in the meadow looking fearfully at the cloud of fog in which sparks and bursts of light

can be seen. A centaur jumps out of the fog, followed by another. The women scream.

[END OF FLASHBACK]

XENAN:

These centaurs' punishment was that they, and their children, would live as strangers among humans. The gods decreed that no female centaur children would be born in this world, so that they could only take human mates. But it was prophesized that one day a female centaur child would be born--and then the portal would reopen and the exiled centaurs could return to their true home.

NIKA:

There's a whole world populated only by centaurs?

XENAN:

Apparently, there is. (shakes his head) I thought it was just a fairy-tale...

XENA (bitterly):

And now that the prophecy has come true, there are only two centaurs left to go back to their world.

Xenan lowers his head sadly; Nika looks guiltily away.

GABRIELLE:

You don't know that. Maybe there were others who survived--other tribes...

LYSIPPE (brusquely):

What does this prophecy have to do with me?

GABRIELLE (puts a hand on her shoulder):

Lysippe--whatever the reason, you were chosen to bear this child.

LYSIPPE (bitter):

That's a huge comfort. Whatever the reason, someone chose to ruin my life.

XENA:

So where is this portal?

XENAN (aghast):

I don't know. That knowledge was kept by the elders of our tribe...but they were all killed when--
(trails off)

Xena and Gabrielle look at each other in sadness and puzzlement; then at Lysippe and her child. The baby smiles and reaches up toward Lysippe, playing with a lock of her hair.

LYSIPPE:

Here--you hold her. (hands the baby to Gabrielle, who takes it, giving Lysippe a reproachful look. The baby's smile crumples and she starts to cry. Gabrielle steps aside and rocks her in her arms, trying to comfort her)

DARION (off-camera, outside):

Come on, I'll race you to the fence!

Xena walks over to the window. Through the window, we see the yard from Xena's point of view; Borias and Darion are racing each other laughing. Borias is first to touch the fence. Darion slaps his knees in frustration. Xena sighs and turns toward the others. Meanwhile, the baby in Gabrielle's arms has quieted down.

XENA:

So there's no way for us to get to that portal.

Nika looks at Xena and at Xenan, with obviously mixed feelings.

NIKA:

If there are other centaur tribes left, maybe they know where it is.

XENAN:

If they do, they may not be able to go through the portal.

GABRIELLE (looks up):

Why not?

XENAN:

Because--

LYSIPPE (rises abruptly, interrupting him):

Look, this is none of my business. I don't want anything to do with centaurs. Keep her here or take her to centaur-land, I don't care. I want to go back to my husband.

LYKIA (turns around):

Do you really think he'll take you back, after what happened? And what about the other people in your village?

XENA:

A better question is, do *you* want him back. (to Xenan) What were you saying before?

XENAN:

For the centaurs to pass through the portal, the girl child must lead the way. So I heard.

LYSIPPE:

I already said I don't care. (softening a little, looks at Xena, Gabrielle and Xenan) Look, I--I appreciate your help. But I have to go.

NIKA:

At least take some food with you for the road.

LYSIPPE (shakes her head, a little ashamed):

No--no, you've done enough. Thank you.

She walks out briskly. The tense silence that ensues, punctuated only by the sounds of Darion and Borias laughing in the background, is suddenly pierced by the baby's loud wail. Nika, Xenan and Xena look at the baby in alarm; Lykia flinches slightly.

In a moment Lysippe walks back inside.

LYSIPPE:

What's wrong?

GABRIELLE (shrugs a little):

She wants her mother.

The baby continues to wail. Suddenly, Lysippe crumples down on a chair and starts sobbing. Gabrielle comes up to her and gently places the baby in her lap. Lysippe picks her up and holds her tight.

LYSIPPE (through tears):

My baby...

DARION (peeks in through the door):

Hey, everything okay?

GABRIELLE (smiles):

I think it is now.

Darion yelps as a ball hits him in the back and turns around to see Borias laughing.

DARION:

Hey! No fair! (he runs off chasing Borias, who gallops away.)

Pan back inside the house. Smiling through tears, Lysippe kisses her baby, who starts to quiet down.

XENA:

Isn't it about time you gave her a name?

LYSIPPE (looks up at her):

Well...you've already got a centaur named after you. (glances shyly at Xenan) So I guess it's going to be--Gabrielle.

Quick pan to Gabrielle, who smiles proudly.

GABRIELLE:

Thank you, Lysippe--I'm honored.

Pan back to Lysippe, who strokes Baby Gabrielle's fuzzy head. Giggling a little, the baby kicks up, throwing off the swaddling cloths.

LYSIPPE (hesitantly strokes her back and touches her tail):

This will still take some getting used to...

The camera slowly pans around the house to show everyone else (except Lykia, who is still sitting in the doorway with her back turned) smiling at Lysippe and Baby Gabrielle. Then, close-up on Xenan as his smile slowly fades.

XENAN:

We still have no idea how to find that portal...

CUT TO

The battlefield we saw in the teaser. A thick cloud of fog still stretches across the middle of the field. The camera pans back to show two soldiers in black armor standing at the edge of the field looking at the fog. They look at each other, shaking their heads.

CUT TO

A soldier in red armor (Soldier #3) peers between the trees out at a wide road. He is a young man, no more than 20, with gray eyes and ash-blond hair. A rumble is heard in the distance. The soldier perks up; the camera slowly zooms in for a close-up as his eyes widen.

CUT TO

The tent of the commander in red armor, who is sitting at a table with some maps on it, conferring with two officers. A soldier (Soldier #2) stands before him.

SOLDIER #2:

It's still there, sir.

COMMANDER (strokes his beard, his hand jerking slightly--he is nervous but trying not to show it):

All right. (to the officers) Then tomorrow, we start moving here-- (points to the map)

A noise distracts him. He turns to see Soldier #3 run into the tent, clear agitated.

SOLDIER #3:

Sir--sir!

COMMANDER:

What is it, soldier?

SOLDIER #3:

I just saw--I saw (he stammers, panting for breath)

COMMANDER (rises abruptly, approaches the soldier and grabs his shoulders):

Get a grip, man! Who's coming? The enemy?

SOLDIER #3:

No--no, sir! (his lips tremble) I--I've never seen anything like this before!

The officers exchange startled looks.

OFFICER #3:

The gods are against us! First that damned fog, and now--some terrible monster that has scared a grown man out of his wits!

A close-up of the commander's face as he yells at the soldier.

COMMANDER:

What is it?

Quick pan to a close-up of the soldier's frightened face.

SOLDIER #3:

Centaur, sir! At least a hundred--maybe more!

As he speaks, a distant rumble of hooves is heard in the background, and the scene in the tent CROSS-FADES into one of a large group of centaurs, young and old, trotting down a road past green hills and distant forests. They are led by a noble-looking middle-aged centaur whose shoulder-length, wavy brown hair is streaked with a touch of gray. He is wearing brown leather armor. The horse half of him is brown as well. He stops, tail flapping.

LEAD CENTAUR:

It should be close now...very close. Beyond those hills-- (points to hills in the distance)

The centaurs start advancing toward the hills.

CUT TO

The tent of the commander in red. The commander looks thoughtfully at the soldier, stroking his beard.

COMMANDER:

Where did you see them?

SOLDIER #3:

On the road about two leagues west of here. If they continue on their path, they should reach the Delians' camp in about an hour--

COMMANDER (thoughtfully):

Not unless we get there first.

OFFICER (tentatively):

Why would we want to do that?

COMMANDER (turns toward the officers):

I know a thing or two about centaurs. They are strange beasts--but great fighters. If they're coming here--

As he speaks, the scene in the tent cross-fades once again to the centaurs, who are advancing toward the hills.

COMMANDER'S VOICE:

--we can use it to our advantage.

The camera zooms in on the lead centaur and a younger centaur next to him.

YOUNGER CENTAUR:

But Photios--are you sure the girl child will be there?

PHOTIOS (passionately):

She must be! She had to be born to one of the other tribes--they must have kept the knowledge of the gateway, just as we did! If they are not there yet--we will wait for them.

The camera pulls back to show the centaurs riding toward the hills. A group of soldiers on horseback emerges from the trees on one side of the road and blocks the centaurs' path. The centaurs come to a halt. As the camera zooms in, we see that the group of soldiers is led by the commander in red.

The camera pans over the centaurs and the soldiers as they stand in a tense face-off, Photios and the commander in red facing each other. Finally, Photios breaks the silence.

PHOTIOS:

We have no quarrel with you. Let us through.

COMMANDER:

You must have traveled pretty far to get here. There are no centaur tribes living in the area as far as I know.

PHOTIOS:

We have traveled here--for a reason that has nothing to do with you.

COMMANDER (looks at him thoughtfully):

Would it have anything to do with--a cloud of thick white fog hanging over a field? (Quick pan to Photios, whose eyes widen, and then back to the commander, who smiles a little, obviously pleased with his deduction) Well, I've got good news and bad news. The good news is that your cloud of fog is right over the top of that hill. (gestures) The bad news is...this land is being disputed by two cities, Tanagra and Delium. Right now, the army of Delium is holding that field. (the centaurs exchange worried looks; that does not escape the commander, who smiles a barely perceptible smile.) Good luck seizing it from them.

PHOTIOS (dubiously):

We could try to negotiate...

COMMANDER:

Or you could join us--in driving the Delians off this land. (chuckles) Can't say I've ever seen anyone go to war over a patch of fog before, but hey--I'm not going to get judgmental about that. Once we've defeated them, that field is all yours.

The centaurs look at each other uncertainly.

The camera pulls back to show Ares standing by a tree, evidently unseen by either party. He shakes his head and smirks.

ARES:

Now this is getting interesting.

The camera pans over to show Photios reluctantly extending his hand and shaking hands with the commander.

CUT TO

A sparsely furnished room in Xenan and Nika's house. It's nearly dark; dawn can be seen breaking out in the window. Gabrielle and Xena are sleeping in bedrolls spread out on the floor. Xena stirs and sits up, throwing off her blanket; she is wearing only a white undershirt. She sits still for a moment, then gets up, puts on her leather tunic and her boots, and walks quietly to the door. When her hand is already on the door handle, Gabrielle stirs and speaks up.

GABRIELLE:

Where are you going?

XENA:

Out for a swim.

GABRIELLE:

A swim? At this hour?

XENA:

Why not?

GABRIELLE (sits up and gives her a slightly mischievous look):

You're not meeting Ares, are you?

XENA (a little brusquely, so that her whisper comes out as a near-hiss):

No.

GABRIELLE (smiles):

Hey, you don't have to get all defensive. So what if you are? I mean--I accept the fact that you're--

XENA (interrupts):

Gabrielle, trust me--meeting Ares is the last thing on my mind right now. I'll be back soon. (starts to open the door)

GABRIELLE:

Xena. (quick pan to Xena as she stops and turns around) Are you okay?

XENA:

Fine. (She starts to leave, then stops and turns again, her look softening) Unless you count the fact that there's nothing I can do to help Xenan--or any other centaurs who may still be alive--

GABRIELLE (smiles):

You'll find a way.

XENA (smiles back, but her smile is slightly forced):

Thanks...I guess.

GABRIELLE:

What?

XENA:

It's not always easy to live up to those expectations.

GABRIELLE:

Well, would you rather have me say, "That's okay, Xena, even you can't solve every problem?"

XENA (thinks a moment, then chuckles):

You're right. (sighs) It's okay. I just want to have a little time to myself, that's all.

GABRIELLE (nods):

That's okay.

She lies down again, while Xena goes out the door.

CUT TO

A riverbank at dawn, with some trees and shrubbery around. Birds are starting to sing. The camera pans over Xena's leather tunic, undershirt, and boots on the ground, then over to the river where Xena surfaces from a dive. She starts swimming toward the bank and dives again. Surfacing near the shore, she stands up with the water reaching up to her shoulders. She seems to be listening to something intently; then her eyes narrow and a hint of a smile creeps up on her lips. She starts to walk forward. We see a shot of her from the back, up to her waist in the water now.

XENA:

Hoping to see anything interesting?

In a flash of blue light, Ares materializes, standing on the riverbank next to her clothes.

ARES:

Oh...you? (Close-up on Xena's face as she chuckles indulgently; then close-up on Ares as he flashes her a roguish half-grin) It's hard to catch you alone, you know. I haven't seen you since, uh-- that business in Rome.

Xena's face darkens for a moment. Then she shakes herself a little, as if trying to shake off unpleasant thoughts more than the water. She comes out on the riverbank, the camera zoomed in on her from the chest up, and sits down next to Ares. They are silent for a few moments.

ARES:

So...feels good to be back on the job, huh?

XENA (shoots him a nasty look):

Thanks for the moral support. (She reaches for her undershirt and slips it on, looking away from Ares)

ARES (confused, holds up his hands in a defensive gesture):

What, what? (realization dawns on him) Oh. Things not going well?

XENA (brusquely, reaching for her tunic):
As if you didn't know.

ARES (leans closer to her so that his lips are almost brushing her ear, and speaks in a soft voice):
Contrary to what you may think, I don't watch you round the clock. (He kisses her shoulder; she shivers, the scowl melting away from her face, and lets go of the tunic.) Tempting though it may be... (Xena chuckles, shaking her head a little) Look, I've been pretty busy the past coupla days--

XENA (gives him a suspicious look):
Busy?

ARES (vaguely):
Oh--just a little something I got going... Anyway-- (he touches her face with the back of his hand) --what's wrong?

XENA (sighs and shakes her head):
Forget it, Ares...it's nothing you would care about.

ARES (gently):
I care about you--all right? Try me.

XENA (sighs):
You've heard about the centaurs' true homeland, haven't you...

ARES (gives her a strange look):
The centaurs?

XENA (nods):
The story is that they came from another world... (puzzled) Ares, you're a god--you have to know something about that!

ARES (reluctantly):
All right, I've heard about it.

Xena gives him a wary look.

CUT TO

A long shot of the military camp of the Delian army (in black) as dawn breaks out. The veil of fog still hangs over the field; it is tinged with pink in the dawn's light. A soldier in red is riding toward the camp.

The camera pulls further back to show Photios and the commander in red (on horseback) standing at the top of the hill, from which the camp and the field can be seen. They look on as the rider enters the Delian camp.

CUT TO

A large field by the bottom of the hill, on the other side. The Tanagra army (in red) is lined up and ready for battle. The camera zooms in on the centaurs lined up on the front lines, looking anxiously at

the top of the hill. Photios and the commander in red appear on the hilltop and start riding down; they are followed by the soldier in red armor who served as the messenger.

CUT TO

Photios and the commander ride up to the front lines.

COMMANDER:

They'll meet us here in an hour.

CUT TO

Xena and Ares sitting at the riverbank.

XENA:

So that's where we are. We have no idea where this gateway is--and if there are surviving centaurs who have made the journey to that gateway, they won't be able to enter because they don't have the child.

ARES (looks at her, wonderingly):

And this is important to you.

XENA (exasperated):

Dammit, Ares--after everything that the centaurs have endured at the hands of humans--don't you think they deserve a chance to return to their own homeland? (As he stares at her intently, she looks away for a moment and then looks at him again. She speaks again, her voice dropping) I owe them, Ares. I waged war on them and tried to destroy them--and they raised (her voice almost breaks) my child. I was too late to stop Belach from slaughtering them. And now, when they need my help again--

She trails off, looking grim, her mouth rigid. Ares continues to stare at her, biting his lip. The camera zooms in for a close-up of his face, then pans quickly to a close-up on Xena, whose expression suddenly changes to a dangerous glare, her eyes glittering.

XENA:

All right, Ares. Where is this gateway (the camera pulls back and we see Ares flinch) and how is it mixed up in whatever it is you have going?

ARES (slowly):

It's--it's on a battlefield where I have two armies facing off against each other.

XENA:

And?

Close-up on Ares' face as he stares at Xena; his face is hard and grim at first, then he sighs, his expression softening as we:

FADE OUT

ACT FOUR

FADE IN

On the centaurs at the front lines of the Tanagra army.

YOUNG CENTAUR (excitedly):

Did you see the gateway?

PHOTIOS (nods gravely):

I did.

YOUNG CENTAUR #2 (vehemently):

Photios--they say that no other centaurs have been seen in this area!

PHOTIOS (nods gravely):

I know.

YOUNG CENTAUR #2:

Then the child isn't here!

PHOTIOS:

She will be.

YOUNG CENTAUR #1:

And what if she isn't? We may fight this battle for nothing!

PHOTIOS (passionately):

What would you have us do? Turn around and walk away?

The other centaurs continue arguing, their voices fading as the camera pulls away. The camera pans over the hill and starts to zoom in on the Delian camp, which we now see is bustling with activity as the soldiers get ready for the battle.

CUT TO

Xena and Ares on the riverbank.

ARES:

So now, they're allied with the centaurs and they're about to go into battle. That's about it. (off Xena's bitter stare) I was going to tell you.

XENA (sighs):

I believe you...

ARES (exasperated):

Xena, look--

XENA:

Yeah. You're the God of War and it's what you do. I know. (She gets up briskly and pulls on her leather tunic, then starts to put on a boot, turning to look at Ares) You're taking us there.

She finishes putting on her boots and strides resolutely away. The camera pulls back to show her marching toward Xenan and Nika's house, a short distance away.

ARES (looks after her and sighs):

I am so whipped. (He shakes his head and grins)

CUT TO

An overhead shot of the two armies separated by the hill. The Tanagra army with the centaurs is waiting at the bottom of the hill. On the other side, the Delian army is marching toward the hillside. We cross-cut between the commander in black riding at the head of his troops, and the commander in red and Photius waiting at the bottom on the hill on the other side.

CUT TO

A small clearing in a grove. Medium close-up on a rabbit munching on grass. The rabbit suddenly freezes as the air crackles and then erupts in blue light. Xenan materializes in the clearing; he is holding Borias in his arms, while Nika, holding her baby, sits on his back. As Nika jumps down, a squeal is heard and the camera pans down to show that she's landed right on top of Gabrielle.

NIKA:

Sorry.

There is another "whoosh" and burst of blue light; Argo appears next to them, neighing and stamping her foot; then, Lykia and Darion, and Lysippe with her baby in her arms. Lykia has a tight grip on Darion's hand; she looks dizzy.

DARION (tugs on her sleeve, laughing):

Wasn't that great?

Quick pan to Gabrielle (her horse next to her) as she whips around to stare at Ares, the blue light fading around him.

GABRIELLE:

Where's Xena?

Even as she speaks, there's another flash of blue. Xena materializes, knocking down Ares and landing on top of him.

XENA (growls):

You did that on purpose!

ARES (smirks):

Well--there's gotta be something in it for me...

Xena can't help grinning as she rolls off him. Ares scrambles to his feet, then holds out his hand to her in an exaggeratedly gallant gesture. Xena stares at him for a moment, a smile tugging at the

corners of her mouth; then she takes his hand and gets up, making a small bow to Ares before letting go of his hand.

DARION (runs over to Ares, excited):
Hey--thanks for letting me come along!

GABRIELLE (looks around, pointing her finger as she counts heads):
All right--everyone's here. (she looks at Ares, smirking a little) I can't even imagine how I'm going to describe *that* in my scroll...

ARES (in mock indignation):
You so much as mention this and you're toast.

XENA:
All right. I've got a battle to stop. (to Gabrielle and the others) You wait here--I'll be back soon.

She mounts Argo and gallops toward the sparse grove at the edge of the clearing.

Ares looks after her, then turns to Gabrielle.

ARES:
Well--I think my work here is done. (He folds his arms on his chest and stands up straight, getting ready to disappear)

DARION:
You could always give us a ride back to our village. That would be fun!

ARES:
Sure, kid. But you'll owe me. Big time.

GABRIELLE (gasps and grabs Darion in a protective hug, glaring at Ares):
Don't you even--

Ares smirks at her and vanishes with a "whoosh" and a flash of light.

CUT TO

The Tanagra troops and the centaurs in the field at the bottom of the hill, looking at the hilltop. The front ranks of the Delian troops, with the commander and the officers at the head of the army, appear on the hilltop. The camera pulls closer as the commander in black signals a stop, staring ahead of him.

Pan to the front ranks of the Tanagra troops and the centaurs, then back to the Delian troops.

COMMANDER IN BLACK (to one of his officers):
They've got reinforcements from centaurs!

OFFICER:
We can't win this one!

COMMANDER IN BLACK (grimly):

We have no choice but to go into battle. We can't turn and run. Let us pray that we still have the favor of my lord Ares.

The camera zooms out as the Delian army advances. The Tanagra army and the centaurs prepare to charge, waiting for the commander's word.

XENA (off-screen):

A-la-la-la-la-la--shee-ya!

The camera pans to the commander in black, then the commander in red, then Photios as they whip around to look at Xena, who is galloping toward them.

OFFICER (standing next to the commander in red, shocked):

Who's that?

COMMANDER IN RED (clenches his jaw):

I think it's Xena.

PHOTIOS (shoots him a shocked look):

The legendary Warrior Princess?

The two armies stand still, waiting tensely, as Xena rides up to the commander in red and Photios.

COMMANDER IN RED:

Xena?

XENA (fixes him with her steely gaze):

That's me. (to Photios) Are you the leader of these centaurs?

PHOTIOS:

I am. My name is Photios. (The tone of his voice is slightly edgy and defiant) What's your business with me?

XENA:

I know about the gateway.

PHOTIOS (flinches):

How?

XENA:

What does it matter? After all the centaurs who died by human hands, Photios, don't you think it's time to end it? (Photios nods slowly) Come with me--we'll talk to the Delians' commander.

COMMANDER IN RED:

She's leading you into a trap!

XENA (to the commander, with a chilly smile):

No. *You* are. (Shakes her head as the commander reaches for his sword) Trust me--you don't want to do that.

Photios walks over to Xena and stands by her side; he is joined by the other centaurs. The commander in red looks at them, realizing his defeat. He turns to his troops.

COMMANDER IN RED:

Stand back.

The camera zooms in slowly on Xena and Photios as they ride toward the hill.

XENA:

Photios--I have something else to tell you. (off his expectant, slightly suspicious look) My friends and I have the girl child.

PHOTIOS (momentarily speechless, a flash of joy in his face):

I can't believe it! Is she--is she with another centaur tribe?

XENA (a shadow of sadness coming across her face):

Not exactly.

The camera pulls back to show Xena and Photios, followed by the other centaurs, ride up to the front ranks of the Delian troops. The commander and the officers wait for them tensely, obviously ready to strike. The camera zooms in again as Xena and Photios approach the commander in black.

PHOTIOS:

We have no fight with you. All we want is passage to the gateway. (He points at the fog)

The commander looks at him, relief evident in his face.

CUT TO

Gabrielle, Xenan, and the rest waiting in the clearing. Darion and Borias are running around the clearing. Lysippe is sitting on the grass, lost in thought; Baby Gabrielle, now out of swaddling cloths, is next to her. The baby giggles and reaches toward a butterfly that flits by.

GABRIELLE (looks at the baby, smiling):

A centaur homeland... I can't believe it's actually about to happen.

XENAN (walks up to Lysippe):

Lysippe.

LYSIPPE (looks up, startled out of her reverie):

What?

XENAN:

Look--if you don't want to come with us, I'll understand. I promise we'll take good care of--

LYSIPPE (shakes her head):

No, it's all right. I know it won't be easy--living as a human in a world of centaurs. (Quick pan to Nika, who looks very uncomfortable and lowers her eyes) But my daughter is a centaur--and my place is with her. (sighs) I'll always miss my husband--but I can't go back to him. I can't go back to my village. I'll never belong there now. They will never see me as one of them. (The camera pans over to Nika, who looks even more distressed, and then to a very thoughtful-looking Lykia.) I'll come with you.

XENAN (smiles at her):
I'm sure you won't regret it.

NIKA:
Xenan...

XENAN (turns around and sees her distressed look):
What's wrong?

NIKA:
What about my daughter and me?

XENAN (taken aback):
What do you mean? You are my wife--she is my daughter. The centaurs will welcome you in their midst.

NIKA (bitterly):
Are you sure? Do you think the centaurs can't hate and fear those who are different from them?

XENAN (kneels by her side and puts a hand on her shoulder):
You are both a part of the centaur bloodline. I'm sure--

NIKA (shakes her head):
I'm sorry, Xenan. I know I shouldn't say this. This is a chance for you to go back to the land of your ancestors--you and Borias. It's just that--I have to leave the land of *my* ancestors forever. My mother's land, where you and I made our home. (tears well in her eyes) I didn't even have a chance to visit my parents' graves--or to say good-bye to Dora, my nurse who raised me as if I were her own child... (she shakes her head) I'm sorry. I'm being very selfish--after what my father did to the centaurs, I have no right to stand in the way of--

XENAN (gently but firmly):
No. Don't ever blame yourself for what your father did.

Tears streaming down her face, Nika kisses him.

The camera pulls back to show Xena riding into the clearing.

XENA:
Come on. The way is clear.

Xenan looks up at her thoughtfully.

CUT TO

The centaurs--now joined by some centaur boys--are standing in the field, in front of the veil of fog.

PHOTIOS:
There they are!

The camera pans over to show Xena and Gabrielle riding toward them; Lysippe and her baby are riding with Xena, Lykia and Darion with Gabrielle. Xenan is carrying Nika and her baby on his back

and Borias in his arms. As they approach and stop, Lysippe dismounts and somewhat hesitantly walks up to Photios, carrying her baby. Nika, with her baby, steps down as well, and Xenan puts down Borias. The camera zooms in on Lysippe as she walks up to Photios.

PHOTIOS (gasps joyfully):
The child! This is the child!

LYSIPPE (shyly but proudly):
Her name is Gabrielle.

PHOTIOS (carefully takes the baby from her hands and holds her up):
Gabrielle. You will lead us to a new world. (The other centaurs cheer as Photios turns to Lysippe)
What is your name?

LYSIPPE:
Lysippe.

PHOTIOS:
Lysippe. You will always be honored among the centaurs.

A close-up on Lysippe. She smiles, but her smile is tinged with some sadness.

PHOTIOS:
To open the gateway, one of us must walk into the fog carrying the child. As her mother--do you want to do it?

LYSIPPE (after a moment's silence):
Yes.

PHOTIOS:
There will be no way back for you to this world.

LYSIPPE:
I know. (lowers her eyes for a moment, then looks up) I accept it.

PHOTIOS:
Then lead the way. (hands the child back to Lysippe)

Lysippe takes the child and walks toward the fog, then stops and turns around.

LYSIPPE:
Xena--Gabrielle...thank you for everything you've done for me.

XENA:
Good luck, Lysippe.

GABRIELLE:
You're doing the right thing. (smiles) Good-bye, Lysippe.

LYSIPPE (after a moment's hesitation):
Can you do me another favor?

GABRIELLE:

Of course.

LYSIPPE:

If you ever pass through my village... (her voice falters a little and a wistful look comes over her face) ...tell Phillamon that--I hope he has a good life.

GABRIELLE (nods gravely):

I understand. Don't worry--we will.

LYSIPPE:

Thank you. (holds up the baby) I'll always have Gabrielle to remember you by.

Close-up on Gabrielle, who smiles, her smile tinged with a little sadness.

Lysippe turns and walks into the fog as the centaurs watch tensely. As she does, the fogs opens up and turns into a transparent veil of mist through which one can see a beautiful field on the other side, and a group of centaurs--male and female--waiting.

PHOTIOS (reverently):

Our world!

Lysippe walks through the mist, which ripples as she crosses the gateway. One by one, the centaurs of Photios' tribe follow her, until Photios is the only one who remains. Photios turns toward Xenan, who stands a few paces away with Nika and Borias at his side. Xenan is holding Nika's hand.

PHOTIOS (to Xenan):

What about you?

The camera zooms in on the portal to show the centaurs waiting on the other side, then pans toward Xenan.

XENAN (stares at Photios, his face reflecting an inner struggle):

I'm not going.

XENA (looks at him in shock):

What?

XENAN:

My place is here--with my human wife and my daughter--

PHOTIOS:

They would be welcome in our world. Here, you and your son will always be outcasts.

XENAN (shakes his head):

No. No, it doesn't have to be that way. There are many people in this world who have learned to accept those who-- (glances at Nika) --are different from them. We can live together in peace.

NIKA (through tears):

Xenan--you don't have to do this for me--

XENAN (squeezes her hand):

But I want to. One of us has to give up their ancestors' world. There's no reason it has to be you. And besides, this was my mother's world too. I have as much of a right to be here as (sweeps his arm to indicate Xena, Gabrielle and the other humans) they do.

PHOTIOS (coldly):

It's your choice. Just remember that once the gateway closes, it will be forever.

XENAN (nods):

I understand. (looks lovingly at Nika and the baby) I've made my decision.

PHOTIOS:

And what about your son?

XENAN:

When he grows up--I know he'll understand too.

Photios shrugs; then he walks up to Xena and extends his hand.

PHOTIOS:

The centaur nation thanks you.

XENA (grips his hand and shakes it):

It was the least I could do.

Photios walks toward the gateway. Before walking through the mist, he turns and looks reproachfully at Xenan but says nothing.

XENAN:

Even though I'm not joining my brothers--our homeland will always be in my heart.

Photios nods mutely, then turns and walks through the gateway. Medium close-up on Xenan and his family, who stand still watching the gateway, Xenan and Nika still holding hands. Xena, Gabrielle, Lykia and Darion stand behind them.

The fog thickens so that the gateway can no longer be seen; then it starts to crackle with energy, swirls, and dissipates so quickly that in a few moments it's impossible to tell it was even there.

The tense silence is broken by Darion, who comes up to Xenan and looks at him, smiling.

DARION:

Hey, I'm really glad you stayed. You have to come to our village and visit someday. (grins) Can you imagine the looks on the other kids' faces?

XENAN (looks at him a moment with a warm but bittersweet smile, obviously pondering his reply):

Uh--thanks.

Pan over to Lykia, who seems to be lost in thought. Then she turns abruptly toward Xena and Gabrielle.

LYKIA:

I don't want to go back.

GABRIELLE (shocked):

What?

LYKIA:

I don't belong in my village anymore. I'm not really one of them now...now that they know I've been a slave in Rome...and besides--

She trails off and tosses her head, as if trying to chase away memories. Pan to Xena, who looks at her with grim understanding.

GABRIELLE:

But Lykia--it's your home. Where else will you go?

LYKIA:

The Amazons. I-- (glances at Darion) --we could stay with them. Couldn't we?

GABRIELLE (looks at her and at Darion, conflicted):

We'll--have to talk about that.

Pan to Xena, who is listening intently to something.

GABRIELLE:

What is it?

XENA:

Do you hear that?

GABRIELLE (frowns in puzzlement):

Hear what?

In the distance, sounds of shouting voices and clashing swords are heard.

XENA (grimly):

Fighting.

CUT TO

Xena and Gabrielle, on their horses, at the hilltop. Pan to a long shot of the field below, where the two armies are locked in a ferocious battle. The camera zooms in slowly to pan over the battlefield. A soldier in black armor is run through with a sword and falls down with a guttural cry; a soldier in red and a soldier in black spar briefly and then the soldier in red falls, his eyes bulging; a mace-wielding hand in a black gauntlet comes down and then goes up again, the mace now bloodied; a riderless horse rears up and neighs in terror.

The camera pulls back to close in on Xena and Gabrielle, who look sadly at the carnage. Xena makes to ride downhill but Gabrielle reaches out to put a hand on her arm.

GABRIELLE:

Xena--it's too late. You can't stop it.

XENA (turns, a look of determination on her face):

I can try.

GABRIELLE (shakes her head sadly):

You can't stop every war.

XENA (her look turning to anguish):

You're right. I can't.

She looks out at the battlefield for a moment, her posture rigid.

GABRIELLE (gently):

Let's get out of here.

CUT TO

The field where the gateway was before. One of the nearly-empty army camps is visible in the distance. The camera closes in on the small group in the field. Lykia and Darion are sitting on the ground.

DARION:

I think it would be really cool if we could live with the Amazons. You remember Klymene, right? She's a lot of fun.

LYKIA (smiles a little):

Yeah.

DARION (suddenly concerned):

We're going to stop by our house and pick up all my toys, right? (gasps a bit as if he's just remembered something and turns toward Borias, who is nearby, poking a stick at something on the ground that has his attention) He's gotta see my toys! You know, the dragon, the chakram...

Pan to Xena and Gabrielle, who are riding toward them at a slow trot.

Pan to Xenan and Nika; he is leaning down to kiss her.

XENAN (straightens up):

Let's go home.

Pan back to Xena and Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE (smiles):

It's beautiful, isn't it? The way true love can overcome all differences...

XENA (reflectively):

Sometimes it can...

The camera pulls back to show the entire group in the field as we:

FADE OUT

THE END

[The mystery of centaur biology was solved during the production of the motion picture.]