

# SHIPPER SEASON EIGHT

## “Behind Your Eyes”

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### Logline

When Aphrodite decides to help Xena and Ares with their problems, the Warrior Princess and the God of War—and many others—find themselves dealing with a lot of unexpected changes.

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## TEASER

### ***FADE IN***

Moonlight shines off a calm water surface. The camera pulls back for a long shot of a lake with a bridge stretching to an island in the middle where a temple sits in the middle of a lush garden.

### ***CUT TO***

Inside the temple. The camera pans over pink, red and white drapes, vases with roses and other flowers, a bust of Aphrodite, and an altar with offerings of jewelry, gems, gold and silver goblets and other trinkets. Behind the altar, light shines from behind a door that is slightly ajar; faint voices can be heard.

### ***CUT TO***

A lounge-type room, also decorated with drapes and flowers. Aphrodite and Gabrielle sit on a pile of pink and red cushions with trays of fruit and pastries in front of them, holding goblets of wine. Gabrielle looks a little distracted as she sips her wine.

**APHRODITE:**

Come on, Gabrielle--relax! Here (points to the pastry tray), try this one. (she looks on as Gabrielle reaches absent-mindedly for the pastry) So you're worried about Xena.

**GABRIELLE** (nods):

Yeah... (She picks up the pastry and brings it to her mouth, then looks up at Aphrodite.) She's just been in such a--weird mood. She gets all irritable about little things--like who's supposed to fetch the water in the morning.

**APHRODITE:**

And you think it's because of big bro?

**GABRIELLE:**

Well--they... (fidgets a little) ...haven't been--alone in quite a while...

**APHRODITE:**

Yeah, I can see how that would make the Warrior Babe irritable... (giggles) ...a cold swim in the lake might help. (Off Gabrielle's impatient look) Look, honey, I know how you feel. It's not fun being around people when they're having love troubles. I mean, look at Cupid--when he was having problems with Psyche, the poor kid actually turned into a green monster.

Gabrielle, who was just about to bite into the pastry, stops and gives Aphrodite a shocked look. Aphrodite smiles and pats her reassuringly on the shoulder.

**APHRODITE** (continues):

Oh, don't worry--I'm not saying anything that, uh, life-changing is going to happen to Xena.

**GABRIELLE** (nods, absent-mindedly lowering her hand):

Uh...thanks.

**APHRODITE** (sighs):

Still--this is not good. My bro's bummed out about it too, I can tell. And you know...a grumpy Warrior Princess is bad enough...

Gabrielle finally bites into the pastry.

**APHRODITE** (continues):

...but a grumpy God of War...oooh! Trouble!

She shudders dramatically, then holds up her hands and mimics shooting fireballs by sticking out her fingers and making a "pff" sound.

Close-up on Gabrielle, who freezes with her mouth full, her face smeared with pastry cr me, and the half-eaten pastry in her hand. After a moment she swallows the pastry, wipes her mouth and sighs.

**GABRIELLE:**

Maybe we shouldn't worry so much, Aphrodite. I mean, we're not talking about two love-struck teenagers. This is Xena and Ares. They're not going to let their let emotions get out of control.

**APHRODITE:**

Right...they'll just keep those emotions *all* bottled up until they burst.

Gabrielle shakes her head. Aphrodite takes a sip from her goblet.

**GABRIELLE:**

Well, she went out with him this evening, so things probably aren't all that bad. Maybe they'll talk things over like grown-ups.

**APHRODITE** (scrunches up her face):

Talk things over? Ar and the Warrior Babe? As if!

Aphrodite giggles and takes another sip of wine.

**GABRIELLE** (sighs):

I wish they got a chance to walk a league in each other's boots.

**APHRODITE:**

Well, they have the same taste in footwear... (giggles) Oh well. (She smiles brightly, then suddenly gets a thoughtful look)

**GABRIELLE:**

What?

**APHRODITE:**

Nothing. (turns to Gabrielle, smiling) Hey, didn't you want to talk about your own guy problems? Xena can take care of herself. Here. Have another pastry!

As Gabrielle reaches toward the tray of pastries, the camera pulls back for a wide shot of Gabrielle and Aphrodite sitting on the pillows talking but their voices can no longer be heard.

**DISSOLVE TO**

The interior of a building. The camera pans along a dark hallway lit only by distant moonlight, the walls lined with swords, shields and other weapons.

Quiet music begins to fade in--"It's Only Love" by Heather Nova.

The camera turns a corner into a room with somewhat nicer decorations--drapes of black and red fabric, a wine-colored couch up against the wall under a window. A dim light is flickering just off camera.

**DISSOLVE TO**

Close up of a flickering candle. The camera moves back to show that it is sitting on an ornate oak table draped with black velvet fabric. The silver candleholder is surrounded by red rose petals.

The music swells, drowning out all other sounds. The rest of this scene plays with no audio except for the song.

*I used to think that I knew what we needed  
Just assumed we would always be fine*

Pulling back further, we see Xena and Ares sitting at the table, each with a now-empty plate in front of them and a goblet beside it. He says something; she chuckles and smiles warmly, the firelight dancing in her eyes. He smiles back.

Ares waves his hand and a red rose materializes suddenly in Xena's cleavage. She looks startled, then smirks, takes out the rose, sniffs it and says something to Ares with a teasing but tender look. He grins with his usual bravado.

*Now I don't think that we lost that feeling  
But we let everything build up inside*

They look at each other. After a moment, Ares reaches across the table and lays his hand on top of Xena's. She looks down at his hand, then squeezes it and looks back at him with a faint smile. They exchange a few inaudible but obviously tender words.

Ares gets up, still holding Xena's hand, and so does she. They stand facing each other; he leans in slowly but stops just short of touching her lips, waiting for her. After a moment she leans closer and kisses him, slowly and sensuously.

### **DISSOLVE TO**

*It's only love  
But love should make us strong*

Xena breaks the kiss, opens Ares' vest and kisses his chest; he throws his head back, gasping. She unhooks his sword belt and it drops to the floor while he removes her armor. Ares pulls Xena closer and kisses her, fiercely yet tenderly.

*It's only love  
But love has been hurting so long*

Xena pulls away and pushes Ares back onto the couch behind him, much as in "Amphipolis Under Siege". She comes closer and stops; Ares looks at her and slowly runs his hand up her leg, making her shiver with pleasure and close her eyes.

### **DISSOLVE TO**

*What a challenge, honesty  
What a struggle to learn to speak*

Xena and Ares are lying together on the couch, visible only from the shoulders up but obviously naked. She is lying on top of him, facing him, stroking his hair as she talks. He smiles faintly and reaches up to kiss her briefly. When he starts to pull away, she leans down to prolong the kiss.

*Who'd have thought that  
Pretending was easier*

### **DISSOLVE TO**

Xena is now sitting up, putting on her arm guards, wearing her leather tunic but not her armor or gauntlets. Ares, still undressed, is sitting up behind her, caressing her shoulder. She turns to him and

says something. He looks away, his expression turning grave, and then says something that makes Xena's face harden. She turns toward him abruptly. He scowls and says something else; there is a flash of anger in her face, followed by regret.

*It's only love*

Xena stands up and Ares stands up with her, now fully dressed. They continue to talk. They are clearly arguing now, both looking, by turns, angry, sad and uncertain.

*But love*

Xena starts to walk away; Ares grabs her arm and says something. She turns around.

*Should make us strong*

Ares talks to Xena, his expression now softer. He touches her cheek with the back of his hand. She stands silent for a moment, looking wistful, then reaches up and lays her hand over his.

*It's only love*

Xena says something, then takes Ares' hand and removes it from her face.

*But love*

Frowning, Ares asks Xena something. She shrugs, turns and walks away. Ares somberly watches her leave.

*Has been hurting so long*

Xena walks down the dark weapons-lined hallways, then opens the heavy door that leads outside.

**DISSOLVE TO**

*And it's all a part of me, it tears at my heart  
Only love*

Xena is standing outside the temple, looking torn.

**DISSOLVE TO**

Inside the temple, Ares slowly walks up to the front door.

**DISSOLVE TO**

Xena sighs and turns toward the doors. She reaches toward the handle, then lowers her hand, turns and walks away into the forest beyond.

**DISSOLVE TO**

*And it's all an eternity, hoping to learn  
Only love*

Ares turns away.

**DISSOLVE TO**

Xena walks through the forest.

**DISSOLVE TO**

*There's a part of you I'm trying to reach  
Still a part I don't know*

Xena is sitting beside a lake, tossing stones into the water and watching the ripples form.

**[FLASHBACKS]**

From "The Furies":

Ares talking to Xena on the cliff.

From "God Fearing Child":

Ares talks to Xena in Tartarus while she sweeps past him, with Solan at her side.

*Tell me, is devotion a gift or a thief  
Do you wish I'd let go?*

From "Motherhood":

Xena thanks Ares; he nods in acknowledgment.

From "Love's Creation":

Xena is standing in front of Ares, looking into his eyes as she tells him she loves him. They kiss.

From "We Who Are About To Die":

In Ares' temple, Xena and Ares are arguing (about the visions in "This Is Your Life" and about Sabina). Xena looks angry and upset; Ares looks angry and frustrated. Xena starts to stalk out; Ares calls out and she stops. He says something and eventually she turns to look at him.

From "The Rebel":

Ares and Xena are sitting together beside the lake in the moonlight, with his arm around her and her leaning against him, her head on his shoulder.

**[END OF FLASHBACKS]**

Xena tosses another stone into the water.

**DISSOLVE TO**

Ares is in his temple, sitting in a big cushioned chair. He has his hand placed on his chin and he seems to be lost in thought.

**[FLASHBACKS]**

From "Seeds of Faith":

Xena holds a dagger to Ares' throat.

*It's only love  
But love should make us strong*

From "Coming Home":

Xena kisses Ares.

From "Divided We Stand Part I":

Ares is standing on the side of a tree-lined road. Xena rides past him and drops something on the ground. Ares watches somberly as she rides off. A close-up of the objects she dropped--the medallion and the pearl pendant Ares had given her.

*It's only love  
But love has been hurting so long*

From "Just Listen":

Ares is sitting in the barn with Xena, holding her hands and pouring his heart out to her. They kiss.

**[END OF FLASHBACKS]**

Ares stands up and waves his hand, opening up a portal in which we see a battle unfolding somewhere in the night, lit by torches and flaming arrows whizzing through the air.

**DISSOLVE TO**

Xena sitting by the lake, lost in thought.

*And it's all a part of me, it tears at my heart  
Only love*

**DISSOLVE TO**

Ares is watching the battle. In the portal, we see a man fall, struck by a flaming arrow. Ares sighs heavily and closes the portal.

**DISSOLVE TO**

Xena gets up and walks off into the forest.

**DISSOLVE TO**

Ares looks around; the candle on the table is still burning, the rose lying beside the candle.

*And it's all eternity, hoping to learn  
Only love*

He waves his hand. The table with everything on it shimmers out of existence, as do the two chairs.

**DISSOLVE TO**

*Only*

Xena settles down onto a soft patch of grass in the forest and closes her eyes.

**DISSOLVE TO**

Ares paces back and forth in his temple.

*Love...*

The music fades out as we see the image of a pensive Ares on his throne superimposed on that of Xena sleeping on the grass. That image lingers for a moment before we:

**DISSOLVE TO**

Sunrise. A close-up of Gabrielle as she opens her eyes. The camera pulls back to see her lying in a bedroll, with Argo, Klio and another horse tied to a tree behind her. She yawns.

**GABRIELLE:**

Xena?

Gabrielle looks at the bedroll beside her; it's empty. She sits up. The campsite is quiet and there are two other empty bedrolls across the fire. Footsteps are heard approaching and Gabrielle turns to see Darion and Haimon walking together, smiling. Darion is carrying several fish all hanging from the same string. Gabrielle sits up and Darion runs towards her.

**DARION:**

Gabrielle! Look! Haimon taught me how to fish. Look how many I caught!

He holds the fish up for display.

**HAIMON (proudly):**

He caught them all by himself.

**DARION:**

Well...except for this big one. (He points to the largest fish.) Haimon had to help me bring that one in.



**GABRIELLE:**

That's great, Darion. (smiles and pats his shoulder) But Xena taught you how to fish months ago.

**DARION:**

But Haimon taught me how to do it *with* a fishing pole.

**HAIMON:**

You're a natural, little buddy. Next comes the best part--cleaning and cooking the fish--and I know Xena didn't teach you how to do that. Why don't you go gather up some wood for a fire?

**DARION:**

Okay!

He runs off excitedly and Haimon laughs, shaking his head. He turns to Gabrielle.

**HAIMON:**

You don't mind fish for breakfast? I know you like fruit in the mornings.

**GABRIELLE:**

No--no. Fish is fine. (She pauses a moment.) You're wonderful with him, you know. Someday you'll make a great father.

Haimon presses his lips together and nods, looking away.

**HAIMON:**

Someday...

There is a momentary silence that is a little uncomfortable for both of them.

**HAIMON** (clears his throat):

So, I hear Lykia's doing well with her Amazon training.

**GABRIELLE** (smiles, either happy for Lykia or relieved by the change of subject, or both):

Yes, she is. Eve says she definitely has the drive to be an Amazon--and pretty soon, she'll have the skills, too.

Gabrielle pauses and glances at Darion who can be seen in the distance walking towards them with an armload of firewood.

**GABRIELLE** (continues):

I'm glad she let Darion come travel with us for a few days. (smiles happily) It's so good to spend some time with him again. (Haimon raises an eyebrow at her and she laughs nervously) And you too, of course!

Darion comes up to them and throws down the firewood.

**GABRIELLE** (continues):

Why don't you two work on breakfast? I'm going to take the horses to the lake for a drink.

**CUT TO**

A lake. Gabrielle leads the three horses up to the water's edge and they begin to drink. Gabrielle pats Klio's side.

There is a low "whooshing" sound. Gabrielle straightens up and purses her lips as blue light flares up behind her. She sighs.

**GABRIELLE:**

Ares? Xena's not here.

**XENA** (off-camera):

She is now.

Gabrielle whips around as we see a close-up of her stunned face. Quick pan to Xena, the blue light still fading around her.

Her outfit is a combination of the armor she wore in "Livia" and her normal armor. Her skirt and sleeves are dark blue velvet and her armor and armbands are silver. She wears gauntlets that resemble Ares' gauntlets, but with dark blue gems instead of red.

Pan back to a speechless Gabrielle, who stumbles and lands on her backside in the water, her mouth wide open.

Pan back to Xena as we:

***FADE OUT***

## **ACT ONE**

***FADE IN***

Medium close-up of Gabrielle still sitting in the water, her mouth still open. A long silence. Argo neighs in alarm.

**XENA:**

Gabrielle... (Off Gabrielle's shocked silence, worriedly.) Gabrielle. (Still getting no answer, Xena walks up to Gabrielle and holds out a hand to her) Come on, Gabrielle, get up!

Gabrielle finally closes her mouth, takes Xena's hand and gets up. Her skirt is dripping with water but she is so shocked she barely notices.

**GABRIELLE:**

What happened to you? (nervously) Okay, okay...I get it...Ares gave you a new outfit as a present. Okay--I can't believe you would let him pick out your clothes, but--I can get used to this. And--he zapped you down here, right?

**XENA** (sighs):

Wrong.

**GABRIELLE:**

Then who did?

**XENA** (takes a deep breath):

Gabrielle--I'm--a goddess.

**GABRIELLE:**

A goddess? (laughs) Xena, come *on*.

**XENA:**

You want me to show you?

She straightens up, throwing her head back slightly. Blue light flares up around her, then fades. Gabrielle cocks her head skeptically.

**XENA:**

Hold on...this takes some practice.

She tries again; this time the light flares up and she vanishes, then reappears with a "whoosh" and a splash up to her waist in the lake.

As Gabrielle gapes at her, she comes out of the water; the water rolls off her and she's completely dry. She looks at Gabrielle, then holds out her hand toward Gabrielle with a somewhat uncertain look and concentrates, furrowing her brow. There's a slight whooshing sound as we see a wave of light blue light emanates from her hand. Gabrielle gives a start.

**GABRIELLE:**

What are you doing?

**XENA:**

Drying you off.

**GABRIELLE:**

Oh. (looks herself over--she is now dry) I guess your powers have their uses... (fully taking in the situation, she stares at Xena in horror) By the heavens, Xena...how did this happen?

**XENA:**

I'm--

**DARION** (off-camera, interrupting her):

Wow, Xena! What a cool outfit!

Xena and Gabrielle turn. Darion is sprinting toward them, followed by Haimon.

**HAIMON:**

Hello, Xena. That certainly looks--different. (to Gabrielle) Breakfast's ready.

**GABRIELLE** (looks at Haimon uncertainly, not quite knowing how to tell him):

Haimon...something has happened.

**HAIMON** (puzzled and slightly worried):  
What?

**XENA** (sighs):  
I'm-- (stumbles a little, then blurts out quickly) I'm a goddess.

**HAIMON** (looks disconcerted, then chuckles):  
Sorry, could you repeat that? For a second there I thought you said you were a goddess.

**GABRIELLE:**  
She did. Uh, she is.

**DARION:**  
A goddess? *Wow!*

**HAIMON** (testy):  
Look, if this is your idea of a joke--

**XENA** (irritated):  
Do I have to prove this to *everyone*?

On the word "everyone," she shoots a fireball out of her hand, setting fire to a patch of grass; Gabrielle runs over to stamp out the fire and turns indignantly to Xena.

**GABRIELLE:**  
This is the first thing you're going to do with the powers of a god? Start forest fires?

Pan to Haimon and Darion, who gape at Xena with identical open-mouthed expressions on their faces. Then Darion sprints toward her and starts jumping up and down.

**DARION:**  
Xena's a goddess! Xena's a goddess! (calms down a little) Please, Xena, show me some more tricks! Pleeeeeeeeze!

**GABRIELLE** (holds out a hand to stop him):  
Darion, hold on...first, we need to figure out--

**DARION** (runs up to Xena and tugs on her skirt):  
Come on, Xena--I want to see some tricks!

**HAIMON** (comes over and scoops up Darion):  
Hey. We'll have some tricks later, okay? Right now, we need to find out what happened to Xena.

**DARION** (puzzled):  
You're saying it like it's a bad thing.

**GABRIELLE:**  
Well--it's--complicated.

**DARION** (sighs):  
Okay, okay.

Haimon puts him down, ruffling his hair. Darion walks off, picks up a stick and starts running around doing pretend combat moves, using the stick sometimes as a staff and sometimes as a sword.

**HAIMON** (shakes his head slowly):

I have to say--things never get boring around you two.

**XENA** (shrugs):

Look--all I know is, I went to sleep--

**GABRIELLE:**

Were you with, uh--? (she glances uncomfortably at Darion as he races past her, using the stick as a sword to thrust and parry)

**XENA** (a bit edgy):

No--no, truth is, we--had a bit of a fight last night. So I left the temple and went to sleep in a forest clearing. And then when I woke up--I was wearing this-- (points at her new outfit) and I just felt--different. It was like...I felt this--overwhelming power just--coursing through me. (Turns to Gabrielle) It was like when I used the power of the Ring... (Gabrielle lowers her eyes) ...only much, much stronger. And I still feel it, all the time.

**GABRIELLE** (mutters to herself):

*That is how I feel every moment of every day of my life...*

**HAIMON and XENA** (stare at her in shock):

*What?*

**GABRIELLE** (shakes head):

Nothing. Just something--Ares said to me once... (trails off)

Xena looks away uncomfortably, obviously considering the possibility that Ares is responsible for her transformation. In the background, Darion can be seen running around using the stick as a staff.

**GABRIELLE:**

You think Ares--? (pause) Does he even have that kind of power?

**XENA** (sighs):

Well...I suppose he could have slipped some ambrosia into my food--

**GABRIELLE:**

You really think he would do that?

**XENA** (lowers her head and then looks up again, anguished):

That way, he could be with me for eternity. It's something he's always wanted. (looks up sharply) But--I just don't believe he would do that.

**GABRIELLE:**

I don't think he would. Xena, I think he--respects your decisions too much.

**XENA** (grins):

And besides, he knows that as a goddess, I would *really* kick his ass for pulling this kind of stunt.

**GABRIELLE:**

Why don't you get him here and find out?

**XENA** (nods):

Good idea. (She turns away from Gabrielle and raises her voice) Ares! I need to talk to you. (no answer) Ares, dammit--this isn't the time for games.

Still nothing. Xena lets out a frustrated sigh.

**HAIMON:**

Maybe he's busy.

Xena throws her head back and shouts.

**XENA:**

*Aaaaareeees!!!!*

This time her voice comes out as a roar that shatters the air like an explosion, making a flock of birds fly up from trees. We see a quick succession of shots of rabbits and squirrels scattering and startled fish leaping out of the water. Gabrielle winces and puts her hands over her ears.

**DARION** (stops doing the combat moves and stares at Xena admiringly):

Whoa.

**HAIMON:**

Well, if Ares didn't hear *that*, he must be *really* busy.

**XENA** (under her breath, grumpily):

Starting wars, probably.

Darion runs up to Xena.

**DARION:**

Xena--could you do that again? Please? That was *awesome*.

**GABRIELLE** (hastily):

Not unless your powers include curing headaches.

**DARION:**

All right--then do that disappearing thing!

**XENA:**

All right. Let's see if I can do better this time.

Gabrielle and Haimon stand back to give her some room, Gabrielle protectively pulling Haimon back with her and shielding him with her arm.

Xena stands very straight and throws her head back, closing her eyes for a moment and then opening them. Azure light begins to flare up around her but then quickly dissipates into nothing. Xena looks annoyed.

**DARION** (disappointed):

Hey, I thought you were going to do it just like Ares does!

**GABRIELLE:**

Look, Ares has had *lots* of practice at this. He's been a god for thousands of years.

Xena gives her a mock version of "the look," then tries again. This time, the light flares up and starts to fade but then brightens and shoots up from Xena's feet to her head. She vanishes. Darion laughs and claps his hands.

Haimon and Gabrielle look around as moments go by but Xena does not reappear.

**DARION** (his expression turns worried):

Uh-oh. Maybe she got lost...or stuck or something!

**XENA** (off-camera):

Have a little faith in me, will ya?

Gabrielle, Haimon and Darion turn to find Xena standing under a tree beside the lake. Xena then vanishes and reappears in a flash beside Gabrielle, by the water's edge.

**XENA:**

I think I'm getting the hang of it now.

**GABRIELLE:**

I hope you don't get *too* used to it!

**XENA:**

Don't worry, I won't. We'll just find Ares and get to the bottom of this--and get this fixed.

**DARION** (disappointed):

Why?

**GABRIELLE:**

Because it's just not who Xena is, sweetie.

**DARION** (philosophically):

Well, it is now. (he looks at Xena and his face brightens) Hey--before you get, uh, fixed, can you shoot some more fireballs?

**GABRIELLE** (worriedly):

Look, before we blow up any more things, can we go have breakfast?

**HAIMON:**

Good idea. It's probably all cold by now.

**DARION** (excited):

Maybe Xena can use her powers to heat it up!

Xena rolls her eyes, slightly exasperated.

**XENA:**

Funny, I don't feel hungry at all.

**GABRIELLE:**

Of course not. You're a *goddess!* (sarcastic) I hope you excuse us if we mere *mortals* still have to eat.

**CUT TO**

Xena, Gabrielle, Haimon and Darion come out into the clearing where the campsite is (Gabrielle and Haimon leading the horses). At the edge of the clearing they stop and stare in shock.

Pan to Ares, sitting by what's left of the fire and enthusiastically devouring the fish in the pan.

**XENA and GABRIELLE:**

Ares?

Ares looks up.

**DARION** (excited):

Hey! Ares!

**ARES** (his speech slurred because his mouth is full):

Hey. I hope you-- (noticing Xena's outfit, he stops and swallows) Whoa. Where'd you pick *that* up? You look *good*.

**XENA** (guardedly):

I thought you might know something about that.

**ARES** (genuinely puzzled):

Who, me? I don't do clothes. Though if I had to pick something out for you...yeah, it'd probably be something like this. (he pops another piece of fish in his mouth)

**GABRIELLE** (suspiciously):

What are you *doing* here?

**ARES** (his mouth full):

Well--I just came across your camp and--

**GABRIELLE** (suddenly struck by horrified realization):

You ate our *breakfast!*

**ARES** (nonchalantly finishes the last of the fish):

Oh yeah. It's pretty good.

**GABRIELLE** (shocked and upset):

That was meant for *three!*

**ARES** (sets aside the now-empty frying pan):

Three what? Three small children?



**GABRIELLE** (speechless):

Oooh--

In the meantime, Xena looks over Ares, slowly realizing something.

**XENA:**

You're mortal.

**ARES:**

It shows, huh?

Gabrielle and Haimon look shocked.

**DARION:**

Wow. This is just getting more interesting.

**ARES:**

Look, I have no idea what happened, but--

Gabrielle's eyes light up.

**GABRIELLE** (raises her finger):

*Wait!* I think I know.

**XENA and ARES:**

You do?

**GABRIELLE:**

Ares is mortal...

**ARES** (sarcastic):

You're brilliant.

**GABRIELLE** (ignoring him):

...and Xena is a goddess.

**ARES** (shocked):

Say what?

Xena raises her hands and between them, creates an electrical charge of blue energy, flowing back and forth from one finger on one hand to the other. She lowers her hands and the blue charge disappears.

**XENA:**

Yep.

Ares gapes at her open-mouthed, his look of utter shock gradually turning to admiration.

**ARES:**

Well, that's definitely something you don't see every day.

**GABRIELLE:**

Don't you understand what this means?

**XENA** (nods):

We've switched places.

**GABRIELLE** (concerned):

Xena...I think you're the new Goddess of War.

Xena and Ares stare at each other, digesting this.

**ARES:**

Well--I always said you'd be right for the job...

**XENA** (narrowing her eyes at him):

Did you do this?

**ARES:**

Me? What am I, crazy?

**GABRIELLE:**

Heh. (Ares glares at her and she smirks at him, then turns serious) Look, I think I may know who's behind this.

**XENA:**

Who?

**GABRIELLE** (uncomfortably):

Well...I may have said...something that gave her this idea.

**XENA:**

*Her.* (Her eyes light up) Aphrodite? (Gabrielle nods) What did you say that could give her an idea like *this*?

**GABRIELLE** (squirms):

Well...we were talking about you and Ares...

Quick pan to Xena and Ares, who both glare at her.

**GABRIELLE** (continues):

...and I said that it might do you two a lot of good if you could just walk a league in each other's boots. It never occurred to me that she would take it so literally.

**XENA:**

She didn't. If she had, she would have just switched our boots. This is a bit more drastic.

**ARES:**

Dammit, Gabrielle, you have to watch what you say around her. This is my sister we're talking about.

**GABRIELLE:**

Yeah, don't I know it. (She turns to Xena.) We've got to get her here.

**DARION:**

Hey! (he tugs at Gabrielle's skirt) I'm hungry!

Close-up of the empty frying pan.

**HAIMON** (sighs):

Guess we're just going to do with bread and cheese.

**ARES** (points to Xena):

She's a goddess. She can get you all the breakfast you want.

Gabrielle, Haimon and Darion look expectantly at Xena.

**XENA** (sighs):

Might as well do something useful... (turns to Ares) ...how am I supposed to do this?

**ARES** (smirks):

You'll know.

Xena hesitates a moment, then focuses and lifts her hands. The air fills with smoke and light; when the smoke clears, the grass on the site is covered with plates laden with food--pancakes drowning in syrup, waffles stacked a foot high, sizzling bacon and eggs, fruit, sweet buns and other goodies.

Quick close-ups of Gabrielle and Haimon, who look stunned, and Darion, who looks shocked at first but then delighted.

**DARION:**

Yeah!

He sprints toward one of the plates, picks up a pancake and starts eating it, smearing syrup all over his face.

**ARES:**

Now *that's* what I call a breakfast. (he picks up a waffle and starts eating)

**GABRIELLE:**

Uh, Xena...

**XENA:**

All right, so I overdid it a little. Give me a break, I'm new at this.

**GABRIELLE:**

A little? (chuckles) I think this could feed an entire army...

Ares gets up, dropping the half-eaten waffle.

**XENA** (arches an eyebrow at him):

Don't tell me you don't like them.

**ARES:**

No--I can't believe I forgot...I must have gotten distracted with all of this going on. (agitated) I've got an army about a hundred leagues from here, waiting for me to give them a-- (as he catches Xena, Gabrielle and Haimon's disapproving looks, his expression turns sheepish and his voice goes flat) -- signal.

**XENA (sighs):**

Why am I not surprised... What kind of signal?

**ARES (uncomfortably):**

Well...they've been laying siege to a town, Ferovia...

**GABRIELLE:**

It's a signal to attack, isn't it?

**ARES (sarcastic):**

No, a signal to start passing out flowers. (off Xena's look) Well, I can't go as a mortal. You're the God...dess...of War now, so you have to go in my place.

**XENA (shocked):**

Me?

**ARES (gesturing around the campsite):**

You see other war gods around?

**GABRIELLE:**

You expect *Xena* to give some army a signal to attack? That's ridiculous.

**ARES:**

Well, fine. We can just let that army stew in the heat for a couple of days. Eventually they'll get tired of waiting and attack anyway. Except by then, they'll be *really* pissed off.

**GABRIELLE (crestfallen):**

Oh.

**XENA (with a catlike smile):**

Fine, Ares. I'll go. But I'm gonna handle this my own way.

**ARES (smirks):**

I'd expect nothing less.

**XENA (unimpressed):**

Uh-huh. (looks at Gabrielle and Haimon) I'll be back.

She disappears in a flash of blue light. Ares sighs dreamily.

**ARES:**

Never thought I'd live to see that...

Gabrielle makes a face at him.

## **CUT TO**

A wide shot of a town with an army encampment by its walls.

## **CUT TO**

Inside the commander's tent. The commander, a tall dark-haired man in black and red armor, is talking to two of his officers.

### **COMMANDER:**

Look, if we don't get a signal from Ares soon, the men--

He is interrupted by a flash of blue light. The officers stare in shock as Xena appears in the middle of the tent.

### **COMMANDER** (stares):

Who are you?

### **XENA** (nonchalantly):

The new God of War. Or you might say--Goddess.

### **COMMANDER** (obviously shocked and confused):

What...? (to the officers, waving them aside) Leave us.

The officers back up toward the exit, staring at Xena, and back out of the tent.

### **COMMANDER** (stutters):

M-my lord Ares said, er--he ordered to wait--what I mean is--

### **XENA** (interrupts unceremoniously):

Well, Ares is out of the job for now--I'm in charge.

### **COMMANDER:**

B-but how do I know that--

### **XENA** (glares):

Do *not* make me zap you.

She forms a ball of blue fire in her hand and tosses it from one hand to the other. Thoroughly intimidated, the commander bows before her.

### **COMMANDER:**

What is your command, goddess?

### **XENA:**

Lift the siege.

### **COMMANDER** (confused):

The Goddess of War wants me to--

**XENA:**

Yes. Lift the siege. *Now*, before I get mad.

Under her steely gaze, the commander shrinks back and bows again.

**COMMANDER:**

Yes, my goddess. W-where shall I take the men?

**XENA** (frowns--she obviously hasn't thought this through):

Retreat to--the mountains. (thinks a moment) And wait for a further signal. Understood?

**COMMANDER:**

Y-y-yes, my goddess. (he starts to back out of the tent, then stops) What is your name?

**XENA** (casually):

Xena.

**COMMANDER** (gulps):

*The Xena? The Warrior Princess?*

**XENA** (grins a little):

That's the one.

**COMMANDER** (nervously):

Hail Xena... (pauses, trying to think of a title) Xena, Warrior Goddess!

**XENA** (pleased in spite of herself):

Not bad.

She vanishes in a flash.

**COMMANDER** (looks at the spot where she vanished, shaking his head):

Gods. Can't live with them, can't live without them.

He leaves the tent.

**CUT TO**

The army encampment in front of the town gates. Some soldiers are wandering about, some are playing dice, some sharpening their weapons. They look bored. The camera pans up to show some of the town leaders looking down on them from the walls.

The commander strides up to the front lines.

**COMMANDER:**

Men...

The soldiers perk up visibly.

**SOLDIER #1** (eager):

Are we attacking?

**COMMANDER:**

No. We're lifting the siege.

An indignant murmur runs through the ranks, growing louder.

**SOLDIER #2:**

What?

**SOLDIER #3:**

We've been sitting out here for days!

The murmur grows louder.

**COMMANDER** (raises his voice):

Listen to me! We've got orders--from the Goddess of War.

**OFFICER #1** (confused):

What goddess of war? Athena?

The murmurs turn to shouts--the men are obviously ready to riot. There is a flash of blue light and Xena appears next to the commander.

**XENA:**

Not Athena. Me.

**COMMANDER** (extends his hand toward Xena):

Behold--Xena, Goddess of War! She has taken Ares' place!

A dead hush falls over the camp. The camera pans over the bewildered faces of the soldiers. Then murmurs of "Xena!", "Xena, the Warrior Princess!" and "Xena, the Goddess of War" start up, rippling through the soldier's ranks. The camera pans over the soldiers' faces as they talk excitedly.

**SOLDIER #1:**

Xena? A goddess?

**SOLDIER #3:**

She must have been a goddess all along!

**SOLDIER #4:**

Of course! No mortal could flip twenty feet into the air!

**SOLDIER #5:**

Or come back from the dead so many times!

**SOLDIER #6:**

Or defeat an army all by herself!

Pan up to the town elders and some warriors on the town walls, looking down.

**ELDER #1** (a grey-haired, frail old man):

Look at that! They've got a goddess on their side!

The camera pulls back for an overhead shot of the camp. The army starts to pull away. A flash of blue can be seen, announcing Xena's departure. Pan back to the besieged townsmen on the city walls.

**WARRIOR #1** (bewildered):

They're--

**WARRIOR #2:**

--leaving.

**WARRIOR #1:**

I wonder what their game could be.

**ELDER #2** (stout, middle-aged man with a curly dark beard):

Well, that does it! (the others look at him in shock) Look, I'm not afraid of battle. But... (almost blubbing) ...when the enemy starts playing these mind games...that's it! It's enough to make me a nervous wreck!

The camera pans down for a quick montage of the soldiers folding camp and starting to pull away from the town walls.

Behind them, we see the town gates opening. A rider with a white flag comes out of the gates.

**CUT TO**

The campsite. Gabrielle and Haimon are watching in dismay as Darion reaches for another sweet bun. Ares sits nearby, polishing his sword.

**GABRIELLE** (gently):

Darion, don't you think you've had enough?

**DARION** (bits into the bun and replies with his mouth full):

No.

**HAIMON:**

You're going to be sick, young man.

**DARION:**

Maybe I'll become a god too. Then I'll never get sick at all.

**ARES:**

The kid's got ambition.

A flash of blue light announces Xena's arrival. Gabrielle, Haimon and Ares look up sharply.

**ARES and GABRIELLE** (in unison):

Well?

**XENA** (imperturbably):

Everything's fine. I lifted the siege.

Gabrielle smiles while Ares shakes his head ruefully.



**ARES** (mutters):  
After all the hard work...

**XENA** (looks as if she is listening to something in the distance; then her expression turns puzzled):  
Hold on.

She vanishes.

**HAIMON:**  
Now what was *that*?

### ***CUT TO***

The main town square in Ferovia. It is now filled with soldiers, all chanting Xena's name.

**COMMANDER** (raises his sword in the air):  
Praise Xena, Warrior Goddess!!!

The soldiers start cheering again. There is a flash of light and Xena appears in the square. She looks somewhat bewildered.

**COMMANDER** (drops on one knee):  
Hail, goddess! You're even better at this than Ares himself! It all worked out exactly as you planned!

**XENA** (frowns):  
As I--

**OFFICER #1:**  
When they saw us pulling away, they figured it had to be a trick...a trick so clever they were doomed for sure! So they opened the gates and surrendered the town.

Xena looks taken aback--she did not anticipate this.

**COMMANDER** (rises):  
All hail, Xena, Warrior Goddess!

**SOLDIERS and OFFICERS** (chanting):  
Xena! Xena! Xena! Xena! Xena! Xena! Xena! Xena!

The disappointed look on Xena's face slowly changes to a satisfied one. A small smile appears on her face. A close-up of her face as she throws her head back slightly, her eyes half-closed.

### ***CUT TO***

A close-up of Ares, laughing in delight.

The camera pulls back to show Xena standing in the middle of the campsite and Gabrielle, Haimon, and Ares sitting around the fire's remnants. Xena looks daggers at Ares and he stifles his laugh.

**XENA:**

Very funny.

**ARES:**

What can you say. You've outsmarted yourself. (he almost starts laughing again but her steely gaze stops him)

**GABRIELLE** (to Xena):

Look, at least the town was taken with no bloodshed.

**ARES:**

Ah. There's always a downside.

Gabrielle gives him a nasty look and Xena glares at him. He holds up his hands in a conciliatory gesture.

In the background, we see Darion sneaking off with some more of the sweet buns left over from breakfast, taking advantage of the fact that the adults are too preoccupied.

**GABRIELLE** (to Xena):

And you let this happen?

**XENA:**

I just wanted to get out of there, Gabrielle. (she hesitates, then blurts out) I--I was starting to enjoy it too much.

Ares gives her a thoughtful look. Their eyes meet and she looks away.

**GABRIELLE** (pauses for a moment while digesting this):

We'd better get Aphrodite.

**XENA:**

Well, go ahead. She's your pal.

**HAIMON:**

Gabrielle and Ares have tried calling to her but it didn't work. She's obviously avoiding us.

**XENA:**

For a good reason, I'm sure. (sighs) I guess I'll just have to hunt her down.

**HAIMON:**

You can do that?

**XENA** (smirks):

Don't forget, I'm a goddess. I have many (pauses) new skills.

With that, she disappears.

**CUT TO**

Xena materializes inside the temple where Gabrielle and Aphrodite had their chat the night before.

**XENA** (sing-song):

Aph-ro-diiii-te... (normal voice) I know you're here. I can *feel* you. (Xena starts walking around the temple) You know why that is, don't you? Of course you do--because it's all thanks to you. And don't bother zapping away to Olympus. You know I can follow you there, too.

She gazes intently at one spot in the room, then pounces suddenly and grabs something. That something turns out to be Aphrodite's arm, which comes into visibility. Xena pulls at her arm and eventually all of Aphrodite comes into view, as if Xena had pulled her out of an invisible cloud.

**XENA:**

No more hide and seek.

**APHRODITE:**

Sorry. You, um, surprised me. (trying to act as innocent as possible) Wow, fabulous outfit, babe! I totally dig it.

**XENA:**

I bet you do.

**APHRODITE:**

Hey--wanna let go of the arm?

**XENA:**

Not a chance. We're going in for a little chat.

Before Aphrodite has a chance to say anything, lights flare up around them and they disappear.

**CUT TO**

The campsite. Xena and Aphrodite flash in, Xena still holding on to Aphrodite's arm. Xena lets go of Aphrodite.

**APHRODITE** (rubs her arm):

You've got some grip. (looks around) So...what's the occasion? Are we having a party, or what?

**ARES** (steps forward):

You know exactly what the occasion is, *Sis*.

**APHRODITE:**

Oh--hey, Ar! What's happenin'?

She wilts under his glare. Darion, who stands next to Ares, tries to imitate his angry pose as best he can.

Aphrodite finally sighs and throws her arms in the air.

**APHRODITE:**

All right. All right! Calm down--the bad vibes are, like, totally killing the mood. Okay, okay, it was me. I confess. I did it. I switched you two. You happy now?

**XENA:**

Oh no. Not until you undo whatever it is you did. Because it's going to be a cold day in Tartarus before I get stuck like this.

**ARES:**

What she said.

**APHRODITE:**

I can't switch you back.

**GABRIELLE:**

*What?*

**APHRODITE:**

Look, you two have major issues in the relationship department (Xena and Ares glare) and I'm sure you don't need me to tell you that. I'm just trying to help.

**ARES:**

And this is supposed to help--how?

**APHRODITE:**

D'uh! It's that whole walking-a-league-in-each-other's-boots thing.

Ares and Xena turn to Gabrielle.

**GABRIELLE** (defensively):

Don't look at me! It was just a thought.

**XENA** (turns back to Aphrodite):

What do you mean, you can't switch us back?

**APHRODITE:**

Well--I kinda rigged the spell so that it would work by itself.

**XENA:**

Oh no. More poetry?

**APHRODITE:**

When each has seen through the other's eyes,  
Then both will be returned to their place.

**GABRIELLE:**

That doesn't even rhyme!

**APHRODITE:**

No, but it works. (giggles) Trust me. Gotta run--toodles!

Smiling brightly, she waves and disappears in a shower of golden sparks as we:

***FADE OUT***

## ACT TWO

### **FADE IN**

Mount Olympus. Stock footage from "Motherhood." We can hear the gods arguing inside.

### **DISSOLVE TO**

The Great Hall. All of the gods have gathered around Zeus' throne, arguing. The gods we notice: Artemis, Athena, Discord, Aphrodite, and Hephaestus. Hera stands by Zeus' throne, looking off to the side. She's on her best peaceful and virtuous behavior.

Zeus seems frustrated as everyone is yelling at him all at once. He looks as if he is going to explode.

**ZEUS** (roaring):

Would you all shut the hell up?!!

Thunder sounds on cue as all of the gods fall silent and back off in fear.

**ZEUS** (sighing):

One at a time.

Artemis steps forward--the red-haired goddess dressed in a golden warrior outfit with a quiver at her back.

**ARTEMIS** (sighs):

As I've been *trying* to say for the past five minutes, Ares is mortal and Xena is now a goddess.

There are gasps of shock. Hera alone looks unperturbed.

**ATHENA:**

How is this possible?

The camera pans over to an innocent-looking Aphrodite.

**DISCORD** (steps forward):

Xena must have sucked--

**ARTEMIS** (gasps in shock):

Discord! Keep your perverted fantasies to yourself!

**DISCORD** (angry):

That's *not* what I meant! Xena must have sucked Ares' godhood out of him...

There's a collective "ohhhh"--obviously, Artemis wasn't the only god expecting something else.

**DISCORD** (continues):

...just like that freak Caligula did to Bimbolina over there!

Pan to Aphrodite, whose mouth hangs open in outrage.

**APHRODITE:**

Go wax your mustache, Discord!

**ZEUS** (angry):

Both of you stop it! (calming down) Xena, a god. That could be a threat to us all.

**HEPHAESTUS:**

She brought us back to life at some risk to herself and her friends. Would she want to become a goddess just so she could overthrow us all?

The other gods chew on this for a moment.

**ARTEMIS:**

Well, even if you're right--what about Ares?

**HERA** (peacefully):

Ares is my son, and even though he and I haven't exactly had a close relationship--we can't just leave him as a mortal. We have to bring him back.

**DISCORD** (rolling her eyes):

Who cares about Ares? Xena's the one we should be worried about.

**ATHENA** (imperturbably):

I can work with Xena. As far as I'm concerned, she could be a much better War God than Ares.

**DISCORD:**

Right. (in a taunting tone) Xena, the kinder, gentler God of War.

**APHRODITE** (giggles):

Hey, I think Ar *is* a kinder, gentler God of War these days.

A quick succession of close-ups of all the gods turning to look at Aphrodite, each of them with a whooshing sound (Discord's sound more like a screech). Only Hera remains unperturbed, still staring ahead peacefully. In the complete silence that falls, one can hear crickets chirping.

**APHRODITE** (cringes and smiles sheepishly):

Uh...joke? Just trying to lighten the mood. (under her breath) You guys can be such sourpusses sometimes.

**DISCORD** (moving right along):

Oh yeah...a kinder, gentler War God. I'm sure that's what Xena would like to be. Well, I'm not going to make it easy.

Suddenly, blue light flashes in the middle of the hall, and we hear Ares' trademark materializing roar. All the gods turn toward the sound. The camera zooms in on Xena as she materializes, a self-assured smile on her face. She looks towards Discord.

**XENA:**

Well, well. I believe I heard my name.

**DISCORD** (looks daggers at Xena):

Look what we've got here. The Skank Goddess.

**APHRODITE:**

Skip the introductions, Discord--she knows who you are.

The other gods laugh.

**DISCORD** (hisses at Aphrodite):

And what are you, the Goddess of Snappy Comebacks? (turns to Xena) This isn't over.

In true villain style, Discord vanishes in a dull blue light, with a sound that resembles a cat screeching.

Athena steps forward and looks over Xena's armor with what seems like a touch of envy.

**ATHENA:**

What exactly happened?

Xena is obviously about to speak. Then she stops.

Pan over to Zeus's throne. The other gods are standing in front of it, all waiting for an answer. Even Hera, finally, turns to look at Xena. Off to the side behind Zeus' throne, Aphrodite is waving her hands frantically in a criss-cross "no" motion and shaking her head with a pleading look. Out of the corner of her eye, Zeus catches the motion and turns. Aphrodite puts on her best innocent look, weaving her fingers through her long blond curls.

Back on Xena.

**XENA** (a little hesitantly):

I--we're not sure. (more confidently) But for now, this is how it is. And I would suggest that you all let me do my job until we can get back to normal.

Close-up on Xena--it's her trademark steely gaze, except that there's a bit of white glow in her eyes.

Pan to the gods standing together in front of Zeus' throne, looking somewhat alarmed. Aphrodite gives Xena a tiny appreciative wave.

**CUT TO**

The campsite. The camera pans around to show Gabrielle and Haimon sitting on a log reading a scroll, and then to show Ares sitting on a tree stump polishing his sword while Darion looks on curiously.

**DARION:**

You know, it's funny...

**ARES:**

Well, I'm glad *someone* sees something funny about all this...

**DARION:**

You're just like Xena, sitting there and--you know-- (He points to the sword, then thinks a moment)  
Are you sure you can't do any more tricks?

**ARES** (getting frustrated):

Oh, believe me, I'm sure.

**DARION:**

Can you try?

**ARES** (losing his patience):

Look, kid--I *promise*, once I get my powers back I'll show you some tricks.

The camera pans over to Gabrielle and Haimon sitting on the log. Haimon folds the scroll and looks tenderly at Gabrielle.

**HAIMON:**

It's wonderful.

**GABRIELLE:**

It's for you. (She smiles timidly) I can't tell this story to the world because everyone has to believe Nero is dead. But you...

He puts his hands over hers and they gaze tenderly at each other.

**VOICE** (off-camera):

Xena! Xena!

Startled, Gabrielle turns to see a villager running into their camp. He is a short man with a small beard. He is out of breath.

**VILLAGER** (exhausted):

I need... (pants) ...to see Xena.

Gabrielle gets up. In the background, we see Darion still pestering Ares.

**GABRIELLE:**

She's not here.

**VILLAGER** (taken aback):

But--I'm in need of her help. We've heard she was nearby. My village has been attacked by bandits--they've threatened to burn the village if we don't pay them tribute.

**HAIMON** (cocks an eyebrow at her):

All in a day's work, huh?

Gabrielle leans down and picks up her sais off the ground.

**GABRIELLE** (placing sais in boots):

Definitely. (to the villager) All right, where's your village?



**VILLAGER** (concerned):

*You? By yourself?*

Gabrielle gives him "the look"--not exactly as powerful as Xena's look but still good.

**GABRIELLE** (sarcastically):

No, not by myself. (She turns to Haimon, who gets up. Then she thinks a moment and turns to Ares as the camera zooms in on him) Let's go.

**ARES** (looks up and points at himself in shock):

Who, me?

**HAIMON:**

Him?

The villager looks suspiciously from Gabrielle to Ares and back.

**GABRIELLE:**

Yeah. You. You have to see the world through Xena's eyes, remember? That means you have to do what she does.

**ARES:**

Great. And I have to start by fighting some small-time thugs over some worthless little village.

The villager looks insulted.

**GABRIELLE:**

Oh, fine. I'll go by myself. (Intercepting Haimon's scandalized look, she catches herself) I mean--I'll go with Haimon. You can stay here and baby-sit Darion.

Darion jumps up in excitement.

**DARION:**

Yeah! Just you and me! (he tackles Ares, knocking him down on the ground) I can show you some wrestling moves I learned from my friend Klymene!

They roll around on the ground as Ares struggles helplessly.

**ARES** (in a muffled voice):

Yeah--*great* idea.

Gabrielle shakes her head and grins.

**ARES:**

Let up, kid! You're choking me! (Darion straddles him, laughing triumphantly, and Ares looks up helplessly at Gabrielle) Get him off me, will ya?

**GABRIELLE** (comes up to them, chuckling):

Come on, Darion. Get up. Haimon will play with you.

Haimon doesn't look very amused but Gabrielle doesn't notice as she pulls Darion off Ares, who gets to his feet, dusting himself off.

**VILLAGER** (to Gabrielle):  
Who *is* this?

Gabrielle pauses and thinks for a moment.

**GABRIELLE:**  
This is...uh...Bob.

The villager gives Ares a skeptical look while Ares glares daggers at Gabrielle.

**VILLAGER:**  
He doesn't look like much of a warrior. And what kind of a name is *Bob*, anyway?

**ARES** (outraged):  
Now that just about does it! Not much of a warrior?! (points menacingly at the villager) For your information--I am the greatest warrior you're *ever* going to see.

Gabrielle shakes her head, smiling.

**DARION** (snickers):  
Come on, that wasn't even scary.

Ares raises a finger at him and glares, as if about to say something, but evidently can't think of anything to say and lowers his hand.

Gabrielle squats down in front of Darion, strokes his hair and kisses his cheek.

**GABRIELLE:**  
I'll be back soon, okay? (strokes Darion's face)

**DARION:**  
I know. (gives Gabrielle a quick kiss on the cheek, then grins) You always come back.

Gabrielle looks very moved. She ruffles Darion's hair and gets up to find herself looking at Haimon.

**GABRIELLE:**  
Haimon--you don't mind, do you?

**HAIMON** (a little bitterly):  
It's just that I keep thinking you and I are supposed to be a team.

**GABRIELLE:**  
Haimon--we *are*! It's just that--Ares has to start doing Xena's job, or they'll never get switched back. You understand, don't you?

**HAIMON** (nods):  
I do.

**VILLAGER** (calls out impatiently):

Hey, missy--

**GABRIELLE:**

Yeah, yeah--I'll be right with you.

**VILLAGER** (nods toward Ares, who is putting on his swordbelt):

What about Bob?

**ARES** (turns toward him, striking a heroic pose with his hand on the hilt of his sword):

Let's go stop those bandits.

**CUT TO**

Countryside. The villager walks along a worn out path as Gabrielle and Ares follow behind him.

**ARES:**

Let's get this straight. I am *not* your sidekick.

**GABRIELLE:**

Ares, I've been in this business a lot longer. So I think I should be the hero and you--

**ARES:**

Oh, no, no, no. I'm not going to be your tagalong. Besides, I'm supposed to trade places with Xena. So there.

**GABRIELLE** (chuckles):

Whatever you say...Bob.

**ARES** (shoots her a murderous glance):

Leave it to you to come up with a stupid name like that.

**GABRIELLE** (defensive):

Look--I had to think of something on the spot, okay? It was just the first thing that popped into my head.

**ARES:**

You and your ideas. Discussing my love life with my sister--

**GABRIELLE:**

I was concerned about my friend, okay?

**ARES:**

Why don't you think about your own problems for a change.

**GABRIELLE:**

And what is *that* supposed to mean?

**ARES** (chuckles):

The way you treat that boyfriend of yours--how long do you think he's going to run after you like a lovesick puppy?

Gabrielle is momentarily speechless with outrage. Finally, she regains the gift of speech.

**GABRIELLE** (indignantly):

I don't know what you're talking about.

**ARES** (rolls his eyes):

Then it's even worse than I thought.

**GABRIELLE** (narrows her eyes at him):

You want to talk about lovesick puppies--how long did you run after Xena, *Bob*?

**ARES** (bristles):

*That* was below the belt!

**GABRIELLE** (gives him a nasty look):

Oh, I bet it was.

They stop and glare at each other.

**VILLAGER** (off-camera):

Hey! (the camera pans to show him standing in the middle of the path, looking at Gabrielle and Ares in obvious exasperation) Are you coming or not?

Ares and Gabrielle look at each other and sigh.

**GABRIELLE:**

Look. We're supposed to fight the bandits, not each other, right?

**ARES** (grumbles):

Right.

They turn and start walking, looking away from each other.

**CUT TO**

Ares' halls on Olympus (as seen in "God Fearing Child"). Weapons and armor hang on the walls along with skulls and gruesome war murals. Xena materializes in a flash of blue light and begins walking along the wall examining the place.

**XENA** (sarcastically):

Nice taste in decorations. (Xena makes one quick scan of the rest of the place) Ares, Ares, Ares...I don't suppose you'd have a scroll around here with a daily planner on it, would you? (She looks around and sigh) Guess not.

She suddenly straightens up, as if listening to something. Then she walks off, flashing away in mid-stride.

**CUT TO**

A temple of Ares. Torches are circling a large stone altar in the center.

A king wearing purple robes and a small crown, with a short gray beard, stands at the altar holding a beautiful, richly jeweled ceremonial sword. He lays it down on the altar.

**KING** (reverently):

Oh great and mighty God of War, accept this humble gift from--

Blue light flares by the side of the altar. The king trails off, terrified; the sword drops from his hands and clatters down on the altar. When the light and smoke clears, Xena is standing there.

**KING** (stammering):

W-who are you? An emissary of Ares?

**XENA** (curtly):

No, his replacement--for now. The new Goddess of War.

The king looks at her in astonishment, then nods doubtfully.

**XENA** (continues):

Who are you, and what do you want with the God of War?

**KING:**

I am Nikandros--king of Leuctra. Great goddess--please accept this--humble gift. (points to the sword) I am about to go to war against my neighbor--Actria--and I need your favor.

He kneels, folding his hands in supplication.

Xena sighs, then leans forward, puts her hands on the altar and addresses him as if he were a little kid.

**XENA:**

Do you really need to go to war?

The king looks at her in shock.

**KING NIKANDROS** (stammers disbelievingly):

The Goddess of War--asks me if I really need to go to war?

There is a flash of golden light and Aphrodite materializes next to the king, invisible to him. She gives Xena a friendly wave.

**APHRODITE:**

Hey babe. You know--if you really want to change back, you have to walk a league in Ar's boots. See the world through his eyes, remember?

**XENA:**

Meaning what?

**KING NIKANDROS** (disconcerted):

Well--you just asked me if--

Xena silences him with a gesture. He looks at her, puzzled.

**APHRODITE:**

Meaning--you gotta do his job.

Aphrodite dematerializes. The camera zooms in on Xena's face, as she slowly bites her lips and thinks for a moment. She looks up at the king, her eyes narrowing.

**XENA:**

All right--why *do* you want to go to war?

**KING NIKANDROS:**

We have no other choice, great goddess. Actria has blocked off our access to the river Pella, which is our only option for travel and trade. We have tried to negotiate--but the tolls they demand are so exorbitant that it would bankrupt my city.

**XENA** (looks at him probingly):

You wouldn't be stupid enough to lie to a god, would you?

**KING NIKANDROS:**

No, great-- (pauses) What shall I call you?

**XENA:**

Xena. (off his stunned look) Yeah, yeah, *the* Xena. The Warrior Princess.

**KING NIKANDROS:**

Great Xena--I am a man of peace. I have-- (nervously) --I hope this doesn't anger you, but I have never prayed to a war god before. It's the only choice I have left.

Xena closes her eyes, as if surveying something she sees in her mind's eye. Then she opens her eyes again.

**XENA:**

All right--you have my favor.

**KING NIKANDROS** (joyfully):

So if we need to call upon you during battle--

**XENA** (reluctantly):

I will help.

A close-up on Xena's face.

**KING NIKANDROS** (off-camera):

Thank you! Thank you, Xena, Goddess of War!

Xena looks stern, her gaze inscrutable.

**CUT TO**

Village. Your typical ancient farm village, the Xenaverse version. All of the villagers have gathered in the village square, busy fixing up a large banner on two poles. There is Greek lettering on the banner--

-two words in huge letters, followed by two words in much smaller letters and, between them, several other words that are crossed out.

Subtitles appear on the screen:

**WELCOME XENA**  
**and Arielle Galadriel sidekick blonde friend**

All of the villagers seem excited about the arrival of the Warrior Princess. Some women do their best impressions of Xena's war cry, though it sounds more like someone yodeling while choking on their own saliva.

Zoom in on a middle-aged man in a dark blue caftan and an embroidered cap standing in front of the crowd. He appears to be the village chief.

**CHIEF** (loudly):

Please quiet down! Now Xena should be here any minute, so lets rehearse our welcoming song for her one more time. From the top...

The villagers all begin to sing. Picture N'SYNC, Britney Spears, William Hung from American Idol, your local church choir, and the Furies (if they ever decided to sing) all singing at the same time. In other words, it's *bad*.

**VILLAGERS** (singing):

Xena, thank you for coming to our aid,  
We hope you like the banner we made!  
With you on our side we can't lose,  
We are so excited to see the bandits bruise--

Thankfully, we don't get to here to the rest of the song because the villager who went to get Xena comes into the square.

**VILLAGER:**

They're here!

Everyone turns around excitedly (with squeaky sound effects). Then, the excitement on their faces quickly fades to disappointment. The camera pulls around to Ares and Gabrielle entering the square.

Pan to the banner, then back to Ares and Gabrielle. Ares smirks while Gabrielle fumes visibly.

**GABRIELLE:**

You'd think that after all these years they'd remember my name...

Gabrielle then notices the villagers' disappointed faces. There is an awkward silence, broken by a young boy's voice.

**BOY** (shouting):

Where's Xena?!

**VILLAGER** (scratches his head):

Well--Xena couldn't make it, so instead I brought the sidekick and--a new hero. Meet Bob.

The crowd heaves a disappointed sigh, followed by loud comments:

**VILLAGERS:**

- Bob! What kind of a name is that for a warrior?
- We spent so much time on the banner, too!
- Not to mention rehearsing a song we didn't even get to sing.

The camera zooms in on Gabrielle, as she smirks a bit.

**GABRIELLE:**

I'm really sorry you didn't get to...uh...sing your song, but trust me, Ar...I mean...Bob and I will take care of the bandits, don't you worry.

**OFF-CAMERA VOICE:**

The bandits! They're coming!

**CHIEF** (to villagers):

All right folks, the exits to the village can be found--

**VOICE** (laughing):

Too late for that.

The camera pulls around as a group of about dozen bandits approach the village square. For some reason they actually look more like pirates than bandits, wearing colorful but patched-up clothes and bandannas. Some of them have eye patches, and one even has a peg leg and a hook for a hand. The leader of this band has a long, scraggly black beard and an eye patch. From the looks of it, he has been in a lot of fights, though it doesn't seem like he has ever attempted to fight plaque and gingivitis.

**LEADER OF BANDITS** (growling):

All right, you worthless village idiots. You got my message, didn't you?

**CHIEF** (terrified):

Yes, we did, Gre--Gre--

**LEADER OF BANDITS** (irritated):

It's Gregogonlashimus, you moron! Well, if you got my message, you know that my men and I will *burn* your village if you do not pay us!

The village chief cowers. Gabrielle and Ares step in front of him, standing face to face with Gregogonlashimus and his band of merry men.

**GABRIELLE:**

Well, Gregohymelengus--I'm afraid we can't let you do that.

**GREGOGONLASHIMUS** (laughing wickedly):

And who is going to stop me? You and your friend?

The men all laugh, their laughs of course being their death wish.

The camera pulls back on Ares as he draws his sword.



**ARES** (grinning):

I'm ready to kick some ass.

Gabrielle draws her sais.

**GABRIELLE** (to Gregon-whatshisface):

Bring it on!

The bandits draw their swords and charge forward with a fierce yell. One of their faces meets Gabrielle's fist, sending the man hard to the ground. Gabrielle then whips around and trips another bandit; he hits the ground with a very loud thud. Kicking, punching and using her sais to deflect their blows, Gabrielle fights back against the bandits (who, as usual, are polite enough to attack only one or two at a time).

The camera pulls around to Ares as he turns around and finds himself facing the bandit with the hook and peg leg.

**ARES** (rolls his eyes):

You've gotta be kidding.

**PEG LEGGED BANDIT** (to Ares, speaking, for some reason, with an Irish accent):

Get a taste of this!

As their swords clash, he swings his hook at Ares, nearly slashing his face, and uses his peg leg to kick him hard in the shin.

**ARES** (winces in pain):

Ow! (mutters to himself) I'd forgotten what that was like.

**PEG LEGGED BANDIT** (still in Irish accent):

Not so tough now, are we?

Their swords clash. Ares deflects his blows, then kicks hard at his good leg and sends the bandit tumbling on the ground.

**PEG LEGGED BANDIT** (screaming):

Ow me leg!

Another bandit charges Ares, as Ares swings around and their swords clash. After a quick fight Ares knocks the sword out of his hand.

The camera pans over the villagers as they watch the fight in awe and excitement.

**CHIEF** (calling out to villagers):

Another banner! Somebody get another banner!

A little boy steps out in front of the crowd so he can get a better view.

Pan to Ares--he knocks down the bandit he was fighting and raises his sword over him, about to skewer the man.

Pan to the little boy, who is suddenly grabbed by one of the bandits. The bandit scoops up the boy, cackling evilly.

**BANDIT:**

We got us a hostage!

The boy screams in terror.

Pan to Ares, still holding his sword over the cowering bandit. He turns at the boy's scream.

Pan to Gabrielle--looks over her shoulder as she sees the bandit taking off with the little boy. But she can do nothing as two other bandits attacks her and block her way.

The boy's mother sees him being carried off and starts screaming as well.

**MOTHER:**

My boy! My boy!

**GABRIELLE** (shouts):

Ar-- (she quickly catches herself as she kicks one of her opponents in the midsection) Bob!

Ares rushes toward the bandit holding the boy. He does a spectacular flip over the heads of two other bandits (of course, we can tell that it's a stunt double who doesn't look much like Ares, but no one cares) and lands right in front of the bandit in a threatening stance, holding out his sword.

**BANDIT** (holds the screaming, squirming boy in front of him as a shield):

Whatch'a gonna do, hero? Skewer the kid?

Ares distracts the bandit with a false move, getting him to move the boy to the left; then he deftly slashes at the bandit's right arm and at the same time quickly grabs the boy and sets him down on the ground. Roaring with pain and frustration, the bandit charges at him.

Ares fights in a manner worthy of Xena, protecting the boy as he fights. He easily disarms the bandit and knocks him down to his knees, then raises his sword to kill him. The bandit blubbers in terror. Ares pauses and glances at the little boy, who is staring at him fearfully. Then, instead of running the bandit through, he knocks him out cold with the hilt of his sword.

**BOY** (claps):

Yay!

The little boy's mother runs up and tearfully sweeps him up in her arms, kissing him. Then she turns to Ares.

**MOTHER:**

Oh, thank you! Thank you!

The boy, in his mother's arm, reaches over, hugs Ares and kisses him on the cheek. Ares is taken back at first; then he cautiously pats the boy on the shoulder, rather the way he first petted Horace in "Old Ares Had a Farm."

**ARES:**

You're all right, kid.

He looks around. The camera follows his stare to see Gabrielle knocking down another bandit. Growling angrily, the bandit advances toward her. She twirls her sais as she watches him approach, his sword bared. He attacks. Gabrielle deflects his blade with her sais, stomps hard on his foot, and then delivers a series of kicks to his midsection that makes him stagger back, stupefied.

A hand taps him on the shoulder. Gregogonlashimus turns around and sees Ares. In the next moment Ares' fist flies toward his face. The powerful blow sends the bandit flying through the air, flailing and screaming. He lands right in front of a pig rooting about on the edge of the square. Moaning, he lifts his head to see the pig sniffing at him. His head drops and he closes his eyes, whimpering.

**VILLAGERS (cheering):**

Bob! Bob! Bob!

Ares cringes at the name but seems to be enjoying the praise. As the cheers die down, the village chief speaks up.

**CHIEF:**

Bob! Over here, please!

Ares turns to look at some villagers hoisting up a new banner into the air. The Greek lettering is translated by subtitles:

**Thank you, Bob!  
and friend**

**GABRIELLE (shakes her head):**

I don't believe this.

***CUT TO***

Field. Xena is seen standing on a tree, much like Ares was in "Eternal Bonds", the wind is softly blowing back her hair. We hear the sounds of swords clashing. She looks down...

The camera moves down to show a battle going on in the field below her.

At one side we see King Nikandros leading his troops. They are giving it all they have. The king is shouting orders from his horse as his men are charging forward. Their swords clash, both sides look evenly matched.

The camera zooms in on Xena. She is watching the battle with obvious relish almost as if it were a spectacle.

An overhead shot of the battlefield. King Nikandros' army is now being pushed back, many of its soldiers falling under enemy onslaught.

One of the enemy soldiers charges at one of King Nikandros' warriors and slashes him across the chest. The warrior falls to the ground, screaming out.

**WARRIOR** (crying out):

Xena, Goddess of War, help us!

Other warriors start crying out Xena's name. The camera zooms back in on Xena as she closes her eyes and then starts slowly to lift her hands. Her hands begin to glow with a red light.

She opens her eyes. They are glowing a bright white.

The camera pulls back in on the troops as they suddenly seem to be recharged with energy.

**KING NIKANDROS** (shouts):

Charge! Push them back!

With a roar, the army charges forward, colliding with the other side.

Montage of shots:

- King Nikandros cutting down a warrior
- One of King Nikandros' warriors thrusting his sword forward and killing an enemy
- An enemy soldier is knocked down with a blow to the head
- The enemy troops are pushed back even further
- The other side's leader calls out a retreat

An overhead shot of the other army retreating. The king's warriors begin to cheer.

**KING NIKANDROS** (raises his sword over his head):

Xena!

His warriors pick up a chant of "Xena! Xena! Xena!"

Up on the tree, Xena flashes away, only to materialize in the battlefield before the troops. King Nikandros dismounts from his horse and drops on his knees.

**KING NIKANDROS:**

Hail Xena, Goddess of War!

The king's warriors cheer, raising their swords in the air.

Close-up on Xena as she smiles, taking in the chant.

The camera pulls out to show a wide shot of the warriors gathered around Xena and hailing the goddess as we:

***FADE OUT***

## ACT THREE

### **FADE IN**

Close-up on Darion as he lies on his side fast asleep, his cheek resting on his palm, his face lit by reflections from the campfire in the night. The camera pulls back to show Darion asleep in his bedroll and Haimon sitting before a fire, stirring it thoughtfully with a stick. In the background, we see Gabrielle appear through the trees, followed by Ares. Haimon glances up at her and Gabrielle smiles.

### **GABRIELLE:**

Hey.

### **HAIMON:**

Welcome back. (pauses) How did it go?

### **GABRIELLE:**

Pretty good. You know, saved the village, defeated the bandits--the usual. (looks around) Did I miss anything?

### **HAIMON:**

Not much. I made Darion his dinner, fed Klio, watered her and brushed her down, got Darion washed up in the lake, tucked him in and told him a bedtime story. (pauses) Though I'm told I don't hold a candle to you.

Sensing his resentment at being left behind, Gabrielle opens her mouth to speak but Haimon smiles brightly.

### **HAIMON (continues):**

So--Klio and Darion have both been watered, fed, brushed and bedded down--just like you ordered.

### **GABRIELLE (stares at him, hurt and bewildered):**

I didn't... (she shakes her head as if to shake off the bad mood) I don't want to fight, Haimon. I've had a long day--I'm tired and hungry and I--

Haimon sighs and shakes his head sadly.

### **HAIMON:**

"I" this and "I" that. Whatever happened to "us," Gabrielle?

### **GABRIELLE:**

I... (she stops and thinks a moment.) We're together, aren't we?

### **HAIMON:**

Together... (he smiles bitterly) What does that mean? I stay behind and baby-sit while you go off with Xena...or whoever happens to be playing Xena this week?

Darion stirs and sighs in his sleep and Gabrielle and Haimon both turn to look at him. They also notice Ares, who is taking off his sword, pretending to look casual.

**GABRIELLE:**

We'll wake up Darion...

**HAIMON** (frowns and nods):

Right...

She reaches out and brushes her fingertips over the back of his hand. Haimon doesn't react for a moment, then gently takes her hand in his. He looks up at Gabrielle and they share a tentative but tender smile.

**GABRIELLE:**

Has Xena been back?

**HAIMON** (shakes his head, his smile fading):

No.

A look of disappointment flits across Gabrielle's face.

**GABRIELLE** (sighs):

All right... (She removes her sais and her boots) I think I'm going to go and wash up.

**HAIMON:**

I'll be here.

The camera follows Gabrielle as she walks away, then pans back to a thoughtful Haimon. Ares sits down on the other side of the fire, with a loaf of bread in one hand and a wineskin in the other. He bites off a piece of bread and takes a sip of wine. After a moment he glances at Haimon.

**ARES:**

Getting tired of playing second fiddle, huh?

**HAIMON** (startled):

Say what?

Ares gives him a bitter, crooked grin and drinks some more wine. Haimon stares at him thoughtfully, then turns away, looking into the night.

**HAIMON:**

They'll always come first for each other.

A moment's silence.

**ARES** (mutters, more to himself than to Haimon):

Welcome to the club.

He takes another gulp of wine, then passes the wineskin to Haimon and takes another bite of bread.

**HAIMON:**

Is it worth it?

**ARES:**

Yeah. (shrugs) In a can't-live-with-'em-can't-live-without-'em kind of way.

**HAIMON:**

Hmm. (He pauses to mull this over, then takes a drink from the wineskin) You know, if you're hungry, there's some stew left over...

**ARES:**

Good idea.

A rustling of branches and underbrush is heard, and Gabrielle comes up.

**GABRIELLE** (looks at Ares and Haimon, smiling):

What are you two up to? Male bonding?

**ARES:**

I don't do bonding.

**GABRIELLE** (chuckles):

Right. (She comes to Haimon and sits down next to him, putting her hand on his arm) Are you all right?

**HAIMON** (gives her a long look, then smiles):

Yeah. I'm all right.

**GABRIELLE:**

Good. (grins) Let's eat.

She suddenly sits up, an intense look on her face as if she's listening to something. So does Ares.

**ARES and GABRIELLE** (whisper simultaneously):

Xena...

There is a flash of blue light and Xena appears before them.

**ARES** (glances at Gabrielle):

You feel her too?

**GABRIELLE:**

Please--Xena and I have been together for years. You think I'm not going to know when my best friend is around?

Xena smiles at her warmly.

**ARES:**

Right.

Darion stirs and sits up. His eyes widen at the sight of Xena.

**DARION:**

Xena! You're back! Can you show me some god tricks?

**GABRIELLE** (comes over and sits down by his side):

Not now, sweetie...you should go back to sleep. (She touches his face) Aren't you going to say hello to me, too?

**DARION:**

Hi, Gabrielle. (He sits up and gives her a quick peck on the cheek) Did you get the bad guys?

**GABRIELLE** (smiling):

Yes, we did.

**DARION:**

Was Ares a real hero?

Gabrielle thinks a moment, then smiles mischievously but warmly.

**GABRIELLE:**

He was. (pats Darion's back) Now be a good boy and go back to sleep, okay?

**DARION:**

Okay. (He settles back into his bedroll.) But Xena has to show me some tricks tomorrow.

Gabrielle sits silently for a few moments, stroking his hair, then turns to Xena.

**GABRIELLE:**

So--how was *your* day?

**XENA:**

Oh...just your standard God of War stuff. I helped someone win a battle. (Off Gabrielle's uneasy look) Don't worry. I'm not going to let it go to my head.

**ARES:**

What happened?

**XENA:**

I promised my favor to a king... (reassuringly) Gabrielle, it was for a good reason. And besides--I have to do Ares' job if we're going to change back, don't I? I watched the battle, and the king's soldiers started to lose. And then...it was strange. (pensively) They called out for my help and then--it was as if some amazing power filled me and flowed from me into the soldiers, and renewed their strength. (quick pan to Ares, who looks at her intently) But that wasn't all...it was as if their battle spirit was...feeding me, too.

**ARES** (thoughtfully):

You felt it...

Gabrielle looks worried. Xena puts a hand on her shoulder.

**XENA:**

Trust me, Gabrielle--I can handle it. (after a moment's tense silence, she changes the subject) So--what's this about getting the bad guys and Ares being a hero?



**GABRIELLE:**

We had to go save a village from a gang of thugs.

**XENA:**

You and-- (she looks uncertainly at Ares)

**GABRIELLE:**

Yep. (she smiles) Ares even saved a little boy.

**XENA** (turns to Ares, smiling):

A hero, huh...

**ARES:**

Don't spread the word.

**XENA:**

Oh don't worry, I won't. But I can't vouch for Gabrielle. (gives Gabrielle a mischievous look, then turns back to Ares) I guess we *are* doing a pretty good job of--being each other, aren't we?

**GABRIELLE:**

So maybe Aphrodite will switch you back soon?

**DARION** (sleepily):

I hope she does. Ares promised he'd show me some tricks once he gets his powers back. (yawns)

Xena and Gabrielle look at Darion, chuckling.

**ARES:**

You know, this could be the last night of this whole role reversal gig.

**XENA** (a hint of seduction in her voice):

The only night.

They look at each other. Gabrielle clears her throat and looks away, then walks over to Haimon.

**GABRIELLE:**

Have you had dinner yet?

**HAIMON:**

I was waiting for you.

**GABRIELLE:**

Good. Then let's have it.

The camera pulls back on Xena and Ares while Gabrielle and Haimon are visible in the background. Ares stands up facing Xena.

**XENA:**

I'm guessing you don't really want to sleep out here, do you?

**ARES:**

What did you have in mind?

**XENA** (grins a little):

Let me show you.

She holds out her hand. He looks at her hesitantly, a little intimidated. Then he takes her hand, weaving his fingers through hers. The blue light brightens around them and they disappear.

Gabrielle turns to look at the spot where they vanished. She looks worried.

**CUT TO**

Inside Ares' temple--the same one where we saw Xena and Ares in the teaser. Xena and Ares appear in the middle of the hall. As the blue light fades, she lets go of his hand and he steps back. He looks rather nervous.

**XENA** (smiles seductively):

You know, I have desired you from the first time I saw you in battle.

**ARES** (swallows nervously):

You have?

**XENA** (comes closer and lightly touches his chest with her fingers through the opening in his vest):

And now, after all the years... (leans closer) ...all the games... (she leans even closer and slides her hand up his chest) ...will I, won't I... (leans closer so that her lips are now almost touching his) ...I think I will.

She kisses him passionately. After a moment she pulls away and looks at him, smiling.

**ARES** (grins, slightly out of breath):

You're seducing me, aren't you?

**XENA:**

Do you mind?

**ARES:**

I don't stand a chance, do I...

**XENA** (huskily):

No.

She reappears behind him and runs her hand down his chest. A faint red glow starts to emanate from her fingers and then grows brighter, creating a scarlet red glow on Ares' stomach just like he did to her in "Path of Vengeance." He throws his head back, gasping and closing his eyes.

**ARES:**

You *do* have many new skills...

**XENA** (grins):

All this and embroidery too.

She moves her hand up his chest, the red glow now there, and simultaneously licks his left ear, lightly tugging at the earring with her teeth. Ares shivers and moans slightly. The red glow subsides, and Xena is facing Ares again. She lifts a finger and touches his lips. He opens his eyes, his breathing now ragged.

She runs her finger over his cheek, then leans forward and kisses him, in a way reminiscent of the dream in "Eternal Bonds"--running her tongue over his lips, then capturing his mouth in a kiss.

The camera pulls back to show that Ares is now shirtless and barefoot, his leather pants replaced by loose silky black ones, while Xena is barefoot as well and clad in an almost sheer black nightgown with only thin straps holding it up, her hair flowing over her shoulders.

After they break the kiss, Ares looks at her and at himself.

**ARES:**

You're getting good at this.

**XENA:**

You ain't seen nothing yet.

They kiss again.

**DISSOLVE TO**

Close up of Ares' face. He is asleep, his eyes closed. The camera pulls back to show him lying on a large bed under black sheets, with Xena lying beside him. She is facing him and is propped up a bit higher on the pillows behind her, watching him sleep. She slowly runs her hand up his chest; he stirs but doesn't wake up. She sighs and closes her eyes, resting her head against his.

A moment later, her eyes flash wide open and she sits up abruptly. She closes her eyes, sensing something. In her mind, we hear the faint sounds of grunting voices and the rattle of metal.

Xena opens her eyes and steps out of bed. We see her bare back from the waist up. Close up of her face as she smiles.

**XENA:**

I could get used to this.

The camera pulls back to show her fully clothed in her armor, complete with chakram and sword.

**ARES (still in bed, sleepily):**

Hmm. So could I...

Xena looks back at him. They smile at each other, and Xena disappears in a flash of light.

**CUT TO**

Dawn. An army is moving along a country road, led by several people on horseback. In front of them is a lean but muscular man in dark brown leather armor, his black hair slicked back.

**LEADER:**

Come on! Sicyone is within our reach and we *will* be the first to conquer it in the name of Xena, the new Goddess of War!

The men cheer; shouts of "Praise the Goddess!" are heard.

A rumbling sound signals Xena's appearance as she materializes in front of the general. The troops stop; gasps and murmurs are heard. The leader quickly dismounts and bows.

**XENA:**

Call it off, Glacus.

**GLACUS** (looks up in shock):

Call it off?

**XENA:**

Are you hard of hearing?

**GLACUS** (shocked):

But--why? Ares would never--

**XENA:**

Well, I'm not Ares. I do things *my* way.

**GLACUS** (still disbelieving):

You've got to be joking. (Off Xena's steely glare in which we see a touch of white glow) Or--not.

**XENA** (smiles wickedly):

You're not going to argue with the Goddess of War, now are you, Glacus? (of his silent headshake) Good boy. Now, go back to camp.

Glacus nods and turns his horse around, facing the bewildered men.

**GLACUS:**

Back to camp!

The warriors begin to turn around somewhat reluctantly, muttering their disappointment at not being able to go into battle as they go. Xena watches them for a moment, then disappears.

**CUT TO**

Glacus is riding toward the camp, looking glum, with his men behind him. There is a flash of pale blue light off screen and a screeching noise. Glacus stops and stares. Pan to Discord, who is standing in front of him.

**DISCORD:**

You're not really going back to camp, are you?

**GLACUS** (bewildered):

Well, Xena said--

**DISCORD:**

Forget what she said. Don't you see she's just testing you?

**GLACUS:**

She is?

**DISCORD:**

Hey, I'm a goddess, I know these things. Did you think you were going to please Xena by conquering some insignificant little village in her name? You need to go after bigger game. Like, for instance--Naupa. Nice, rich town just a day's march from here.

**GLACUS (unsure):**

Are you sure that's what she wants? Should I ask her?

**DISCORD:**

You idiot! War gods want those who serve them to show some initiative. Just do it. Trust me, she'll be pleased. If you play your cards right--you may become her right-hand man.

Glacus grins, dreaming of the possibilities.

**GLACUS:**

All right, then. (turns to his troops) To Naupa!

The men cheer. Discord watches with a wicked smile as the troops march on.

**DISCORD:**

And now--part two.

***DISSOLVE TO***

Wide shot of another army gathered in a field. From a distance, we see Discord appear to the leader, who is wearing a long black cloak and a heavy-duty silver helmet. They talk briefly, Discord pointing to something in front of her. The general nods and then mounts his horse.

Close-up of the army leader.

**COMMANDER:**

To Naupa! We'll be the first to conquer a town in the name of the new Goddess of War.

Close-up on Discord's face. She grins evilly, cackles and disappears.

***CUT TO***

The campsite. Xena, Ares, Gabrielle, Haimon and Darion are sitting around the smoldering remnants of a campfire. There is a lavish breakfast laid out before them, though not quite as excessive as the day before.

**XENA (smiling a little):**

You know, I've been thinking...these powers I've got--I could use them for good. To save people...to make sure wars are fought only for the right cause... Maybe we should just stay this way, huh? What do you say?

Ares and Gabrielle look at her, both slightly alarmed. Xena smiles at Ares.

**ARES:**

You mean--I get to stay mortal. (he pauses a moment; we hear the tick-tock of a clock and then a ding) I don't think so.

Xena shakes her head at him, chuckling slightly.

**GABRIELLE:**

I agree with Ares. (he shoots her a mock look of surprise) Xena, I--I just don't think being a god is right for you. This...sense of power you get from the battles they fight in your name...it hasn't changed you yet, but how do you know it won't?

**XENA** (half-joking):

Thanks for the vote of confidence.

**GABRIELLE:**

And besides-- (smirks) --there's no way I'm spending the rest of my days as a sidekick to *Bob*.

**ARES** (gleeful):

So you *admit* you're the sidekick!

Gabrielle gives him a mock glare.

Xena chuckles--but her smile quickly fades and she looks up, very alert.

**HAIMON:**

What's the matter?

**ARES:**

There's a war somewhere, isn't there?

Xena doesn't answer, listening intently.

**ARES** (sighs and drops his head in his hands, muttering to himself):

I hate not knowing what's going on.

**DISSOLVE TO**

A close up of a soldier's boots. We hear the beat of marching feet. Pulling back, we see an army is on the move. Glacus is riding at the front.

**DISSOLVE TO**

Another army is on the march. The commander in the silver helmet and black cloak is in the lead.

**DISSOLVE TO**

Xena turns to look at everyone.

**XENA:**

There are two armies on the move, both heading straight for Naupa.

**HAIMON:**

What do they want?

**XENA** (grimly):

To be the first to conquer a town in the name of the new Goddess of War.

The others pause a moment to digest this.

**ARES:**

This is something we want to stop, right?

Xena says nothing. Haimon, Gabrielle and Ares exchange looks. Then Gabrielle looks at Xena.

**GABRIELLE:**

Right?

Xena is still silent. Close-up of her face, reflecting conflicting emotions as we:

***FADE OUT***

## **ACT FOUR**

***FADE IN***

The same scene as before. Gabrielle, Haimon and Ares stare at a still-silent Xena.

**ARES:**

Xena?

Xena looks at him distractedly. Ares frowns, concerned.

**GABRIELLE:**

What's wrong?

**XENA** (hesitates):

Gabrielle...maybe it's not such a--good idea to stop the two armies.

**GABRIELLE:**

What do you suggest? Leave them to work out their problems by slaughtering each other?

**XENA:**

So? We'll have two less warlords that we'll have to deal with in the future.

Gabrielle gives her a horrified look.

**GABRIELLE:**

Xena...what's happening to you?

**XENA** (irritated):

Nothing! I'm just saying that stopping them may not be the best option. They'll leave the town alone if they're busy fighting each other. It's a win-win situation here.

**GABRIELLE:**

Are you sure this has nothing to do with being worshipped? With having two armies call out your name as they battle to the death?

Xena looks at her silently, her face reflecting a struggle.

**ARES:**

Of course it does.

**GABRIELLE:**

Xena...we can't let this happen.

**HAIMON:**

They'll destroy the whole valley around Naupa, including the crop fields.

**GABRIELLE:**

That's right. So maybe they'll destroy each other but the people of Naupa won't have enough food to last them through the winter.

**XENA:**

I'm a goddess, Gabrielle. I could help them.

Gabrielle shakes her head in dismay.

**HAIMON:**

So you're not going to stop them? You'd rather watch a battle than do the right thing?

Xena gives him an uncertain, rather guilty look.

**ARES:**

Wait--she *can't* stop them.

**GABRIELLE** (shocked):

What?

**ARES:**

For us to go back to--normal, we have to do each other's job, right? And if she just went out and stopped both of the armies...that wouldn't exactly be doing my job.

**XENA:**

He's right.

**GABRIELLE:**

Are you sure you aren't just saying that because you want to see blood shed in your name?



**XENA** (frustrated):

So maybe I do! Or at least--this power inside me does. Gabrielle, that's what this power was created for--and I just have to deal with that. The other part of me knows that the war has to be stopped--but it shouldn't be up to me. (She stands up and stares meaningfully at Gabrielle and Ares) Do what you have to do.

She vanishes in a flash of light.

After a moment's silence, Gabrielle turns to Ares.

**GABRIELLE:**

You realize how important it is that we stop these armies, don't you?

**ARES:**

Yeah, yeah...

**GABRIELLE** (dead serious):

You don't get it. When Xena becomes herself again, she'll never forgive herself for allowing a war to be fought in her name.

**ARES** (serious, nods):

I know. So... (looks around at Gabrielle and Haimon) ...the three of us are supposed to stop two armies.

**DARION:**

Hey, there are four of us.

**ARES:**

I stand corrected--the two of us. Someone has to stay behind and babysit.

**HAIMON** (sighs):

I'll stay. (off Gabrielle's guilty look) Hey--I understand. Ares has to play the hero if things are going to back to the way they were.

Gabrielle moves closer to him.

**GABRIELLE:**

Haimon... (She trails off and gives him a tender kiss)

**HAIMON:**

Good luck. (pauses) I'll wait for you.

**GABRIELLE:**

I know. (She gives Darion a tight hug and kisses him) You're going to be a good boy, right?

**ARES:**

Don't answer that, kid. (chuckles)

**DARION** (to Gabrielle):

You'll be back soon?

**GABRIELLE** (tenderly):

Promise.

She lets go of Darion, gets up and walks over to Klio. As she gets in the saddle, Ares puts on his swordbelt and, after a moment's hesitation, goes over to Argo. As he puts his hand on the mare's neck, Argo snorts and tosses her head. After a moment, she calms down and compliantly allows him to mount her. Gabrielle looks on, surprised. She turns to wave to Haimon and Darion once more as she and Ares ride off into the woods.

**GABRIELLE** (turns to Ares):

So. Do you have a plan?

**ARES:**

No. Do you?

**GABRIELLE** (sarcastic):

A lot of help you are, Ares. What kind of hero are you going to be if you can't even think of a simple plan? Or maybe you want your *sidekick* to think of the plans while you get all the credit?

**ARES** (with a smug grin):

It's called delegating.

**GABRIELLE** (gives him a look that says, "very funny"):

Hah.

A wide shot of the two of them riding away down the road.

**CUT TO**

A wide shot of a town in a valley, with mountains on the side. The camera zooms in past the town and on the mountains, then pans up to a ledge on a cliff. There is a flash of blue light and Xena appears. She stands on the ledge, looking down on the town and the valley below.

**XENA** (whispers to herself):

Naupa...two armies headed this way...

She closes her eyes.

**ARES' VOICE** (in flashback from "Path of Vengeance"):

...both of them worshipping me for success in battle, oh--what a blast. I am the God of War and that's what I do.

Xena opens her eyes and sighs, obviously torn between conflicting emotions. In frustration, she turns around and lobs a fireball at a cliff above her, blasting off pieces of rock.

**XENA:**

Yeah!

Lifting both hands, she starts shooting more fireballs at the cliffs, exploding them right and left, the thrill evident in her face. Throwing her head back, she lets out a yell as she blasts away a large cliff.

As the sound of the explosion subsides, there is a cackling laugh off-camera. Xena lowers her hands and whips around to find Discord standing behind her.

**DISCORD** (smirks):

Xena, Goddess of War. Working off excess energy?

**XENA:**

Discord. Do you have nothing better to do or do you just like annoying me?

**DISCORD** (pretends to think):

Hmm...both, actually.

Xena shakes her head and turns away from Discord.

**XENA:**

Go away.

**DISCORD:**

So. You're about to watch two armies fight in your name. How does *that* feel?

Xena narrows her eyes at Discord, a look of realization on her face.

**XENA:**

You! It was you who put them up to it.

**DISCORD** (smirks):

My, my...you *are* good at playing detective, aren't you? So...what do you think *that* will do to your reputation, hmm? You think people will believe that it wasn't you who sent those two armies to slaughter each other for your glory? (Xena looks troubled) And if and when you go back to being mortal...how's that going to make you feel? Think anyone will ever buy your hero act again? So much for the *good* Xena.

Trying not to show her anxiety, Xena straightens up and puts on a sarcastic face.

**XENA:**

What makes you think I'm here to watch, Discord? You think I can't stop two armies? Please. I'm a goddess. I've had tougher *chores* as a mortal.

**DISCORD:**

Yeah, I thought of that. But you see... (she smirks, and a gruesome-looking sword with a jagged blade and a black handle appears in her hand with a flash of light) ...that's gonna have to wait-- because you've got a goddess to deal with first.

**XENA** (sarcastic):

The highlight of my day.

Xena draws her sword. She swings at Discord and their swords meet, sparks flying everywhere. They exchange blows, using their swords, fists and feet, anticipating and parrying each other's moves. Each clash of their swords, each punch, kick and head butt creates bright flashes of light on impact.

Xena punches Discord in the face, making her stagger back; she growls, then hurls a fireball toward Xena. Xena moves out of the way and it hits the rock ledge behind them, sending a few rocks down to the ground.

Discord growls and charges at Xena. They struggle and Xena tosses Discord over the edge of the cliff. Discord screams in rage as she falls and she disappears in midair. Xena chuckles, rubbing her hands together.

**XENA:**

Much better.

Xena suddenly feels a jolt and gets a shocked look on her face. She looks down. We follow her gaze to see Discord's sword protruding from her chest. She turns around, the sword still stuck in her chest and finds Discord looking back at her, an evil grin on her face.

**DISCORD:**

You're not the only one with many skills, Xena.

Xena reaches back, yanks out the sword and throws it up into the air. It vanishes in a shower of sparks, only to reappear in Discord's hand. Discord cocks her head, smirking.

Xena charges Discord, sword at the ready, but Discord vanishes. Xena slams into a rock, then shakes herself off.

**DISCORD** (off-camera):

Over here!

Xena whips around and finds Discord standing on a thin ledge on the other side of the cliff. Xena disappears and reappears beside Discord, punching her in the face even as she materializes. Discord staggers back but almost immediately recovers and zaps Xena with a fireball, which momentarily stuns her. Before Xena can recover, Discord leaps at her and repeatedly pummels her in the face with rapid punches, slamming her head into a rock. After a moment Xena regains her bearings, pushes Discord back and slams a knee in her chest, then kicks her away. Discord disappears and reappears on another ledge. Xena follows her--but just as she appears on the ledge, Discord vanishes and reappears on yet another ledge.

**DISCORD** (cackles):

You enjoy a nice game of tag?

**XENA:**

I prefer a good butt-kicking.

The two goddesses fly at each other and collide in the air, sparks flying. They hang in the air, sparring with their swords.

**CUT TO**

Glacus' army, now in a field, marches on. The walls of Naupa can be seen in the distance.

**SOLIDER:**

A rider approaches!

Glacus turns. From the side, a rider on a palomino, dressed in black, is coming toward the troops. As he gets closer, we see that it's Ares. He rides up to Glacus, who stops.

**GLACUS:**

What do *you* want?

**ARES:**

Oh-- (casually) --just to take over your army.

**GLACUS:**

You and who else?

**ARES:**

Oh, I don't need anyone else. I'll do fine on my own.

**GLACUS** (laughs):

And what makes you think my men are just going to let it happen?

**ARES:**

Maybe because serving under the former God of War doesn't seem like a bad idea?

**GLACUS** (shocked):

God of War? You're Ares?

There is an audible murmur among the soldiers.

**ARES:**

That's right. So...unless you'd rather lose face in front of your men, you'd better fight me now. Otherwise, it might get embarrassing.

He draws his sword and dismounts. So does Glacus. Ares moves toward him and they circle each other. Glacus finally makes the first move and swings at Ares, but Ares easily eludes his blow, causing Glacus to charge right past Ares. Glacus turns and tries again. Their swords clash. Ares easily parries Glacus' blows; after a brief swordfight he kicks Glacus' sword out of his hand and kicks it away. Glacus draws a dagger and charges at him, but Ares knocks him down with a swift kick and puts his sword to Glacus' throat.

**GLACUS** (gasping):

You're just doing this to get in Xena's good graces, aren't you? Probably scheming to get your godhood back!

Ares presses the tip of his sword against Glacus' throat and Glacus gasps and whimpers slightly.

**ARES:**

Why I'm doing this is none of your business. Now, stay down like a good little warlord while I take over your army.

Ares steps over Glacus who does not move a muscle, frozen with fear. Ares looks at the men, who remain silent.

**ARES:**

Well? Are you going to follow me?

After a moment, one of the soldiers raises his sword.

**SOLDIER:**

Hail, Ares!

**SOLDIERS** (chanting):

A-res! A-res! A-res!

Ares grins, obviously enjoying the attention.

**ARES:**

On to Naupa!

He mounts Argo and rides at the head of the army.

**CUT TO**

Discord and Xena are still going at it. They are now in hand to hand combat again and clearly, have reached a stalemate. They are on one of the small rocky ledges.

**DISCORD:**

Face it, Xena. You can't beat a goddess who knows all the tricks in the book and who's been doing this for centuries.

Xena glances up at the ledge above them and sees a large pile of rocks. She grins and looks at Discord.

**XENA:**

Well, I have some tricks of my own.

She lobs a fireball at the ledge. The rocks come crashing down right on top of Discord; she screeches, unable to move out of the way before they hit her. Xena mouths a "bye, bye" and waves to her and flashes away as Discord is buried.

Xena reappears on another rock ledge, watching. When the dust settles, Discord is left under a huge pile of rocks.

**XENA:**

That should slow you down for a while. (grins) You should have gotten a few tips from Callisto.

She smiles and crosses her arms, obviously pleased with herself. Then she approaches the edge of a cliff and looks down.

An overhead shot of the entrance to the walled town and the large open field in front of it. The two armies can be seen heading toward each other. The camera zooms in to show Ares at the head of one of the armies; the other army is lead by the commander in the black cloak and silver helmet, his face still invisible. The armies ride toward each other until they are only several feet apart. They stop.

**ARES** (raises his sword):

I am Ares--the former God of War! I have pledged to conquer this town in the name of Xena, the new Goddess of War!

We now see the face of the other commander. It's Gabrielle.

**GABRIELLE** (likewise raises her sword):

And I am Gabrielle, the Battling Bard of Potidaea--I have pledged that I will conquer it in the name of the new Goddess of War!

Quick pan to Xena, standing on the ledge. Her eyes widen in shock; then, suddenly, she smiles.

Quick pan to Ares and Gabrielle facing each other.

**ARES:**

I suggest that instead of shedding the blood of our men, we settle this between us. Whoever wins takes the town.

**GABRIELLE:**

Agreed. (looks upward) And if what we are doing here displeases the goddess, let her send us a sign!

Ares and Gabrielle both dismount, Gabrielle removing the helmet and the cloak, and walk up to each other, swords drawn. They assume a combat stance, raising their swords. Their swords clash--and, in the same instant, both shatter to pieces.

There are gasps of shock on both sides. Some of the men are heard muttering, "The goddess!", "A sign!", "She's angry!"

Gabrielle suddenly gasps and clutches at her heart. She sways, drops to her knees, and then slowly falls to the ground. The murmur among the soldiers grows louder as they exchange nervous looks. They stare at Ares as he, too, starts to totter and gasp.

**ARES** (with some exaggerated eye-rolling):

I--can't--breathe!

He collapses on the ground. The soldiers are now visibly terrified.

**SOLDIERS:**

--The goddess! She's killed them both!

--Are they dead?

-- Let's get out of here!

In the next moment the two armies run away in a panicked stampede.

Close-up of Xena on the cliff. She shakes her head and laughs as she vanishes in a flash of blue light.

An overhead shot of the field as the two armies run away. Soon no is left except Ares and Gabrielle, lying motionless on the ground, and their horses wandering about.

## **DISSOLVE TO**

A close-up of Gabrielle, lying on her stomach, as she opens one eye to make sure the field is clear. Then she sits up. So does Ares.

### **GABRIELLE:**

*That was the worst acting I've ever seen in a death scene.*

### **ARES** (sarcastic):

Well. I guess now we know that if I stay mortal, theater just isn't my calling. (He gets up and dusts himself off)

### **GABRIELLE** (gets up):

But you know, other than that...we make a pretty good team.

### **ARES:**

As long as you remember who's the hero and who's the sidekick.

### **GABRIELLE** (smirks):

Oh, I do. After all, it was *my* plan.

Ares fixes her with a mock glare. Then they grin at each other almost affectionately; in the next moment Ares clears his throat and looks away, embarrassed. Gabrielle looks away as well with a little "hmph."

There is a flash of light beside them, accompanied by the trademark sound of Ares (and now Xena) materializing. They turn to find Xena standing there, smiling.

### **XENA:**

Good job.

Quick close-ups of Ares and Gabrielle smiling back at her.

### **XENA** (continues):

So you took over those armies and switched the swords, huh?

### **GABRIELLE:**

You never know when ceramic replicas of ceremonial weapons can come in handy.

They all laugh.

### **ARES:**

So...what were you doing all this time?

### **XENA:**

Slugging it out with an old friend of yours. (off his questioning look) Discord.

### **GABRIELLE:**

What happened?



**XENA** (chuckles):

Let's just say she's caught between a rock and a hard place right now. (points up to the mountains; off Gabrielle's puzzled look) You know--the old, reliable way of dealing with a psycho goddess...

Gabrielle nods and grins in understanding.

Xena glances at Ares, who is smiling at her. She becomes more serious and looks at him for a quiet moment. Then, Argo trots up to Xena, nuzzles her and neighs.

**XENA** (pats Argo's neck, then gives Ares a mock-angry look):

I can't believe you rode my horse. (turns to Argo) And you let him.

**ARES:**

Hey, she's a smart horse. She knew I was supposed to take your place and I guess *she* didn't have a problem with that.

A brief pause.

**XENA** (quietly):

Do *you*?

**ARES:**

Hmm...I'll get back to you on that.

Another brief silence.

**GABRIELLE:**

Come on. We should get back to camp. Haimon and Darion will be waiting for us.

**XENA:**

I'll take you there.

**CUT TO**

Close up of Haimon's face. Pulling back, we get an overhead view of him--he is sprawled on the ground, his arms spread out. He looks exhausted. Darion lies next to him, fast asleep.

There is a flash of blue light. Xena appears with Ares and Gabrielle and their horses. Haimon sits up.

**HAIMON:**

All done?

**ARES:**

Piece of cake.

Gabrielle looks at Haimon and the still-sleeping Darion, then comes up to Haimon and sits on her haunches next to him, putting a hand on his shoulder.

**GABRIELLE:**

Are you all right? It looks like you had the tougher job.

**HAIMON** (smiles a little):

Just a little worn out after a couple of dozen rounds of tag. (looks up at Xena) Maybe you should try it next time. I think it would take a god to keep up with the kid.

**GABRIELLE** (gazes at him tenderly):

Haimon...you've been great.

Ares glances at them uncomfortably, quietly rolling his eyes.

**ARES:**

I'm off to get some water from the lake.

He picks up a waterskin and walks away.

Xena stands still, looking at Gabrielle and Haimon, her face inscrutable. Then she smiles, but there is a little anguish in her smile.

**XENA:**

Gabrielle--I think I need to, uh--take care of some god things.

**GABRIELLE** (looks up at her):

Is everything okay?

**XENA** (smiles):

Yeah. I'll be back soon.

She vanishes in a flash of blue light. Gabrielle turns to Haimon and they look at each other silently.

**XENA'S VOICE:**

Gabrielle... (Gabrielle starts a little) Don't worry, he can't see me or hear me.

Close-up of Gabrielle's face--she looks startled and somewhat alarmed.

**HAIMON:**

What is it, Gabrielle?

**XENA'S VOICE:**

Don't you think it's about time you told him how you feel?

A faint "whoosh" is heard, signaling Xena's departure. Gabrielle shakes herself a little, as if snapping out of a trance.

**HAIMON:**

Is something wrong?

**GABRIELLE** (smiles):

No, Haimon. Everything's all right.

She lifts her hand and touches his cheek. The camera pulls back to show Darion, who stirs and sits up, rubbing his eyes.

**DARION:**

Gabrielle?

Gabrielle turns to him.

**DARION:**

You're back! Did you get the bad guys?

**GABRIELLE:**

Yes, we did. (smiles warmly) And Ares was a real hero. Come here.

She hugs Darion and ruffles his hair.

**CUT TO**

The lake. Ares is squatting by the water, filling the waterskin. Suddenly alert, he sits up.

**ARES:**

Xena...I know you're there.

There is a "whoosh" and a flash of blue light behind him. He turns around and looks at Xena standing there. She smiles.

**XENA** (playfully):

What is it about me? You always seem to know when I'm around. I must have a certain...presence around you.

Ares walks toward her.

**ARES** (smiles):

Presence? Maybe it's just that I'm drawn to you...like a moth to the flame.

He runs a hand along her arm and she closes her eyes.

**XENA** (whispers):

Who is the moth... (she reaches over and intertwines her fingers with his) ...and who is the flame?

As they hold hands, a red glow forms around their fingers.

Then it fades but they continue to hold each other's hands. Xena opens her eyes.

**XENA:**

This has been quite an experience, huh?

**ARES:**

I'll say. (thoughtfully) You know, when I was helping those villagers...when I saved that kid from the bandits...I never knew it could feel so good to be...*good*. (he chuckles in disbelief and shakes his head)

Xena lets go of his hand and steps back.

**XENA:**

Ares...now that I know what it's like to be you...

Ares' smile fades.

**ARES** (interrupts her, anticipating the worst):

You know I can never change--is that it? And you think we shouldn't be together? (He shakes his head, frustrated but resigned) I should have known it wouldn't last.

Ares turns around and starts to walk away but Xena appears in his path, her eyes very tender. He tries to walk around her but she grabs his shoulders.

**XENA:**

Let me finish. Now that I know what it's like to be you--I know that I can accept you the way you are. When we go back to normal, that is. (smiles mischievously) I'll still have to stop you, of course. (grins) And kick your ass, sometimes.

**ARES** (grins back at her):

But you'll accept me.

**XENA** (smiles teasingly):

I wouldn't have it any other way.

They melt into a loving, passionate kiss. As they kiss, a blue aura begins to glow around them. It gets brighter until it explodes in a brilliant flash of blue light.

When the light dissipates, Xena and Ares step away from each other, opening their eyes. Xena is wearing her traditional leathers and armor again. Ares looks subtly different--his hair is now smooth, all traces of dust gone from his leathers. They look each other over. Ares raises his hand and looks at it; blue sparks crackle between his fingertips.

**ARES** (grins):

Back to normal at last.

**XENA** (looks herself over, then looks up at Ares and smiles):

Back to normal.

**APHRODITE** (off-screen):

Yoo-hoo!

Ares and Xena turn to look at her.

**ARES** (scowls):

Sis.

**APHRODITE** (beaming):

I think that definitely qualifies as a success story. Have fun, you two!

She waves at them and dissolves in a shower of golden sparks. Ares and Xena shake their heads, looking at the spot where she vanished. Then Ares turns to Xena.

**ARES:**

Well, I was right about one thing.

**XENA:**

What?

**ARES:**

You'd make a magnificent Goddess of War. (He smiles and touches her face) But I think I like you better this way.

They smile at each other. Xena puts her hand over his.

**XENA (grins):**

You'd better send out a memo to your worshippers. Otherwise, they'll continue to think I'm the Goddess of War.

**ARES:**

Right. I'll take care of that later.

**XENA (raises an eyebrow):**

Later? What did you have in mind for now?

**ARES:**

Oh, I don't know. Maybe a good round of swordplay?

**XENA (chuckles):**

Good idea. (weaves her fingers through his) But... (she leans close to him, speaking in a low, sensuous tone) ...there's something very important we've got to do first.

**ARES:**

What's that?

**XENA:**

You promised to show Darion some tricks.

The camera pulls back for a long shot of Xena and Ares laughing. Then, still holding hands, they walk off toward the campsite together as we:

**FADE OUT**

**THE END**

*[Xena and Ares got under each other's skin during the production of this motion picture.]*