

SHIPPER SEASON NINE



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Story By: Aurora, Ryan and LadyKate
Head Writer: LadyKate
Co-Writer: Aurora
Edited By: LadyKate
Collage By: Aurora
Images Gathered By: Aurora

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Logline

While Xena hovers between life and death, Gabrielle and Eve continue to defend Moesia from the Visigoths while Eve confronts her past and its deadly consequences.

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TEASER

FADE IN

ANNOUNCER:

Previously on Xena...

EVE (facing Xena):

I promised to protect Orphelia.

CUT TO

Flashback of a younger Nymphidius and Livia.

LIVIA (determined):

I know what I want, Nymphidius. And someday I'll have it.

CUT TO

Eve and Nymphidius in the hallway of a Roman military building.

EVE (in shock):

You want me to lead Roman troops into battle.

CUT TO

Eve, on horseback, wearing a Roman helmet and leather armor, leads a group of Roman warriors charging into the thick of the Visigoth army.

CUT TO

A large camp. The people walking around are dressed in rugged clothing, with long beards and shaggy hair.

CUT TO

Alaric sitting in his tent; Zenobia faces him.

ALARIC:

We obviously want the same thing.

ZENOBIA:

The fall of Rome.

CUT TO

The hallway; Xena and Gabrielle face Nymphidius and Eve.

XENA:

I'm sure Rome can take care of its own.

CUT TO

A battlefield. Zenobia stands in Eve's path, pointing a sword at her.

ZENOBIA (sneers):

Well, if it isn't my old friend--*Livia*.

CUT TO

Zenobia and Eve fighting.

CUT TO

Xena's room--day. Xena and Ares.

ARES:

This is much too personal for you. You're losing focus.

CUT TO

The battlefield. Xena stands frozen for a moment, looking troubled and distracted.

CUT TO

Gabrielle in another part of the battlefield.

GABRIELLE (shouts over the noise of the battle):

Xena!!!

Pan to Xena. She falls to the ground, face down, brought down by a blow to the back from a Visigoth's club.

CUT TO

Ares picks up the bleeding, unconscious Xena in his arms and stand up, his face grim. He disappears with Xena in a flash of light.

[END OF MONTAGE]

DISSOLVE TO

Xena's face, very pale, with a few cuts and scratches on it. Her eyes are closed. She is unconscious. There is blood on her lips.



The camera pulls back to show Gabrielle reaching out to wipe the blood from Xena's mouth. As the camera pulls further out we see a female medic in a long white robe standing by Xena's side, examining the wound in her side.

GABRIELLE (looks anxiously at the medic):

She'll be all right--won't she? (Off the medic's dubious look) She *has* to be all right!

MEDIC:

With those injuries...most soldiers I've seen would be dead already.

Close-up on Gabrielle's horrified face.

The camera pulls back to show Ares standing by the wall, his arms folded on his chest. He looks impassive but his mouth twitches slightly.

GABRIELLE:

What are you saying?

MEDIC (shakes her head):

I'm sorry.



GABRIELLE (brokenly):

No. No--it's not possible. (She takes Xena's hand in hers) She can't die.

MEDIC (gently):

She's mortal, Gabrielle. She can die.

Pan over the Ares. He stands very still, his eyes closed, as if he were somewhere else.

CUT TO

Athena sits at a desk in a richly but austere decorated study, reading a scroll. Suddenly she looks up, her face alert, as if she has heard something.

CUT TO

Close-up on Ares. His eyes are still closed, a look of intense focus on his face.

Pan to Xena's bed. Gabrielle squeezes her hand, her eyes filling with tears.

GABRIELLE:

Xena, no... I--we can't lose you again....

Zoom in on Xena's face, then closer and closer until the screen:

FADES TO BLACK

After a few moments of darkness, a torch-like reddish light flares up. Close-up on Xena's face, fully alert and unmarked. She looks around, clearly bewildered and wary.

The camera pulls back to show Xena, in full warrior gear, walking through a dimly lit tunnel, looking around warily.

Pan to show, from Xena's point of view, light at the end of the tunnel. Xena stops a moment and looks around, then strides toward the light.

CUT TO

Xena stands at a rectangular opening in a wall. There is daylight on the other side.

The silence fills with the sounds of clashing swords and the cries and grunts of what sounds like two people fighting.

Xena steps through the door.

Wide shot of an arena in an empty amphitheater. In a scene that looks almost like a replica of Ares and Livia sparring in *Livia*, we see Livia fighting with a man in dark leather armor whose face remains invisible. They spar and exchange kicks and punches, their fighting moves like an elaborate dance. They don't seem to see Xena.



Zoom in on Xena as she stands in the doorway, horror and bewilderment evident in her face.

Pan to Livia and her adversary. He succeeds in pinning her arms behind her back, then leans in to kiss her passionately.

The look on Xena's face turns to disgust. Almost instinctively, she grabs the chakram from her belt and throws it toward Livia and the man who is kissing her.

The chakram whizzes through the air.

Quick pan to Livia as she breaks the kiss, whips around and snatches the chakram, grinning gleefully.

Pan to Xena's horrified face.

Pan to Livia and the man standing next to her. It's Julius Caesar. Livia and Caesar both grin triumphantly, Livia holding the chakram.

LIVIA:

Surprised?

XENA (through clenched teeth):

What *is* this?

CAESAR:

Xena. What a pleasure.

Caesar and Livia both advance toward her, their swords at the ready. Xena draws her sword.

Caesar and Livia charge. Xena parries their blows but she seems somewhat disoriented and not fully focused. A kick from Livia gets her in the stomach and sends her flying back. Caesar leaps toward her, his sword raised, but she manages to roll over quickly, jump to her feet and parry his thrust. With a furious yell, she swings at him and knocks the sword out of his hand.

Pan to Livia. An evil sneer on her face, she raises her hand with the chakram.

Pan to Xena as she kicks Caesar again and raises her sword.

Pan to Livia throwing the chakram.

Ready to strike at Caesar, Xena shudders suddenly and lurches forward.

The chakram bounces off Xena's back and falls--it's much like the scene in *Ides of March* except that the chakram doesn't break.

Close-up of Xena falling.

Xena groans and winces as she looks up. Livia and Caesar are standing over her, sneering.

LIVIA:

This time--I win.

CAESAR:

This time, I think I'll stick around to watch you die. I should have done that the first time.

XENA (through clenched teeth):

Nice try, Caesar. I'm already dead...right? (grunts as she lifts herself up on her arms) This has got to be Tartarus...

Livia and Caesar laugh.

LIVIA:

You know what's funny, *mommy*. After all those years as a do-gooder, you're still not surprised you'd end up in Tartarus.



CAESAR:

And to die fighting to defend a Roman colony against barbarians...fighting for the empire I built... (he squats down in front of Xena and caresses her cheek) ...it's the ultimate irony, don't you think?

Xena snarls. She manages to pull herself up and land a punch that gets Caesar in the face, causing him to fall back.

The camera starts to zoom out.

LIVIA:

Still feisty, aren't we? (sneers) Not for very long.

Xena cries out in pain as Livia's foot slams down on her back.

The camera pulls away rapidly, as we:

ZOOM OUT TO

Xena's bed. Still unconscious, Xena frowns, moans slightly and twitches.

The door flies open and Eve comes in, followed by Nymphidius and Haimon.

EVE (anxiously):
How is she?

GABRIELLE (turns toward her, anguished):
I--I don't know...Eve-- (she shakes her head) It's not good...

Eve rushes toward the bed, taking off her helmet in mid-stride; she kneels by the bed and takes Xena's other hand.

EVE:
Oh, Mother--

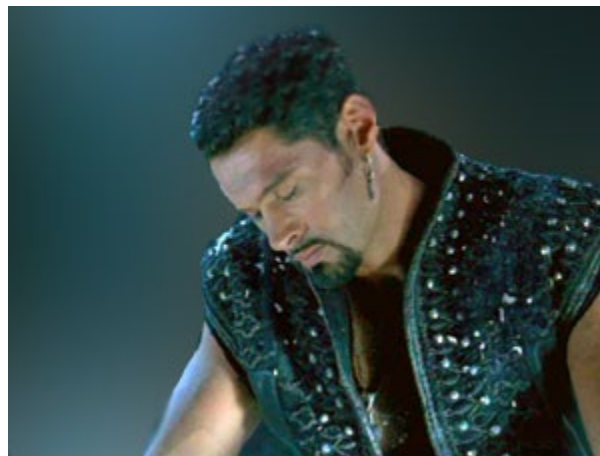
NYMPHIDIUS:
By the gods--

MEDIC:
Her pulse is dropping. I'm sorry...I don't think there's anything I can do...

Pan to Ares, his face hard.

ARES:
I can. (to the medic) Let go of her. (he looks at Eve and Gabrielle, a sudden ferocity in his voice)
All of you!

The medic shrinks back fearfully. Gabrielle and Eve exchange a hopeful look and move away.



Ares steps toward the bed, kneels down and lays his hands on Xena. He closes his eyes. In the background, Gabrielle gasps as a blue glow starts to emanate from Ares' fingers, flowing into Xena's body.

As the glow fades, Xena sighs and moves her head from side to side. Her eyes remain closed.

Ares lifts his hands, pausing for a moment to brush a strand of hair off Xena's face. Then he rises and steps aside.

Gabrielle rushes toward Xena and unwraps the bandage around her chest.

MEDIC (gasps):
The wound--it's gone!

Nymphidius and Haimon stare in amazement.

GABRIELLE (overjoyed):
Xena--

EVE (kneels at Xena's side, tearfully):
Mother!

GABRIELLE (turns to Ares, incredulously):
You--you gave up your godhood...?

ARES (shakes his head):
Not this time. (off Gabrielle's puzzled look) Athena's blessing, remember?

GABRIELLE:
Oh. (She smiles at him) Ares, I--I don't know how to thank you...

Apparently oblivious to her words, Ares is staring past her at Xena, who stirs slightly and then lies still, her breathing even.

EVE (looks up, worried):
She's not waking up.

Ares, Gabrielle, and Eve exchange worried looks as we:

FADE OUT

ACT ONE

FADE IN

On the same scene as before. Ares, Gabrielle and Eve stand around Xena's bed. They look worried.



The camera zooms in on Xena's face, then her closed eyes, and then moves in to take us inside Xena's mind.

ZOOM IN

On the arena. Xena leaps to her feet, fully healed, and knocks Livia back with a swift kick.

Livia flies back and falls, screaming in rage.

Xena picks up her sword and faces Caesar, grinning confidently.



XENA:

No getting rid of me, is there.

She and Caesar start to spar when a cry of "Yah!" and the sounds of galloping horse hooves are heard off-camera.

Xena turns her head abruptly.

A horseman in richly decorated armor, with two other horsemen behind him, is galloping toward her across the arena. Zoom in to show that it's Pompey.

Xena's hand goes toward the chakram on her hip but it's not there. She looks over to see Livia hold up the chakram with a sneer.

Pompey rides up close to Xena and stops.



POMPEY:

Long time, no see, Xena. (sneers) Interesting how people have a tendency to lose their heads around you.

He charges toward her, followed by the two soldiers behind him, and swings his sword. Xena ducks the sword and manages to strike down one of the soldiers.

Pompey turns around and rides toward Xena again, with Caesar and Livia advancing toward her simultaneously. Xena looks around, then starts running, gaining momentum. With her ululating battle cry, she leaps up (much like in *Livia*) and lands in one of the spectator rows above the arena, then runs away.

CUT TO

Xena's room.

GABRIELLE (almost frantic):

What's wrong with her?

The medic silently spreads her arms, as if to say that it's beyond her understanding. Gabrielle and Eve look at Ares.

ARES (exasperated):

I don't know! (shakes his head) It's--it's almost like her soul is--trapped somewhere else.

GABRIELLE (quietly, horrified):

Trapped...you mean--she could stay like this...until she dies?

ARES (testy):

Let's not jump to any conclusions.

NYMPHIDIUS:

Liv-- (his voice breaks off as he looks at Eve, who is kneeling at Xena's side) Eve.

At the sound of his voice, Eve turns around and looks at him expectantly.

NYMPHIDIUS (gently):

I know you want to be by your mother's side right now. But we need to think about the Visigoths--about what to do next. You know they haven't gone away.

CUT TO

The Visigoth camp at dusk. The half-darkness is dispelled by campfires. The men are clearly in a festive mood, eating, drinking and laughing. Outside his tent, Alaric sits on a fur-covered seat in front of a fire, holding a large mug of ale as he surveys the scene. Herman, also sipping his ale, sits on a stool nearby. Alaric takes a gulp of ale and wipes the foam off of his face.

HERMAN:

You think they're ready for more?

ALARIC:

More what? Drinking or fighting?

Before Herman can answer, Zenobia comes up.

ZENOBIA (sarcastically):

Did I miss something? Do we have a victory to celebrate?

ALARIC (grins):

Relax, Zenobia. Have a drink. Herman! A seat for our honored ally.

HERMAN:

Yes, sire.

He goes inside the tent. Alaric puts down his mug of ale, reaches for a jug standing on the ground, pours ale into an empty mug and hands it to Zenobia.

ALARIC:

A toast.

ZENOBIA:

To what? Getting kicked around by the Romans?

ALARIC (grins):

Come on, take it. A little drink never hurt anyone yet.

Zenobia takes the mug, eyeing him suspiciously. Herman comes out with a seat and puts it down. After a moment's hesitation Zenobia sits down and sips her ale.

ALARIC:

We were doing good out there, Zenobia--until some fools started a panic because they thought a god had showed up to fight on the Romans' side. (He chuckles) That won't happen again. The Romans may have been able to push us back from the walls of Moesia this time--but they've lost more men than we have, and we're not going to give them much time to regroup. (He takes a gulp of ale) And besides--they tell me Xena was badly wounded in the battle. She's dying right now, for all I know. Just think what *that* will do to the Romans' morale.



ZENOBIA (smirks):

As we speak, Livia may be watching her mother die. (raises her mug of ale) I'll drink to that.

They clink their mugs and drink.

ALARIC (laughs):

Livia, huh? I take it this is personal.

ZENOBIA (with sudden grimness):

It doesn't get much more personal than that. (A grin spreads slowly across her face) Whatever else happens here--the Bitch of Rome will pay for what she did to me--and my people.

ALARIC (chuckles):

I like your attitude, Zenobia. (takes another gulp of ale) But--you need to have patience.

ZENOBIA (scoffs):

Patience. The virtue of slaves and housewives.

Alaric laughs and she joins in his laughter.

CUT TO

Xena's room. Xena remains unconscious. Gabrielle, Ares, and Eve are sitting by the bed; Haimon and Nymphidius are standing behind them.

NYMPHIDIUS:

Unless we get those reinforcements--the next time the Visigoths come, we're not going to fare very well.

EVE (looks up at him):

We were able to push them back.

NYMPHIDIUS:

The men are exhausted. It took all they had to repel this attack. (shakes his head) If we at least had a way to buy us some time...

Gabrielle looks at him, then rises suddenly.

GABRIELLE (firmly):
Maybe *I* can find a way.

NYMPHIDIUS (puzzled):
What are you talking about?

GABRIELLE:
I'll go to the Visigoths under a banner of truce.

HAIMON (worried):
Gabrielle!

NYMPHIDIUS:
Are you mad? Truce? What makes you think they'd be interested?

GABRIELLE:
What makes you so sure they won't be? Have you even *tried* to find out what they're after--

NYMPHIDIUS (scoffs):
What's there to find out?

GABRIELLE:
--or what's driving them?

NYMPHIDIUS:
Come on--you can't talk to these barbarians!

GABRIELLE (glances uncomfortably at the still-unconscious Xena):
Nymphidius... Once, Xena said something like that about another--enemy force we had to fight. (quietly) And she was wrong. Look--if nothing else, maybe it will buy us some time. Isn't that what you wanted?

NYMPHIDIUS:
Or maybe they'll kill you on sight. Are you willing to take that risk?

HAIMON and GABRIELLE (in unison):
No. Yes.

CUT TO

The gates of Moesia. Nightfall. Gabrielle rides up to the gates, accompanied by Haimon and Nymphidius, also on horseback.

HAIMON:
Are you sure you don't want me to--

GABRIELLE (reaches out and presses her fingers to his lips):
I'm sure. (smiles) I'll be all right.

NYMPHIDIUS (frowns):
I still don't like this.

GABRIELLE (ignoring him):

Haimon... (there's a catch in her voice and her eyes tear up slightly) Stay with Xena.

HAIMON:

Don't worry so much. (he presses her hand) Xena will be fine--maybe she just needs time to recover fully. She's got Eve with her--and Ares.

Gabrielle nods but doesn't look very reassured.

CUT TO

Gabrielle riding through the forest.

CUT TO

Alaric in his tent, in the reddish-gold light of some oil lamps. He has in front of him a large open box filled with jewelry and other trophies that he is examining, grinning as the stones sparkle in the lamplight.

The tent flap opens. Alaric turns his head to see Zenobia come in, twirling a dagger in her hand. Alaric scowls and slams the lid on the box.

ALARIC:

This *is* a private tent, you know.

ZENOBIA:

If there'd been a door, I would have knocked. (contemptuously) Don't worry, I'm not interested in your loot. I have news.

ALARIC:

Yes?

ZENOBIA (taps the dagger on her palm):

I interrogated one of the captured Romans.

ALARIC (lifts an eyebrow):

Poor devil.

ZENOBIA:

He told us something--interesting. (pauses for effect as Alaric listens) It seems my good friend Livia is here to protect someone--someone who lives just outside the town. This man heard Livia order two soldiers to be dispatched to watch over--whoever it is. If we find out more...it's something we could use for leverage.

ALARIC (looks at her probingly):

Or payback. (pauses) Isn't that what you mean?

ZENOBIA:

There's nothing wrong with payback.

ALARIC:

No--not unless it distracts you from your main goal.

The tent flap is lifted and Herman's voice is heard from outside.

HERMAN:

Sire? There is a woman here to see you.

ALARIC (glances sarcastically at Zenobia):

She'll have to get in line.

Zenobia rolls her eyes and gives him a disgusted look.

HERMAN:

She's a Roman emissary, sire. It's Gabrielle of Potidaea.

ALARIC (sits up, alert):

Send her in.

ZENOBIA (grins):

So. They want to negotiate.

ALARIC:

They want *something*. We'll find out soon enough what it is.

Gabrielle comes in and stops.

ALARIC:

Gabrielle, I presume. Queen of the Amazons--Battling Bard of Potidaea.

GABRIELLE:

That's right. And you're Alaric.

Alaric rises, steps toward her and takes his sword off his belt. Slowly, he raises it until the tip is a finger's width away from Gabrielle's chest. Gabrielle looks at him unflinchingly.

ALARIC:

Do you know that two years ago, my brother Euric died fighting you and your Amazons?

GABRIELLE:

And you're going to avenge him by killing me?

ALARIC:

I could.

He stares at her, holding the sword to her chest.

GABRIELLE:

I came here to talk. I'm not armed.

Alaric stares at her intently, then lowers his sword.

ALARIC:

The Romans may call us barbarians; but we're not animals. (he slips his sword back in the scabbard and sprawls in his seat again) I have to say I'm impressed. I would have thought only Xena would have the nerve to walk into an armed enemy camp just like that. (eyes her mockingly) Speaking of which--how *is* Xena?

GABRIELLE (uncomfortably):

She's--recovering...very quickly.

ALARIC:

Is she, now. I've heard a great deal about Xena's amazing powers of healing, but I would think that this one would be beyond even her--if what I've heard of her injuries is true.

GABRIELLE:

Maybe you've heard wrong.

ALARIC:

Maybe. (strokes his beard) You're here to talk. I'm listening.

Gabrielle casts a questioning look at Zenobia; Zenobia chuckles.

ZENOBIA:

You don't know who I am, do you. Queen Zenobia of Palmyra.

GABRIELLE:

I've heard the stories... You fought for your people's freedom--against Rome.

ZENOBIA:

That's right. For eight long years, I was a prisoner of Rome. And now, her worst nightmare. (smirks) I hope.

She raises her dagger in a mocking salute to Gabrielle and walks out. Gabrielle looks after her anxiously.

ALARIC (gives her a probing look):

What are you and Xena doing on the side of the Romans, anyway? I would think you'd hate them more than anyone else.

GABRIELLE:

Hate innocent people? That's who we're trying to help.

ALARIC (chuckles):

Very noble. So, what do you want?

GABRIELLE:

What do you want, Alaric?

ALARIC:

To take Moesia. (with a hearty laugh) Isn't that obvious?

GABRIELLE:

And then what? You know Rome has enough legions to win it back.

ALARIC (chuckles):

Today, Moesia; tomorrow-- (he trails off, looking meaningfully at Gabrielle)

GABRIELLE:

You can't believe that you and your army can topple the Roman empire!

ALARIC:

Baby steps, Gabrielle. Moesia will fall--we'll take its riches. The Romans can have what's left when we're done. We'll move on to other colonies, and ally ourselves with other tribes. We can't strike at the heart of the empire--yet--but we can inflict small wounds until the beast bleeds to death. Rome wasn't built in a day; it won't fall in a day, either.

GABRIELLE:

And for that, you're willing to kill--and send your own men to die.

ALARIC:

That's the way of the world, Gabrielle-- (takes a gulp of ale) whether it's Romans conquering lands for their empire, or Visigoths taking what should be theirs--or two villages fighting over a patch of land for their crop fields.

GABRIELLE:

That doesn't make it right.

ALARIC:

Right. (he pensively cradles his mug of ale) You know, Gabrielle, I wasn't always an enemy of the Roman empire. A few years ago, Augustus offered my people land and full Roman citizenship if we joined them. We did. I myself fought in a Roman legion. (Gabrielle looks at him curiously) But the Romans lied to us. They used us to battle and die for them--and then they wouldn't give us what was our due. So we're going to take it. The way I see it--this is justice.

GABRIELLE (chuckles bitterly):

Justice? You're even worse than they are.

ALARIC:

We're playing to win, not to get a consolation prize for good sportsmanship.

Gabrielle turns away and Alaric calls out after her.

ALARIC:

If you do decide to switch sides--the offer's open.

Without replying, Gabrielle walks out of the tent. Alaric looks after her, stroking his beard.

CUT TO

Night. Gabrielle is riding through the forest, dimly lit by moonlight.

In the near-darkness, a figure moves into her path.

Gabrielle brings her horse to a halt, staring ahead warily. She reaches for a sword attached to her saddle.

The figure steps into the moonlight. It's Zenobia.

GABRIELLE:

What do you want?

ZENOBIA:

How about--to see the Romans get what's coming to them? (pauses) Especially one Roman. One who dragged me through the streets of Rome like a chained animal.

She pauses for effect. Pan to Gabrielle who stares at her warily and expectantly.

ZENOBIA (continues):

Livia--the Bitch of Rome.

Gabrielle looks stricken.

GABRIELLE (whispers):

Eve...

ZENOBIA:

From what they tell me, she's like a daughter to you, isn't she? Her mother is a very, very good friend of yours... (sneers) or should I say--*was*.

GABRIELLE (hastily):

Xena's going to be all right.

ZENOBIA:

Oh, really.

Gabrielle stares intently at Zenobia, then dismounts and stands facing her.

GABRIELLE:

Zenobia...if there's one thing I've learned in the years I've been traveling with Xena--

ZENOBIA:

Go on?

GABRIELLE:

--there is nothing worse than to make vengeance your goal. It consumes your soul. It destroys your life.

ZENOBIA (gives her a strange look):

I wish those words could move me, Gabrielle. I really mean that. But--it's too late.

She looks at Gabrielle as we:

FADE OUT

ACT TWO

FADE IN

On the same scene. Gabrielle looks at her with a sigh of regret and shakes her head, then picks up the horse's reins and starts to walk. Zenobia walks next to her.

ZENOBIA:

You know--you disappoint me. I used to admire Xena...and you. I heard all the stories about how the two of you fought the Romans--to help Boadicea, to defend the Amazons, to keep Egypt free from Roman rule. I heard about how you were crucified by Caesar, and survived. You inspired me to fight for the independence of my own people. And now, you take the Romans' side?

They come out into a moonlit clearing and continue to walk.



GABRIELLE:

We're not taking any sides. We're helping innocent people to protect their homes--their lives. Just like we did in Britannia and in Amazon lands--just like we always have.

ZENOBIA (laughs):

Really. And how many innocent lives has Rome taken compared to the Visigoths?

GABRIELLE:

The people of this town had nothing to do with that.

ZENOBIA:

They're Romans! They reap all the benefits of the empire and its conquests.

GABRIELLE:

Zenobia, we promised to protect them. And we will. There's nothing else to talk about.

She mounts her horse and is about to ride off.

ZENOBIA:

Gabrielle!

Gabrielle turns to look at her. Close-up on Zenobia, her face lit by the bright moonlight.

ZENOBIA:

Don't tell me there isn't some part of you--deep down--that would be happy to see the Roman empire crumble.

Close-up on Gabrielle's face. She looks troubled and doesn't quite know what to say.

Pan to Zenobia. She smiles slightly, clearly knowing she has struck a chord.

ZENOBIA (continues):

Don't tell me *Xena* doesn't feel that way.

Close-up on Gabrielle's troubled face.

CUT TO

Xena on her bed, still unconscious. The camera zooms in on her face and then her closed eyes, and continues to zoom in, taking us inside her mind.

DISSOLVE TO

Xena walks into a lavishly decorated Roman temple, with a fire burning in front of the altar. Holding her sword at the ready, she looks around warily.

FEMALE VOICE (off-camera):

Xena!

Xena flinches and whips around, looking for the source of the voice. A faint laughter is heard.



XENA:

Who's there?

VOICE (laughs again, still off-camera):

Oh, Xena...

XENA (contemptuously):

I don't know where I am or what this is, but I'm not playing your games. (She sheathes her sword) Come out now or leave me alone.

From behind one of the statues, Agrippina comes out. She is wearing a long purple dress and a gold necklace.

XENA:

You!

She stares at Agrippina.

AGRIPPINA:

Are you surprised?

XENA:

Not really.

Agrippina walks around the temple, then stops and turns to face Xena.

AGRIPPINA (suavely and with only a faint hint of mockery, not open taunting like Callisto or Livia):

You could at least tell me you've missed me.

XENA:

I haven't.

AGRIPPINA:

Pity. I told you we made a good team.

XENA:

A good team for *what*? Lying, cheating and killing your way into power?

AGRIPPINA:

Anything. (pauses) Maybe even defending the Roman empire from barbarians.

XENA:

I'm not. (pauses) I wasn't. I was defending one colony.

AGRIPPINA:

Today, it's Moesia. Tomorrow--those barbarians could be a threat to the whole empire. (she circles Xena slowly, then stops) Be honest, Xena.

XENA (scoffs):

You're a fine one to talk.

AGRIPPINA:

Tell me there isn't a part of you, deep down, that would be glad to see Rome fall. Even to a horde of ruthless barbarians.

Xena stares at her thoughtfully, then looks away.

XENA:

I'm defending innocent people from slaughter. It's what I do.

AGRIPPINA (coolly):

Oh yes. The Greater Good.

She walks toward Xena until they're standing face to face, a hand's span apart. Xena flinches slightly and eyes Agrippina with visible distaste but does not step back. The camera starts to zoom out.

AGRIPPINA (continues):

But you're not really fighting for the Greater Good, are you? We both know this is all about your daughter.

As she speaks, the camera continues to zoom out rapidly and we:

ZOOM OUT TO

Xena's room; Xena lies unconscious. Eve and Ares sit by her side; Ares appears to be deeply in concentration, his eyes closed. Eve looks at him expectantly.

Ares opens his eyes. He looks pained.

EVE (looks up at Ares):

Well?

ARES:

She's--dreaming. I think she believes she's already dead.

EVE (frightened):

What--what does that mean?

ARES:

She could stay like this... (avoiding Eve's eyes) for the rest of her life.

EVE (gasps):

The rest of her-- (trails off) You can do something--can't you? (off his silent, uncertain look) Ares, you're a *god*. (angrily) I *know* you can get into dreams. You did it before to torment her--

Close-up on Ares as he flinches and grimaces slightly.

EVE (continues):

--aren't you going to do it now to save her?



ARES (snaps at her):

It's not that simple! This is no ordinary dream. There are--realms--inside the human mind where even a god's powers are-- (He trails off, shaking his head; then, suddenly, he erupts in anger, banging his fist on the bedside table) *Dammit!* (to the unconscious Xena) Why wouldn't you listen to me?

In her dream, Xena sighs and frowns a little, tossing her head. Eve, her mouth tightening as if she were about to cry, reaches over to brush the hair off Xena's face.

The camera starts to zoom in on Xena's face for an extreme close up, and continues to zoom in, taking us inside her mind.

ZOOM IN

On the temple where Xena talks to Agrippina.

AGRIPPINA:

Your daughter. You'd stand by her no matter what, won't you?

XENA (bitterly):

Look at *you*. You made your psycho son Emperor of Rome.

AGRIPPINA:

But we're not talking about me, Xena. I'm not claiming to be a hero. (She continues to slowly circle Xena) You stood by your daughter when she slaughtered the Elijans.

XENA (hotly):

That's *not* true! I would have killed her if that was the only way to stop her.

AGRIPPINA:

Maybe. But you didn't. (pauses, smiling triumphantly) Then, you shielded her when she had to pay for her crimes under Amazon law--

XENA:

My daughter had changed.

AGRIPPINA:

Let's say that she had. But--would you have worked quite so hard to save a reformed criminal who *wasn't* your child? Hmm?

She puts her hand on Xena's shoulder. Xena flinches and throws it off.

XENA:

Don't touch me.

AGRIPPINA:

And now, your daughter leads Roman troops--*again*--and you went into battle to protect her. Ironic, isn't it--considering that you weren't there to protect her--a long time ago--when it really mattered.

Xena's face contorts in pain and rage.

XENA:

Get away from me!

She shoves Agrippina away. As Agrippina laughs, there is an explosion of bright, blue, blinding light. When it fades, we see a close-up of Xena's face. She is lying on her back surrounded by something glittering and blue. She shivers with cold. The camera pulls away a little to show that she's lying in an ice coffin just like the ones in *Looking Death in the Eye*.

Her eyes widen suddenly. Through the lid, she sees Octavius standing over her coffin; he's holding a laughing Baby Eve. He is seen from Xena's point of view, from below, through the bluish ice.



OCTAVIUS:

Little Eve... Now that your mother is gone--you belong to me. I can raise you to be the greatest warrior Rome has ever known.

He lifts the child up as we cut to an exterior view of the coffin and Octavius with baby Eve, inside an austere room of white and gray marble.

Steps are heard behind him. Julius Caesar comes into view, wearing his toga and gold laurel wreath.

Interior view from the coffin as Xena struggles in vain. Through the lid, she sees Caesar take Baby Eve from Octavius.

XENA (kicks and punches desperately at the coffin's lid):

No!

Caesar kisses the baby's forehead.

CAESAR (to Baby Eve):

Rome is your mother.

An exterior view of the coffin. We see Caesar handing Baby Eve back to Octavius, and Xena struggling inside the coffin.



With a powerful punch, Xena shatters the coffin's lid and sits up, panting. She looks around wildly. Where Octavius and Caesar were standing before now stands Livia in her Roman armor and red cloak. She laughs.

With a snarl, Xena swings at her. Livia parries the blow.

LIVIA:

He was right, you know. Rome *is* my mother. (she makes a sword thrust that nicks Xena's arm, making her bleed) And maybe it always will be--no matter what I call myself.

XENA (with a cry of rage):

No! You're not my daughter!

LIVIA:

Really. (clicks her tongue reproachfully) Tsk-tsk-tsk. After all this time of trying to convince me that I am--

She charges Xena with a furious yell. They continue to fight, parrying and blocking each other's sword thrusts, kicking and flipping.

There is a sudden flash of light and the setting changes to that of an arena filled with spectators who are hooting, clapping, yelling and whistling.

Xena looks momentarily disoriented and Livia takes advantage of this to deliver a kick to her midsection that makes her fall backwards.

In a leap, Livia stands over her and brings down her sword.

FADE TO BLACK

A bright flash of light. Close-up on Xena's face. She looks around fearfully. The camera pulls away to show her tied to a cross, like in *Destiny* except that she's in full armor and with her boots on.

CAESAR (off-camera):

Xena.

Pan down to show Caesar standing on the beach in his *Destiny* armor, grinning.

CAESAR (continues):

You will always have a place of honor--

On the word "place," his voice is joined by Livia's. The camera pulls back to show Livia in full armor standing next to Caesar, a bloodied sword in her hand. She laughs.



CAESAR and LIVIA:

--among my conquered.

Pan up to Xena. She throws her head back and screams.

The camera zooms out rapidly, her scream fading.

ZOOM OUT TO

Xena's room. Eve and Ares are still sitting by Xena's bedside. Haimon is standing by the wall, looking anxious.

The door opens and Gabrielle comes in.

HAIMON:

Gabrielle! (hugs her) Thank the heavens!

GABRIELLE (rests her head on his shoulder for a moment):

I'm all right.... (gently extricates herself from his arms) How's Xena?

Eve looks to Ares, who sighs and reluctantly lifts his eyes to meet Gabrielle's.

ZOOM INTO

Xena's dreamworld. Xena hangs on the cross, her head drooping, her eyes closed.



Suddenly, she moves, opens her eyes and snaps her head up.

XENA (with a nasty, crooked grin):

If you think I'm going to spend eternity like this--think again.

She jerks her right arm and starts grinding her gauntlet against the rope while twisting her wrist around trying to reach the rope with her fingers.

ZOOM OUT

To Xena's room. Close-up on Xena's face, her facial muscles twitching slightly. Her head snaps back from being moved.

GABRIELLE (off-camera):

Xena! Xena!

The camera pulls back to show Gabrielle desperately shaking Xena by the shoulders.

GABRIELLE:

Wake up!

ARES (grabs her shoulder):

Stop it. It won't do her any good.

GABRIELLE (looks up at him):

Send me into her dream. You can do that, can't you?

ARES:

No. I can't.

CUT TO

Xena's dreamworld. With a cry of victory, Xena wrenches her right hand free.

CUT TO

Gabrielle sitting at Xena's bedside holding her hand.

EVE:

There's no chance to negotiate. (sighs) I didn't think so.

GABRIELLE (looks up at her):

Eve...I spoke to-- (trails off)

EVE (nods and lowers her head):

Zenobia.

GABRIELLE:

Be careful. She's out for revenge. She'll stop at nothing to hurt you.

EVE:

I know.

GABRIELLE:

So she led a rebellion against Rome--and you were the one who put it down.

Eve stares at her as we

DISSOLVE TO

[FLASHBACK]

Augustus sits on his throne, several Senators by his side.

SENATOR #1:

Emperor--if this rebellion isn't stopped right now, other provinces may join in.

SENATOR #2:

This is no time for leniency. Everyone knows you don't like shedding blood--but the longer you do nothing, the more lives will be lost later on.

LIVIA (off-camera):

Send me.

Augustus turns. Pan to show Livia standing in front of him.

AUGUSTUS:

You? (he looks doubtful) Livia, I'm not sure about this. I don't doubt your ability--you have more than proven yourself as a fighter and a leader. But you're young--you don't have much experience in the field as yet, and for a mission of this importance --

Livia comes closer and stops.

LIVIA (vehemently, eyes blazing):

And how am I supposed to gain experience if you don't send me out into the field? I'm not going to spend years and years patiently making my way through the ranks, Augustus. Give me a chance to show you--*all* of you--what I'm really capable of. (She

comes closer and smiles at Augustus, a hint of seductiveness in her smile and voice)
You won't regret it. I promise.

Augustus gives her a long stare, then smiles slightly.

AUGUSTUS:

Very well. (Gasps are heard from some of the senators) You will lead two legions to Palmyra. (He smiles) I know you won't disappoint me.

Livia smiles gleefully.

[END OF FLASHBACK]

DISSOLVE TO

Close-up of Eve's face. She looks worried and guilty.

DISSOLVE TO

[FLASHBACK]

Zenobia, on her knees, cradles a young man who is gasping for breath, his armor covered with blood, blood trickling from his mouth. Zenobia screams.

CUT TO

Zenobia, a freshly healed scar on her face, her hands in manacles, is walking with other chained prisoners. Her face is expressionless.

The camera pulls back to show Livia riding at the head of the triumphal procession, Zenobia behind her.

We see Eve's face, superimposed on this image.

[END OF FLASHBACK]

DISSOLVE TO

Xena's room.

EVE:

Gabrielle, I'm--worried about Orphelia. She's back at the villa with just a couple of her maids--and Virgil... Yesterday I sent two soldiers over to keep an eye on her, but if the Visigoths raid the place, they'll all get killed. I should go out there and bring them into the town. Now's the best time to do that, while it's dark.

GABRIELLE:

Then you should go.

EVE:

And leave Mother...

GABRIELLE (gently puts her hand on Eve's arm):

There's nothing you can do. (looks at Xena) Maybe this time, no one can bring her back except herself.

The camera zooms in on Xena's face for an extreme close-up, and then we

ZOOM INTO

Xena's dreamworld. With a yell of both supreme effort and triumph, Xena leaps off the cross and lands in the sand.

Off-camera, applause is heard.

AGRIPPINA (off-camera):

Well-done.

Xena turns toward Agrippina, who stands there clapping.

XENA (grins crookedly):

I'm glad you approve.

The camera pulls back to show them standing on the beach as we:

FADE OUT

ACT THREE

FADE IN

Outside Orphelia's villa. A moonlit night. Eve knocks on the door. She waits a moment, then knocks frantically again.

The door opens. Virgil stands in the doorway. His face lights up when he sees Eve.

VIRGIL:

Eve!

EVE:

Virgil...(a little awkwardly) It's good to see you. Is everything okay?

VIRGIL:

Yes, fine. I was worried about *you*--I know you asked me to stay here with Orphelia, but when I heard that you were leading troops into battle... (after a long, awkward pause) ...I felt I should be at your side.

EVE:

I'm fine. Virgil, I don't think this place is safe anymore.

CUT TO

A living room. Orphelia, in a nightgown and a shawl, is pacing around nervously. Eve is standing watching her while Virgil sits in an armchair.



ORPHELIA:

You want me to leave? But what if they destroy the house? My whole life is here, all my possessions-- (her voice drops) even the remains of those I loved most--

Eve lowers her head, then looks up again.

EVE:

Orphelia...please. I came here to protect you. I can't do that if you insist on staying outside the city walls. And I can't send enough men here to keep you safe. We don't have any soldiers to spare.

There is a noise off-camera.

ORPHELIA (scared):

What's that?

More sounds are heard--the sound of clanging metal, a loud crash, and a cry. Virgil rises abruptly from his seat and looks at Eve, alarmed.

EVE (to Orphelia):

Quick, go to your bedroom. Lock yourself in. We'll--

Before she has finished speaking, the door flies open. A Roman soldier staggers in, clutching at his chest with his left hand, a sword in his right.

SOLDIER (hoarsely):

They're here--they...

With a rasping moan, he collapses and dies.

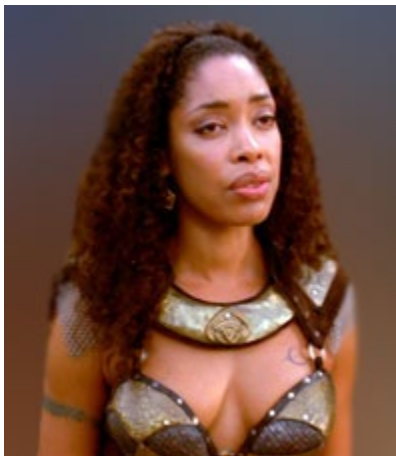
Steps are heard outside and Zenobia appears in the doorway, a sword in her hand, a tall Visigoth warrior behind her.

ZENOBIA (with a barely visible sneer):

Well, well. *Livia*. I didn't think I'd actually find *you* here. It seems I've hit the jackpot.

ORPHELIA (shaking):

Who *is* this woman?



ZENOBIA:

You know, I could ask the same thing about you. (pensively) You must be someone very dear to my good friend if she came out all this way to protect you. (looks her over) My guess would be, you're family. (She grins slightly) And that suits me just fine.

EVE:

Leave her alone, Zenobia. This is between you and me. She had nothing to do with it.

ZENOBIA:

She does now.

She charges at Eve. In a swift motion, Eve picks up the dead soldier's sword and parries Zenobia's blow. Virgil draws his sword and charges forward to meet the Visigoth's attack.

Eve battles Zenobia while Virgil fights the Visigoth and Orphelia cowers by the wall.

Zoom in on Eve and Zenobia as they fight. They seem to be evenly matched. They spar, their swords clashing in the air and making sparks fly, and deftly avoid each other's blows. Zenobia dives down, glides between Eve's legs and tries to attack her from the back but Eve turns around and brings down her sword. Before she can hold Zenobia at swordpoint, Zenobia rolls away, leaps up and charges again, kicking at Eve. Eve manages to grab her ankle and yank it upwards but as Zenobia falls, she flips over her head and kicks out at Eve, getting her in the midsection and making her stagger back and knock over a statuette on a tripod. The statuette crashes and breaks into pieces.

Quick pan to Orphelia, who gasps, covering her mouth.

Pan to Virgil, who is fighting the Visigoth warrior and clearly gaining the upper hand. He pushes the Visigoth back toward the wall. The Visigoth grabs a vase and throws it at Virgil but Virgil swats it away; it falls and breaks.

Pan to Eve as she charges at Zenobia with a sword thrust. Zenobia leaps up, grabs a curtain and swings on it, kicking out at Eve who flips as she ducks out of Zenobia's way.

Pan to Virgil as he kicks the sword out of the Visigoth's hand, then knocks him down with a powerful punch. The Visigoth slams into the wall and falls, momentarily stunned.

Pan to Zenobia and Eve. Zenobia lands, rips down the curtain and throws it over Eve, who is taken by surprise and becomes tangled in it for a moment. As she throws off the curtain, Zenobia leaps toward the cowering Orphelia and grabs her. Orphelia screams. Eve's eyes widen in horror.

ZENOBIA (the tip of her sword at Orphelia's chest):
One move, and she dies!

Eve lowers her sword; Virgil stands frozen to the spot.

ZENOBIA (to Orphelia):
You're coming with us.

As she pushes Orphelia forward, Orphelia screams and tries to break free. Close-up on her faces as her cry breaks short and her eyes bulge. Blood bubbles up on her lips.

Pan to Eve as she looks on in horror.

EVE (screams):
No!

Pan back to Zenobia and Orphelia. Orphelia crumples to the ground; the sword in Zenobia's hand is covered with blood. Zenobia looks momentarily disconcerted but then her face breaks into a nasty grin.

ZENOBIA:
Whatever she meant to you--it couldn't have been more than my brother meant to me. So--you might say that was payback.

Tears streaming down her face, Eve rushes toward Orphelia, who lies on the floor gasping and clutching at the wound in her chest. Blood is streaming all over her hands and she is turning pale.

Eve drops her sword and kneels by Orphelia's side.

EVE:
No--you're not going to die...

ORPHELIA (gasping):
I'm--I'm sorry I--wasn't more of a mother to you--Livvie --

EVE:
No, no--don't say that--you raised me... (sobbing) I love you.

ORPHELIA (raises her bloodied hand to touch Eve's cheek):
I--wish you *had* been my child ...

On the word "child," her voice turns to a raspy cough. Dark blood trickles from her mouth and her hand goes limp in Eve's hand. Her eyes freeze; she is dead.

VIRGIL (gently):

Eve ...

ZENOBIA:

All right, Livia. Let's end this right here. I could have killed you a dozen times just now--but (sighs) I guess I'm still held back by some stupid notion of honor. (indicates Eve's sword with her hand) Pick up your sword and fight.

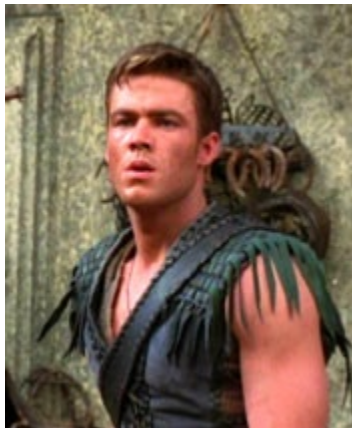
EVE (looks up, stifling a sob):

No.

ZENOBIA:

Then I'll kill you unarmed.

She swings her sword. Virgil jumps toward her and deflects the blow with his sword.



ZENOBIA (sneers):

Boyfriend to the rescue, huh?

She starts to fight Virgil but it's clear that he's no match for her. She kicks him in the side and he doubles over. She knees him in the face and he staggers back, groaning.

Looking resolute, Eve leaps to her feet and grabs the sword.

EVE:

All right, Zenobia. It's me you want? Come and get me.

Zenobia charges and they fight, both looking very grim. The tip of Zenobia's sword nicks Eve's chest, drawing blood. They spar for a few more moments; then, with a cry of anger and pain, Eve knocks Zenobia's sword out of her hand with a powerful blow and lands a kick that sends her flying and sprawling on her back. Before she can get up, Eve is standing over her, her sword pointed at Zenobia's heart.

ZENOBIA:

Go on.

The Visigoth whom Virgil knocked out before leaps to his feet and charges at Eve, his sword pointed at her back; Virgil blocks his thrust. The Visigoth snarls and takes a swing at Virgil; Virgil runs him through and he falls to the floor.

ZENOBIA:

Finish what you started years ago.

Close-up on Eve's tear-stained face as we:

DISSOLVE TO

[FLASHBACK]

Under the blazing sun, Livia is battling a young black man--the same one we saw in an earlier flashback dying in Zenobia's arms. The camera pulls back to show the Romans battling the warriors of Palmyra. Zenobia, on horseback, is racing toward Livia.

ZENOBIA (shouts):

Timon!

Livia's sword runs through the young man's neck and he falls dead.

ZENOBIA:

No!

She dismounts in a leap and rushes toward the dying young man.

ZENOBIA:

Timon--brother--

She cradles the young man in her lap. Livia steps back, a sudden look of regret in her face.

YOUNG LIVIA'S VOICE (in Livia's head):

Larus, wake up! What's wrong? No. No, Larus, Larus, you aren't dead--I won't let you be dead!

Zenobia looks up and turns a hate-filled stare toward Livia; then she springs to her feet, grabs her sword and charges Livia with a cry of rage. They start to spar but Zenobia's movements are too chaotic and unfocused. After a few moments, she loses her footing and falls backwards. Her eyes meet Livia's and they stare at each other for a long moment, before Livia points her sword at Zenobia's throat, then suddenly moves it away and steps back without saying a word.

Close-up on Livia's face as cries of "Retreat!" are heard in the background.

CUT TO

A pensive-looking Livia sits in her tent, sipping wine.

Ares flashes into view next to her. She looks up.

ARES:

You let her go.

LIVIA (not looking at him):

It wasn't the right time.

ARES:

Why not?

LIVIA:

She had just seen me kill her brother. She was grieving. It wasn't a fair fight.

ARES:

A fair fight? When did that ever count for anything? (off her harsh look; suddenly understanding) I see. After all this time, you're still mourning your--adoptive brother.

LIVIA (snaps):

So what if I am?



ARES:

You're letting feelings get in the way, Livia. (He gently takes her shoulders and pulls her to her feet, looking into her eyes) Feelings--are a weakness. They cloud the mind and prevent focus. And, in the end-- (Ares looks away, his face turning thoughtful and somber) all they do is bring pain. (After a brief pause he turns to look Livia in the eye once again and raises his hand to touch her face.) To be a true warrior--you have to be above all that.

Livia's eyes sparkle as she listens, and her mouth curls up in a smirk.

LIVIA:

Don't worry, I will be. Zenobia and her troops have retreated to Palmyra. Tomorrow, we'll take the city and teach them a lesson about going up against Rome.

ARES (grins):
That's my girl.

He bends down and kisses her neck. Livia throws her head back and closes her eyes.

LIVIA:
This time--she doesn't stand a chance.

[END OF FLASHBACK]

Eve lowers her sword. Close-up on Zenobia as her lip curls in a sneer.

ZENOBIA:

The bad girl gone good. Even after what I did--you still won't kill me. (She springs to her feet) Too bad for you.

With a rage-filled yell, she leaps out the window and disappears into the darkness.

Eve looks after her dejectedly.

CUT TO

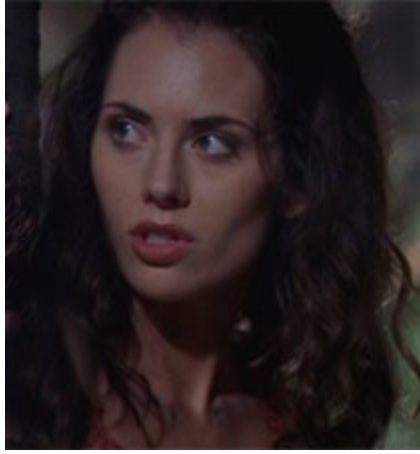
Gabrielle, Eve, Haimon, Virgil, and Nymphidius sitting at a rectangular wooden table in the Roman military headquarters, with bread, cheese and wine in front of them. The hall is lit by lamps but there is daylight coming in from the windows.

Eve is on one side of the table between Gabrielle and Nymphidius, while Haimon and Virgil are sitting across from them. Eve stares down sadly.



GABRIELLE:

Eve--it wasn't your fault.



EVE (looks up and turns toward her, bitterly):

Wasn't it? Zenobia wasn't a killer before. She was a woman of honor and courage--a woman who fought for freedom for her people. I killed all that--now there's nothing left but rage. And that cost Orphelia her life.

VIRGIL:

You did your best to protect her.

EVE:

She's still dead. And Zenobia is still out there, seeking revenge.

NYMPHIDIUS (to Eve, sympathetically):

I know this is a bad time for you. But we have to think about defending the town. There's already panic over Orphelia's murder, and there are rumors spreading all over the place that Xena is either dead or dying from her injuries. (Pan over Gabrielle, Eve, Virgil and Haimon's faces; Gabrielle and Eve look stricken, Virgil and Haimon look concerned.) The Visigoths will attack again; we all know that. Right now, we're organizing a defense. You need to go and talk to the men.

EVE (sighs):

All right--let's go.

NYMPHIDIUS (after a moment's pause):

I'm sorry.

Nymphidius and Eve get up.

VIRGIL:

You want me to come along?

EVE (uncertainly):

Not now...(avoiding his eyes) Thank you, Virgil. (she finally forces herself to look at him) For everything.

Eve and Nymphidius turn and walk toward the door.

VIRGIL:

Wait--Eve --

Eve turns around. She looks pained.

EVE:

I'll talk to you later--okay?

Eve and Nymphidius leave. There is a brief, awkward pause.

GABRIELLE:

Let's go check up on Xena.

CUT TO

Xena's room. Ares is sitting by Xena's bedside. Xena stirs in her sleep and moans slightly. Ares sits up and peers intently at her; the hopeful expression fades from his face when he sees that Xena still isn't awake.



ARES:

Xena. (After a moment he leans down and kisses her lips; she doesn't react and he sits up with a sigh) I know you can't hear me...wherever you are. (He frowns and shakes his head, as if at a loss what to say next, and then speaks quietly and almost timidly) I need you.

The camera begins to zoom in on Xena's face and we:

ZOOM INTO

Xena's dreamworld. Xena is standing on the beach at the foot of the cross, with Agrippina next to her.

AGRIPPINA:

So. This is where it all began.

XENA (gives her a sarcastic look):

What are you supposed to be, my guide through the spirit world?

AGRIPPINA (smiles):

Just a friend.

XENA (bitterly):

Yes, this is where it began. This is where Caesar betrayed me--for Rome.

The scenery changes; they now stand at the foot of another cross, at the top of a green hill.

XENA (smirks):

You know, you can't scare me with these tricks anymore.

AGRIPPINA:

And this is where you came to fight the Romans--because of your hatred of Caesar--and where your friend lost her blood innocence.

The setting changes to a Roman amphitheater. It's empty at first, then fills with noise and people. Caesar, with Pompey at his side, sits above the arena while a struggling Crassus is dragged to the executioner's block. Pan up to the stands to show Gabrielle, Crassus' ring on her finger flashing in the sun.

Close-up on Xena's face. She winces as if in pain.

AGRIPPINA (in voice-over):

And that was even before she had to act as judge, jury, and executioner--in Rome--

The setting changes again, to the prison courtyard at Mt. Amaro, empty but quickly filling with Roman soldiers. Gabrielle, in her *Ides of March* outfit, picks up the sword and charges at the soldiers.

Close-up on Xena, looking angry and hurt.

XENA:

Stop it! (takes a deep breath) None of this is real--

Pan to Agrippina, smiling enigmatically.

AGRIPPINA:

Oh, but it was.

Pan to Gabrielle stabbing a Roman soldier.

AGRIPPINA (in voice-over):

And then, the daughter--

The scene changes to the imperial box where Xena stood with Augustus in *Livia*.

AGRIPPINA (in voice-over):

--who you hoped would find a way beyond the violence--the way *you* never found--

Pan to the scene below, where Livia in her Roman armor is riding a horse leading the triumphal procession with shackled slaves.

AGRIPPINA:

--became a warrior for Rome.



XENA (turns to Agrippina in disgust):

What are you trying to say? Everything that ever went wrong for me was Rome's fault?

AGRIPPINA:

Isn't that why you've hated Rome so much? You think it has destroyed your life--poisoned your soul--crushed your dreams--

Xena gives her a thoughtful look, as if struck by something she's trying to figure out. Then she slowly shakes her head.

XENA:

I've made my own choices--my own mistakes. (harshly) I was already a pirate when Caesar crucified me. What's the point of guessing what would have happened if I'd never met him? What's the point of second-guessing anything? (shakes her head bitterly) I was crazy to think that Gabrielle could travel with me and never spill blood. It was going to happen sooner or later--Romans or no Romans.

AGRIPPINA (smiles with a touch of sarcasm):

Such insight, Xena. Too bad it's taken you until now to realize it.

XENA (looks at her probingly):

Wait. There was something you said before--

AGRIPPINA (raises an eyebrow):

Yes?

XENA:

Something about my life, my soul, my--(she gasps) *Dreams!* That's it! (she whips around and stares at Agrippina) I'm not dead, am I? (She laughs gleefully) I'm not dead! This isn't Tartarus--it's a dreamworld!

AGRIPPINA:

And what if it is? You entered this world when you were dying.

Close-up on Xena, who stares intently at Agrippina.

AGRIPPINA (off-camera, with a slightly taunting intonation):

Just think, Xena. You could stay here forever--trapped between life and death.

XENA (with a menacing grin):

I don't think so. (The camera pulls back to show her coming closer to Agrippina) I don't know if you're Agrippina, or an illusion, or a spirit. To tell you the truth, I don't care. Whoever you are, you're taking me to the arena.

AGRIPPINA (mockingly):

You're ordering me about? I was an empress.

XENA:

Only because I put you there. And besides, you're in *my* dream. (She forcefully grabs Agrippina's arm) Come on.

As she speaks, the camera starts to zoom out.

ZOOM OUT TO

Xena's room. Gabrielle sits by her side, stroking her hair. Ares sits on the other side of the bed. Haimon and Virgil stand behind her Gabrielle.

The door flies open. A Roman soldier stands in the doorway. He's out of breath.

SOLDIER (panting):

We're under attack! They've crashed through the Eastern gates!

Gabrielle looks desperately from him to Xena.

GABRIELLE:

I can't leave her. (drops her head in her hands) I can't bear this ...

Haimon comes up to her and puts his hands on her shoulders.

HAIMON (gently):

Gabrielle. I read your scroll about how you fought to defend a village from a warlord when Xena was hit with a poisoned dart.

Gabrielle puts her hand over his and looks up, throwing her head back.

HAIMON (continues):

It's all about the Greater Good, remember?

Quick pan to Ares, who gives him a disbelieving look.

HAIMON (continues):

Xena would have wanted you to go out and--

Gabrielle leaps to her feet with sudden vehemence and whirls around to face him.

GABRIELLE:

What do you mean, "would have wanted to"? She's not dead!

HAIMON:

I know. (takes his hands in hers) I mean--she would want you to. We're here to defend these people.

GABRIELLE (sighs):

Yes--you're right. (She goes over to Xena, bends down and quietly kisses her forehead) Xena... I'll be back.

As she stands up, the camera zooms in on Xena's face as we:

ZOOM INTO

Xena's dreamworld. Xena stands in the middle of the arena where she saw Livia and Caesar fighting the teaser. She looks around and sees the entryway through which she came out into the arena. She heads resolutely for the doorway.

Two figures emerge from the doorway. As the camera zooms in closer, we see that it's Caesar and Livia, their swords drawn, as we:

FADE OUT

ACT FOUR

FADE IN

On Xena standing in the arena, facing Caesar and Livia.

LIVIA:

You'll have to go through us first.



XENA (snarls):

I've had just about enough of you.

They stand still for a moment, facing each other. Then Xena lets out her battle cry--"A-yi-yi-yi-yi!"--and charges Caesar and Livia, flipping in the air as she does so. Their swords clash. She ably parries their blows, spinning around and delivering powerful kicks, ducking their blows. Livia leaps over her and lands behind her but Xena spins around and blocks Livia's kick with her own; at the same time, she deflects Caesar's sword with hers without looking.

DISSOLVE TO

Romans battling Visigoths in the streets of Moesia, clouds of dust obscuring the battle. The Roman soldiers are trying to push the Visigoths back toward the gates. As the dust clears momentarily, the camera zooms in on Gabrielle and Haimon fighting side by side.

Pan to Nymphidius fighting in another part of the street, leading a group of Roman soldiers. A Visigoth's sword slashes at his leg and he falls, clutching at the wound.



Pan to Eve fighting the Visigoths in another part of the street; she is making an effort to fight without killing, knocking out and disarming enemy warriors rather than killing them.

Pan to Virgil who is fighting his way through the Visigoth ranks, making his way toward Eve.

Pan to a soldier running toward Eve.

SOLDIER (shouts over the noise of the battle):

Livia! They're trying to scale the walls over in the Aelian quarter!

Eve looks around and grabs another soldier by the arm. He turns toward her. It's Vitus--the soldier who spoke against Xena in *What Separates Us I*.

EVE (shouts):

Where's Nymphidius?

VITUS:

He's hurt--they had to carry him off the field!

Eve makes her way toward Gabrielle. A Visigoth charges her; she briefly spars with him, disarms him and knocks him out with the flat of her sword.

EVE (yells):

Gabrielle! I'm leaving you in charge here--I'm heading over to defend the walls!

GABRIELLE (mutters):

Great...

Eve takes off running. Four Visigoths cut off her path and back her into the stone wall of a building, blocking her way. With a fierce yell, she does the flip she showed to *Varia* in *Coming Home*, flips over their heads, and then slams three of them into the wall and punches out the fourth.

DISSOLVE TO

Xena's dreamworld. Xena flips over Caesar and Livia and slams her boots in their backs, knocking them flat on their faces. She starts toward the doorway, only to hear a rumble of hooves. She looks toward the sound to see Pompey and two gladiators, one of them swinging a sword and the other a mace, racing toward her on horseback.

XENA:

You've got to be kidding. (She looks around, then raises her voice, firmly) Give me back my chakram!

Looking down, she sees something gleaming in the sand covering the arena. It's the chakram. She dives down, picks it up and throws it, knocking both Pompey and the gladiators off their horses. As she catches the chakram and puts it back on her belt, there is a shadow behind her. She thrust her sword backward and hears a strangled cry.

Xena yanks out the sword and turns around. Livia crumples to the sand, clutching at the bleeding gash in her stomach. For a moment Xena's expression is one of shock, but then her face hardens.

XENA (to Livia):

Stay out of my dreams.

With a yell, Caesar charges her and thrusts his sword at her. Xena blocks the blow, kicks the sword out of his hand and runs him through. There is a brief flash of satisfaction in her face.

XENA:

And you, too.

Caesar collapses next to Livia. Xena turns and races toward the doorway, disappearing into it.

CUT TO

A dark tunnel, with a light visible at the end. Xena runs toward the light.

A bright flash of white light fills the screen.

DISSOLVE TO

Xena's room. Xena's eyes fly open and she sits up with a gasp.



Close-up on Ares, a look of relief and wild joy in his face.

Xena looks around, breathing hard. She smiles.

ARES (his voice almost cracking with suppressed emotion):
Welcome back.

He sweeps her up in his arms and kisses her.

As they break the kiss, Xena looks herself over, surprised.

XENA:
My wound--it's-- (look up at Ares) How?

ARES:
A little divine intervention.

He smiles at her.

CUT TO

The Visigoths coming over the walls of Moesia, using grappling hooks and sliding down ropes. Zoom in on Zenobia as she comes over the wall, slides down the rope and jumps on the ground. The Roman soldiers try to push the Visigoths back. With a fierce battle cry, Zenobia mows down the Romans in front of her.

Eve comes running toward the scene. Seeing Zenobia, she stops. They face each other, swords in hand, as the noise of the battle fades to silence and we:

DISSOLVE TO

[FLASHBACK]

The Romans battle Zenobia's army under the white walls of Palmyra, in the gleaming sun.



Zoom in on Zenobia and Livia fighting. Zenobia gets some good swings in but Livia dodges them all. For a while, Livia only seems to be going on the defensive, not the offensive. The two of them do a spectacular flip, passing each other in mid air and colliding swords, then landing on their feet and turning around to face each other again. Zenobia tries to stab Livia in the gut but Livia blocks the blade before it can hit her. Livia pushes back with her sword.

With a snarl, Zenobia slashes at Livia and gets her across the arm. Livia steps back, unfazed by the cut, and attacks Zenobia. They fight, both evenly matched.

In a flash of blue light, Ares appears on top of the wall, watching Zenobia and Livia fight and obviously enjoying it.

[END OF FLASHBACK]

Two swords clash in the air. The camera pulls back to show Zenobia and Eve fighting each other. Eve and Zenobia are evenly matched in battle, just as they were in the past, both of them swinging, kicking and thrusting their swords and then parrying those moves. Zenobia swings at Eve and she leaps up, letting the blade glide under her.

[FLASHBACK]

Livia slashes at Zenobia and gets her across the face, right over her eye. Blood swells on the long cut; Zenobia cries out but does not back down. She yells and throws her weight at Livia, their swords clashing. Livia yells and does a spinning back kick, disabling Zenobia for a moment as she is kicked to the ground. Zenobia quickly gets to her feet, wiping the blood from her eyes, and tries to attack Livia from the back but Livia meets her sword with a backhand movement.

[END OF FLASHBACK]

Eve and Zenobia fight. Zenobia seems to be getting the upper hand, backing Eve up a ramp that leads to the top of the city wall.

CUT TO



Gabrielle is fighting the Visigoths. Around them, the battle rages; the Romans are holding their ground but the Visigoths continue to attack.

A sudden "A-yi-yi-yi-yi-yi!" pierces the air.

Close-up on Gabrielle; her face lights up with joy as she turns toward the sound. The camera pulls back to see Haimon and Virgil turning their heads as well.

GABRIELLE (whispers):

Xena...

Pan to Xena, who arrives on the scene in a spectacular flip, kicking down two Visigoths in her path and knocking down a third with a punch. She runs toward Gabrielle and they hug quickly but warmly.



GABRIELLE (beside herself with joy):

Xena--you're all right!

XENA (grins):

No worse for the wear.

They break apart. More Visigoths stream toward them and they fight back to back, repelling the attackers with kicks and sword thrusts.

XENA:

Where's Eve?

CUT TO

Eve fighting Zenobia, now at the top of the wall. Close-up on Eve's face.

[FLASHBACK]

Livia and Zenobia fight. Zenobia is growing weak, half-blinded by the blood flowing down her face. Livia kicks the sword out of her hand, then kicks at her foot and causes Zenobia to stagger back. A second kick sends her sprawling on her back. Before Zenobia has a chance to recover, Livia is standing over her, the tip of her sword touching Zenobia's throat. Zenobia is breathing heavily.

ZENOBIA (through clenched teeth, panting):

Do it!

With a cruel smile, Livia glances over at the wall where she sees Ares standing. He is staring at her, his lips parted slightly, a gleam in his eye. She turns back to Zenobia.

LIVIA:

Oh no. That would be too easy. And I wouldn't pass up a chance at such a great trophy.

[END OF FLASHBACK]

Eve and Zenobia fight on the wall. A cry of "Retreat!" is heard off-camera and they stop for a moment to look around. The camera pans over the ground within the city walls. The Visigoths who have managed to scale the walls are all dead, wounded, or captured. Pan over to the other side of the wall, where the Visigoths are now fleeing from the Roman soldiers.

EVE (breathing heavily):

Zenobia, it's over.

ZENOBIA:

No! Not as long as you're alive, Livia!

She swings at Eve again.

EVE (dodges a blow):

I'm not Livia anymore. I'm... (her voice drops) I'm sorry about what I did to you.

Close-up on Zenobia.



ZENOBIA (chuckles bitterly):

It doesn't mean much now, does it?

She charges again and they spar; Eve is not attacking but only defending herself.

EVE (panting):

Zenobia--hate is the most destructive force in the world. You've let it consume you--destroy the good woman you used to be.

ZENOBIA:

So what? I have nothing left because of you.

EVE (parries another blow):

You can put this rage behind you. Trust me--I know.

ZENOBIA (snarls with rage):

Don't you *dare* preach to me!

Zenobia charges violently at Eve, throwing her against a turret on the wall and pushing up her sword against Eve's neck, blocked from delivering a killing blow only by Eve's own blade. Eve struggles to free herself and pushes Zenobia back. She loses her footing and goes over the edge of the wall.

Eve looks horrified and ashamed as she rushes to the edge of the wall. She looks over the wall and sees Zenobia hanging by one hand, holding onto a large gap between two stones. She lets go of her sword and it falls down with a loud clanging sound. Eve looks down at the ground to see jagged rocks below. She reaches down, extending her hand to Zenobia.

EVE:

Take my hand.

ZENOBIA:

I won't be a prisoner of Rome--not again.

EVE:

I promise you, that's not going to happen. Take my hand--now!

ZENOBIA (disgusted):

And owe my life to the Bitch of Rome? I'd rather die.



EVE:
No.

Smiling gleefully, Zenobia lets go of the crack in the wall and starts to fall as a horror-struck Eve clasps her hands to her mouth.

XENA (off-camera):
Eve!

Eve turns around, the horror in her face giving way to incredulous joy. Pan over to show Xena standing below.

EVE:
Mother--you're all right!



She rushes down the ramp and hugs Xena. A close-up of the two women embracing.

DISSOLVE TO

Xena and Gabrielle sitting at a table in a small dining room in the Roman military headquarters, eating.

GABRIELLE (smiles as she moves away her empty plate):
Well, there's definitely nothing wrong with your appetite.

XENA:

I'm telling you, I'm feeling better than ever.

GABRIELLE (suddenly serious):

I was--starting to worry you'd finally run out of lives.

XENA:

Nah, I should have another three or four left. (grins) I never got a chance to thank Ares properly--

GABRIELLE (smirks):

I'm sure you will.

Xena gives her a dirty look.

There is a flash of blue light and Ares materializes standing next to the table.

ARES:

I do believe I heard my name...

GABRIELLE:

Ares...thank you for what you did.

ARES (embarrassed, nods in acknowledgment):

Mm-hmm.

GABRIELLE (looks from Ares to Xena):

I think I'll go and see how Eve's doing. (her face turns sad) We're supposed to be going out for Orphelia's funeral in half an hour.

XENA (slightly distracted):

Right.

As Gabrielle leaves, Ares sits down next to Xena.

XENA:

Ares...

He takes her hands.

ARES:

There's something you should know. With Athena's blessing, any god can heal a mortal from a fatal wound--once.

XENA (impassive):

Oh.

ARES:

It's the law of the gods...made so that the gods' favorites couldn't cheat death over and over again. Athena herself couldn't break that law when you killed Ilainis.

XENA (in a near-whisper):

I see...



ARES:

So, the next time... (his voice trails off; he looks away, then looks up at Xena again) We can never truly be together, can we? As long as I'm a god and you're mortal--one day you'll be gone and I'll have to go on without you--for eternity.

Xena looks wistfully at him and touches his cheek.



XENA:

Mortality...immortality--it's just what separates us, Ares. All we can do is make the most of the time we have right now.

They look at each other for a long moment, then kiss. Their kiss grows passionate; Ares' hands caress Xena's shoulders as he kisses his way down her neck and to her chest. Xena throws her head back, her breath growing husky.



XENA (pushes him back, trying to keep control):
I--didn't mean that quite so--literally.

CUT TO

Eve in her room, packing a saddlebag. She is back in her Amazon clothing. There is a knock on the door.

EVE (turns):
Mother?

VIRGIL (off-camera):
No, it's me.

EVE (looks perturbed):
Oh...come in.

The door opens and Virgil comes in.

EVE:
Hello.

VIRGIL:
Eve...you've been avoiding me all this time. What's wrong?

EVE:
You were there yesterday when I watched Zenobia kill Orphelia before my eyes... (She looks down, and then raises tear-filled eyes toward Virgil) Just like you were there when I killed your father.

VIRGIL (looks pained):
Oh, Eve...

EVE:
And she wasn't even my real mother. (vehemently) You should hate me as much as Zenobia did.

VIRGIL:
I don't *believe* in hate. Eve--you know I lo--

EVE (interrupts):

No. Don't say it. Please don't. Don't make it any harder.



VIRGIL:

Make *what* harder? Are you saying that we shouldn't see each other again?

EVE:

Don't you think it's for the best?

VIRGIL (hotly):

No, I don't! I thought we had moved on and--



EVE:

You can't move on from some things, Virgil. What do you see in our future? We get married, have children? And some day we have to tell them that Mom killed Grandpa?

Virgil is momentarily at a loss for words. He looks down, then sideways, then at Eve again. He seems close to tears.

VIRGIL:

Maybe it's crazy. But I can't change the way I feel about you. Not Livia. Eve. The woman you've become.

EVE:

I care about you too. But I can't change the fact that your father died by my hand. Or that I still think about it when I look at you.

There is a long, awkward silence.

VIRGIL:

Do you want me to leave?

EVE (with an effort):

Yes. (pauses) Thank you for coming here and-- (her voice breaking) helping me out.

VIRGIL (in a neutral voice, obviously hurt):

You're welcome. Good-bye, Eve.

He turns around and walks out.

EVE (whispers tearfully):

Good-bye, Virgil...

DISSOLVE TO

The garden outside Orphelia's house. A large group of people is gathered around a pile of sticks, with a body wrapped in white cloth on top of it. Four large burning torches are positioned around the pyre.

Xena, Gabrielle, Haimon, Eve, and Nymphidius (his leg in a splint) are standing at the front of the group. Eve is wearing a black stole around her shoulders, in mourning. She approaches the pyre, picks up a torch and lights it. The wood goes up in flames, burning bright.

Eve returns to stand with the others.

NYMPHIDIUS:

You know, we never did find Zenobia's body.

GABRIELLE:

Maybe the retreating Visigoths took it away.

XENA:

Or maybe not. (grimly) From what you've told me, she seems like the type to have nine lives.

Eve stares pensively at the flames.

DISSOLVE TO

[FLASHBACK]



The city of Palmyra in flames. The camera pulls back to show a group of chained captive from Palmyra, Zenobia among them, watching the city burn. Nearby, Livia sits astride a horse, grinning gleefully.

[END OF FLASHBACK]

XENA:

Nymphidius, those Visigoths--don't think they're defeated. It may take them a while to rebuild their forces, but they'll be back.

NYMPHIDIUS:

Don't worry, the Empire will be ready for them.

GABRIELLE:

What's going to happen to the ones who've been captured?

NYMPHIDIUS (shrugs):

I'm sure the barbarians will make excellent gladiators.

Xena and Gabrielle shoot him disgusted looks. Eve looks intensely uncomfortable.

NYMPHIDIUS (to Xena and Gabrielle):

I do want to thank you for what you did to help protect this colony.

XENA:

We'd do the same for anyone.

NYMPHIDIUS:

Still, when I make my report to the emperor, I'd like to put you in for a special commendation--and honorary citizenship of Rome.

XENA (coldly):

Don't bother.

Nymphidius looks at her, surprised, then shrugs.



The camera zooms in on Eve's profile as she sadly watches the fire, and then pulls back to show Xena and Gabrielle looking at Eve, as we:

FADE OUT

THE END

[Allying with her greatest enemy proved to be a hazard to Xena's health during the production of this motion picture.]