

SHIPPER SEASON NINE

“The Outlaws”

Production #XWP193/SS59
Episode #9.12

Story By: Ryan
Written By: Ryan
Edited By: LadyKate
Collage By: Aurora
Images Gathered By: Aurora

Disclaimer

All characters and storylines that have appeared in the syndicated series Xena: Warrior Princess are a copyright and trademark of Universal and Renaissance Pictures. No infringement was intended during the writing of this script. All original characters and storylines are a copyright of the respective authors and of the Shipper Seasons. No script may be reproduced on a website elsewhere without the author's consent.

Logline

The Amazons lives are threatened yet again, but this time by a renegade tribe. Meanwhile Xena, Gabrielle, and Eve are faced with the difficult choice of losing the Amazon lands forever.

Airdate

July 24, 2006

TEASER

FADE IN

Amazon village. Dusk. A battle is in progress.

Within the city walls a battle between two groups of warrior women is taking place. The Amazons are fighting off a group of female warriors much like themselves except their faces have streaks of red war paint. The women they are fighting--the Renegade tribe--look a lot fiercer than the Amazons.

Pan to show Xena fighting off two of the Renegades. She whips around and elbows one, then flips the other over her shoulder. She isn't going easy on them.

CUT TO

Eve, who is fighting in another corner of the village. She has a gash on her shoulder and is fighting off a very large husky woman. Finally the woman grows visibly weary and Eve runs her through. She pulls out the sword quickly, letting the woman fall to the ground, in a sequence that just screams Livia.

The battle continues around her and then everything goes silent.

Begin to fade as we...

SMASH CUT TO

[FLASHBACK]

ONE WEEK BEFORE THE BATTLE

We fade into the night sky as the sounds of waves crash against a beach. The camera pulls down to reveal the shore of an island with a small fortress with a small wall built around it. A long dock extends out of the island.

"Shark Island Prison" appears across the screen.

The camera pulls in on two guards standing on the wall above the gates. One is leaning up against the wall while the other is looking out into the distance.

GUARD #1 (pointing out into the distance):
There is a ship approaching the shore!

The other guard gets up and looks out into the distance.

GUARD #2 (confused):
The next ship full of supplies wasn't supposed to be sent out until three days from now. (to the other guard) Go get a couple of the other guards and have them come to the gates, just in case.

Guard #1 heads off.

CUT TO

A large old ship cuts through the ocean. It looks as if it has seen many battles and it's tattered flags blow in the end. The waves crash against the sides.

DISSOLVE TO

The gates to the prison yard open and five guards rush out holding swords. They head towards the dock where the ship is waiting. No one is seen on the ship as the guards head towards it to see what is going on.

The guards approach the ship, anchored a couple feet away from the dock.

GUARD #1 (shouting out):
Hello?!

WOMAN'S VOICE (shouting):
Amazons, attack!

Suddenly a group of female war cries fill the air.

From the ship a group of warrior women flip onto the dock holding swords in their hands. They quickly begin to cut down the five guards, killing them and throwing them into the ocean. Nearly forty warrior women jump out of the ship and gather on the dock. Their faces cannot be seen through the nightfall. One of them motions for the others to follow her and they all head off the dock towards the gates.

CUT TO

Prison yard. A horn blows, alerting the other guards as the warrior women enter the gates. Other guards see them and begin to attack but the warrior women easily fight them off and kill them.

CUT TO

The prisoners' quarters. The large door opens and a beautiful, fierce-looking, dark-haired woman walks in, carrying a set of keys. She walks in as the other women in the jail cells jump up from their beds to see what is going on.

The woman carefully scans all of the jail cells as if looking for someone.

VOICE (off-camera):

Melanippe...it's about time you showed up.

The camera pulls around to show one of the jail cells at the very end, facing the hallway. Inside we notice a woman in dark black leather that has obviously seen some war days.

The camera pulls back on Melanippe. A smile comes across her face as she approaches the jail cell.

MELANIPPE (grinning):

We have missed you, Queen Andromache.

Melanippe takes one of the keys and places it in the lock and turns it quickly, unlocking the jail cell. As she does this the jail cells full of criminal women begin to erupt in shouts as they all reach out, wanting to be freed as well.

Andromache swiftly walks out of the jail cell.

ANDROMACHE (shouting out to the prisoners):

Quiet!

The shouts die down to murmurs, then settle into a tense silence.

ANDROMACHE:

I know you want to get out of this hellhole just as much as I do. But I am on a

mission. If we free you, then you must pledge to join in our cause and become part of my Amazon tribe. The days when we let men walk all over us have ended!

The woman in the jail cells begin to shout and cheer as Melanippe begins to unlock the doors.

The camera zooms in on Andromache as a smile comes across her face.

CUT TO

The dock. The warrior women are loading supplies into the boat as they all aboard, with some of the other female prisoners as well. In the background the Shark Island Prison is seen in flames.

The camera moves in on Andromache as she stares off into the distance with a determined look on her face. Melanippe stands by her side.

MELANIPPE:

While you were held here, we raided a village by the coast. We killed them all in your name, my Queen.

ANDROMACHE (irritated):

I am getting sick of raiding little fisherman villages. These prisoners have more than doubled our army. (sighs in frustration) Those foolish men expect us to attack now, but I will *not* be captured again. I am through with the pirate business.

MELANIPPE (softly):

So what now, my Queen?

Andromache puts her hand on Melanippe's shoulder. The flames of the prison yard illuminate their faces.

ANDROMACHE (smiling):

Now--we go home.

The camera pulls out to show a wide shot of the boat as we...

[END OF FLASHBACK]

FADE OUT

ACT ONE

FADE IN

We return to the present battle.

Bodies of the Amazons and Renegades are spread across the village.

The camera zooms in on Gabrielle who is fighting off a Renegade. She is fighting with both her sais. The blond haired Renegade goes back to strike Gabrielle with her sword, but Gabrielle blocks the blow with her sai. She then uses the other sai and plunges forward. She rips the sai away fast.

The Renegade falls to the ground in slow motion. The camera zooms in on her face, her blonde hair covering her wide-open eyes.

The sounds of battle begin to drain out as we...

SMASH CUT TO

[FLASHBACK]

EIGHT HOURS BEFORE THE BATTLE

An overhead shot of the Amazon village and the burnt-out remains of the Temple of Artemis nearby. Amazons are clearing away the rubble. The camera zooms down, then pans to Xena and Gabrielle loading charred rubble and debris into a cart.

EVE (off-camera):

Glad you could stay another day.

XENA:

Yep. Still cleaning up the gods' messes.

GABRIELLE (throwing a large stone into the cart):

Well, technically, it's our mess. Artemis wanted to rebuild the temple. We burned it down.

XENA (grimly):

Well, *technically* the gods' mess is our mess because we're right in the middle of it. They know they need worshipers to survive and they'll stop at nothing to get them.

EVE (quietly):

What will *you* stop at--Mother?

Gabrielle pauses and gives her a sharp look, as does Xena.

XENA:

What do you mean?

EVE:

When you thought Artemis was threatening me, you wanted to get a dagger that could kill gods. Now--

XENA (shakes the dust and soot off her hands in a vehement gesture):

If it's about protecting the lives and freedom of innocent people--

Eve gives her an uneasy look. She stops abruptly, her words hanging in the air in a tense silence.

GABRIELLE (trying to lighten the mood):

Well, at least I don't think Artemis will be back. The Amazons are safe.

XENA (guardedly):

For now.

CUT TO

The blonde Renegade (the one we saw Gabrielle kill in the present-day battle) walks along the field with the rest of the Renegade army.

BLONDE RENEGADE (smiling):

I remember playing in this field with my sisters. We always came out here after chores and training...

MELANIPPE (softly):

So many memories...

Queen Andromache, leading the Renegades through the field, brings up her hand in a halting motion. The camera pulls close to her shoulder to reveal her point of view...

DISSOLVE TO

The Lanis settlement.

The camera zooms in on the villagers hard at work: bringing in crops from their farms and such, selling supplies at the market, etc. We recognize this as the village from "Grey Areas."

Teras, the leader of the village, walks through the streets examining the progress.

CUT TO

Hillside. Andromache looks down on the village. Melanippe stands by her side.

MELANIPPE (confused):

Villagers--men--on Amazon lands?

ANDROMACHE (irritated):

The Amazons have grown weak. This doesn't surprise me. Everything started to go downhill once Marga became Queen. This is our chance to restore the word "Amazon" to its former glory. (drawing her sword from a scabbard on her back) And we can start-- (points her sword at the village) right here.

All of the Renegade Amazons behind her draw their swords as well.

ANDROMACHE (grinning):

Let's go!

They all head down the hill towards the village.

CUT TO

Village. A young boy quickly runs towards the village, out of breath.

Teras notices the boy and the fear in his eyes and approaches him as the other villagers gather around.

TERAS (to the boy):

Are you all right?

BOY (panting):

Those warrior women...armed...they are coming towards the village. I saw them on the hills.

The villagers react with evident fear and anger.

TERAS (ordering):

Get the children into the meeting hall, and grab anything you can use as weapons.

VILLAGER #1 (shouting):

We told them to stay away from our village, it's time to stop those barbaric women once and for all!

All of the villagers shout and mutter in assent as they grab anything they can use as a weapon.

CUT TO

Another part of the village. Villagers all hurrying around, some looking fearful, others determined. Caleb (the seventeen-year old boy from "Grey Areas" and "Twilight Eve") comes out of his house to see what is going on. He sees his mother running toward him.

CALEB (confused):

Mother--what's going on?

CALEB'S MOTHER:

Those Amazon women are headed towards the village, they have weapons!

CALEB (confused):

But mother--they're not our enemies!

CALEB'S MOTHER:

Well, they don't look friendly, that's for sure. (in an authoritative tone) I want you to go with the other children to the meeting hall; you'll be safe there.

CALEB:

I'm not a--

CALEB'S MOTHER (urgently):

Go! I'll be there soon.

Caleb's mother rushes off. Caleb stares after her for a moment, then heads toward the edge of the village.

CUT TO

Village entrance. The village men and some of the women have gathered there, holding makeshift weapons. The Renegade Amazons (with Andromache leading them) enter the village, surprised to see the villagers so prepared.

TERAS (angrily):

We told you to stay away from here!

Andromache doesn't say anything, merely smiling at the villagers' fear.

TERAS (angrily):

What do you want? You agreed to stay away from our village.

ANDROMACHE (surprised and amused):

Agreed? (to the others) That must have been Queen Marga. I didn't think she was going to be *this* soft.

TERAS (forcefully):

What do you want?!

ANDROMACHE (hissing):

Our lands back!

With a fierce yell, Andromache charges towards the villagers as the Renegades behind her do the same.

The camera pans over to Caleb watching the confrontation from behind the villagers. He quickly realizes something is wrong and rushes off.

As he runs through the village, he sees other Renegades attacking the villagers everywhere and cutting down villagers, young and old. Some villagers try to fight back but without much success.

Caleb dives into a side street and continues to run.

CUT TO

Caleb runs into a large wooden building. A group of children of different ages are there; they turn to the door, a little fearfully, at hearing Caleb. One, a girl of about fourteen with long blond hair whom we recognize as Caleb's sister (from "Grey Areas"), looks up at him and then jumps to her feet.

ALISSA:

Caleb! Is everything--

CALEB (forcefully):

Come on. We have to get these kids out of here!

The children start crying as Alissa and Caleb steer them to the doorway.

CALEB:

Go to the south end of the village. Follow the river downstream until you make your way to the Amazon village.

ALISSA (fearfully):

Okay, okay...

CALEB:

Find their Queen, Eve, and tell her we are under attack. Hurry!

ALISSA (scared):

What about you? What about mom?

CALEB:

I'll go find her. Don't worry!

CUT TO

A long shot of the edge of the village as Alissa and the children head out into the woods.

CUT TO

Caleb running through the village. The air is filled with screams and the war-cries of the Renegades as they chase and kill the settlers. The ground is covered with the bodies of dead and dying villagers.

The camera then pulls over to show Caleb's point of view as Andromache swings her sword forward stabbing Caleb's mother. She pulls her sword out and Caleb's mother falls to the ground.

CALEB (screaming):

NO!

Caleb rushes forward in fury and rage, attempting to attack Andromache.

ANDROMACHE:

Foolish boy.

CALEB (screaming):

You killed my mother!

Andromache swings her fist forward, striking him across the face, and then sending him to the ground, knocking him unconscious.

ANDROMACHE:

She shouldn't have been on my land.

A close-up on Andromache's face as she smiles.

[END OF FLASHBACK]

Back to the present battle.

The camera pans fast to another section of the village. A small group is fighting in front of the Queen's Hut. Four Renegades (all look like the prisoners) are fighting off three Amazons. All three Amazons look young, fighting nervously. We recognize the one in front as Myopi, an African Amazon.

Myopi fights off the strong Shark Island Prisoner with swift moves. While Myopi fights with a staff, the Renegade fights with a double-sided axe. Suddenly, Myopi loses her footing and the Renegade swings her axe forward. The other two Amazons scream as Myopi is struck in the chest.

[FLASHBACK]

MYOPI (shouting):

Queen Eve!

SEVEN HOURS BEFORE THE BATTLE ATTACK

The charred remnants of the temple are still being cleared. Myopi comes running toward Xena, Gabrielle and Eve who are helping clear the rubble.

MYOPI (out of breath):

Queen Eve!

Eve turns to Myopi.

EVE (alarmed):

What is it?

MYOPI:

You have to come back to the village--quick!

Eve rushes off as Xena and Gabrielle share concerned looks and then follow her.

DISSOLVE TO

The Amazon village square. A small groups of Amazons have gathered around a group of children--Alissa, and the other six children, who are scared and crying.

Eve comes up, with Xena, Gabrielle and Myopi behind her. The Amazons stand aside and she sees the children.

EVE (confused):

What's going on?

ALISSA:

My brother Caleb told me to come find you. The village is being attacked.

EVE:

By whom?

ALISSA (trembling):

I...I don't know, I never saw them. (pointing to one of the boys) He said he saw warrior women headed our way. Some others thought they were the Amazons.

Eve looks confused.

ALISSA (holding back tears):

Our families are in danger. You have to help them.

Eve reflects for a moment, then quickly turns to Myopi.

EVE:

Sound the alarm. Have the Amazons get their weapons and gather at the gates.

MYOPI:

Yes, my queen.

She rushes off.

EVE (to Alissa and the other children):

I want you and the others to stay here where you will be safe.

Alissa manages a nod as Eve exchanges a worried look with Gabrielle and Eve.

GABRIELLE:

Warrior women. (puzzled) Who could they be?

XENA:

Anyone. Bandits, a group of raiders--

EVE:

Could it be another Amazon tribe? One that didn't join--

GABRIELLE (interrupts vehemently):

An Amazon tribe, attacking a defenseless village? I'll never believe that.

XENA:

Let's just get over there and find out what's going on.

CUT TO

A group of about thirty Amazons kneel down at the edge of the forest, the village a short distance in front of them. Eve peeks through the branches and sees the Renegades in the destroyed village, walking about and apparently looting. She makes a hand motion to Cyane, who moves along back through the forest with a dozen others.

Eve continues to watch; then suddenly tenses, hearing a sound. She turns to see a group of swords pointed at her and the other Amazons still with her. Pan up to Andromache who is smiling as she stands over her, in front of the other Renegades.

ANDROMACHE (grinning):

Finally, reunited with our sisters...

Andromache stares at Eve with curiosity, her eyes drifting from Eve's Queen's necklace to her face.

ANDROMACHE:

The new queen. (puzzled) I know I've seen you before--and yet you weren't one of the tribe under Marga.

Eve is taken aback. Suddenly Xena's war cry fills the air. A group of a dozen Amazons jump down from the trees, surrounding the Renegades. Xena and Gabrielle leap down as well, their weapons pointed at the Renegades.

Using the distraction, Eve and the others quickly get to their feet and draw their weapons.

EVE (lowers her sword):

We can resolve this without violence!

ANDROMACHE (sneers):

No, we can't. (to the Renegades) Amazons, attack!

The Renegades charge forward as the Amazons defend themselves.

Andromache attacks Eve, striking out with her sword. Eve blocks it and then pushes her back as Xena comes from another direction and kicks Andromache in the side, sending her to the ground. Andromache rolls and then leaps to her feet as Xena attacks her. Their swords clash and they spar.

A montage of shots as Gabrielle fights Menalippe while Cyane, Myopi, Antiope, and the other Amazons fight off the Renegades.

Meanwhile, Xena continues to fight off Andromache (who has some impressive skills) while Eve fights with a brown-haired Renegade who has a scar across her face. The brown-haired Renegade screams as she fights, using all of her fury to attack Eve. Finally, Eve manages to knock her down to the ground.

The camera zooms in on the Renegade's face, filled with helpless rage, as Eve moves the point of her sword over her, to keep her down. Pan to Eve's face, bearing a horrified look of sudden recognition.

Eve stares down at the brown haired warrior, shocked and with a loss of words. Then she moves the sword and steps back. The Renegade jumps up, looking at her in shock and anger.

Pan to Xena as she flips up and sends Andromache flying back, causing her to drop her sword.

Pan back to Eve.

EVE (shouts):
Amazons--retreat!

Antiope, who is fighting off one of the Renegades with a sword, pushes the Renegade back and then heads towards Myopi as they make a retreat. The camera then zooms in her point of view as she notices Melanippe fighting off an Amazon.

ANTIOPE (whispers):
Melanippe?

The camera zooms in on Melanippe, who turns toward Antiope as if she's heard the whisper. The camera pans to Melanippe, then to Antiope as they stare at each other, both looking as if they've just seen a ghost. The camera pulls back to show Myopi grabbing Antiope.

MYOPI (urging her):
Come on, let's go!

Myopi pulls Antiope into the woods and away from the attacking Renegades.

The other Amazons push the Renegades back and then start their retreat into the forest, with Xena and Gabrielle bringing up the rear. Some of the Renegades begin to give chase after them. Pan to Andromache rising to her feet.

ANDROMACHE (yells forcefully to the Renegades):

Let them go! (her voice drops) For now. (she grins wickedly) Make sure you are prepared for my homecoming...(hissing) Livia.

[END OF FLASHBACK]

Back to the battle.

Eve swings her staff around and sends a Renegade to the ground.

CYANE (shouting, off screen):

Eve!

Cyane rushes up to her. She has a cut on her lip and her sword is covered in blood. Around them the struggle between the Amazons and Renegades continues.

CYANE (out of breath):

Myopi's dead.

The camera pulls in on Eve's expression and then quickly pulls out to show a wide-shot of the battle as we...

FADE OUT

ACT TWO

FADE IN

Present battle.

Three Renegades corner in a young Amazon between two huts. The young Amazon grips to her sword, scared to death. Suddenly a familiar whizzing is heard and the chakram flies past them.

The camera follows the chakram as it strikes the hut and then whips back and strikes each Renegade in the face one by one.

The camera pulls on Xena as she extends her hand outward to catch the chakram. With the chakram in her hand she whips around pointing it at...

Ares. He stands motionless with the chakram blade at his neck.

ARES:

We need to talk.

XENA:

Not *now*!

SMASH CUT TO

[FLASHBACK]

Amazon village square. The older Amazons are tending to the wounded. Eve is wrapping a bandage around Myopi's arm, while Gabrielle is tending to a younger Amazon whose arm seems to be broken.

Xena comes up behind Eve as she finishes bandaging Myopi's arm.

XENA (softly, to Eve):

You all right?

Gabrielle walks up behind Xena.

EVE (shaking her head):

I saw someone...this girl I was fighting. (With a guilty look) She was one of the Amazons I enslaved when I attacked them--years ago. (the camera pans on Xena's uncertain face) I... (with an effort) I ordered her thrown overboard when I couldn't sell them. She must have somehow survived.

Gabrielle looks shocked; Xena looks sick for a moment, then puts a comforting hand on Eve's shoulder.

EVE (softly):

The leader--I think she may have recognized me. I can't remember seeing her here before, though.

VOICE (off-screen):

Her name is Andromache.

The camera pulls around to show Othila, one of the members of the Amazon Council, and one of the older Amazons (in her forties).

OTHILA:

She was in the Amazon tribe under Marga's rule. She was always challenging Marga; she wanted the Amazons to be stronger, to attack others, to seek more land and more power. After your--

She stops herself; Eve looks away quickly.

OTHILA (continues):

After Livia's raid, when the tribe was weakened, she thought she'd seize the chance. She issued the royal challenge to Marga and lost. Then she and about a dozen other Amazons tried to overthrow Marga. They were banished, and Andromache said they would try to rescue the sisters Livia sold into slavery. But they never came back.

EVE (remorseful):
Until now.

GABRIELLE (confused):
But there were at least fifty women here. You said Andromache only had about a dozen followers.

OTHILA:
Somehow their numbers have grown. (noticing Eve's guilt) My Queen, you cannot blame yourself--

EVE (brusquely):
Of course I can.

There is a tense silence.

EVE (continues):
What do we do now?

XENA:
Don't underestimate them, Eve. They know this village--these lands. And they believe all this is rightfully theirs. (grimly) This will be a fight to the death.

Eve thinks a moment, then looks resolute.

EVE:
If we let it be a fight.

XENA:
What do you mean?

EVE:
We can try to talk to them, offer them a place in the tribe. They're still Amazons. After all the losses the Amazons have already suffered--can we really afford to lose more?

GABRIELLE (uncertain):
They just attacked and slaughtered innocent villagers. That means--

EVE:
That means what? That they don't deserve a second chance?

A tense silence.

EVE (to Gabrielle):
Gabrielle, you once talked about ending the cycle of violence. Now--

GABRIELLE (bitterly):

Now I've learned that sometimes you just can't do that, no matter how much you try.

EVE:

But have you even tried?

Xena and Gabrielle exchange uneasy looks. Gabrielle looks down, clearly disturbed.

XENA (reluctantly):

Eve is right. (to Eve) Talk to them. But be prepared for--anything that happens. You can't trust them.

EVE (smiles wanly):

Don't worry. (To Othila) Get the children to safety. Then take four women with you and go to the settlement--see what you can do to help the survivors.

OTHILA:

Yes, my queen.

She walks away.

EVE:

We need to find someone who'll be willing to go and negotiate with these--outlaws.

Antiope steps forward.

ANTIOPE:

I'll go.

Xena, Gabrielle and Eve turn to her, surprised.

EVE (warily):

Why you?

ANTIOPE:

Because I think I know where to find them. And I know one of them--very well.

Xena, Gabrielle and Eve look at her expectantly.

[END OF FLASHBACK]

The present battle. Near the Council Chambers.

The dust and smoke of the battle clears and we see Melanippe standing still, staring ahead of her, obviously searching out something or someone on the battlefield.

Quick cut to Antiope in another part of the village, also scanning the battlefield for someone.

Cut back to Melanippe.

WOMAN (shouting off-camera):

Traitor!

The camera pulls back to show a woman warrior running toward Melanippe; she is seen from the back and we don't know if she is an Amazon or a Renegade. They spar briefly before Melanippe runs the woman through and pulls out the sword, now covered in blood. Everything begins to wash out as we...

SMASH CUT TO

[FLASHBACK]

SIX HOURS BEFORE THE BATTLE

Lanis settlement.

The village is in complete ruins. The fires are dying down with most of the houses burned to charred rubble. There are dead bodies and wounded people lying everywhere.

A body lying face down, on the top of another body, starts to move and then rolls over, landing on the ground face down. The man who was pinned under it sits up. It's Teras, the village leader. He is bloodied and bruised, and in very bad shape. He stumbles to his feet and starts to walk unsteadily, then stumbles and falls.

DISSOLVE TO

Teras stumbling through the village. A brown horse, neighing in alarm, runs through the village street.

TERAS (weakly):

Here, boy!

The horse neighs, eyeing him nervously, then comes to a halt.

TERAS:

Good boy.

He breaks into a cough, wiping the blood from his mouth. Then he grabs onto the horse's bridle and starts pulling himself up into the saddle. He falls with a groan, then picks himself up again and resumes his effort. Finally, with a supreme effort, he manages to straddle the horse.

TERAS (urges the horse forward):

Yah!

The horse trots off, then speeds up.

CUT TO

Forest. The Renegades head through the forest. They have blood on their faces--most likely from the dead villagers--using it as war paint.

Andromache stops and turns to the other Renegades.

ANDROMACHE:

Our cause is even greater now. Livia, the woman who slaughtered our sisters, is leading the Amazons. I thought I had recognized her. After Phania's story, there is no doubt.

PHANIA (the brown-haired Renegade with the scar who fought Eve before):

I'd never forget her face.

ANDROMACHE:

We kill her--then the rest will follow like sheep.

One of the Renegades looks towards Andromache.

RENEGADE #1 (uncertain):

That other Amazon that fought you...

ANDROMACHE (angrily):

What about her?

RENEGADE #1:

She won't be easy to defeat.

ANDROMACHE:

Nothing worth taking is easy. (thoughtfully) That woman--her armor, that round blade at her belt--I could swear it was Xena--the legendary Warrior Princess. Maybe all those stories are true--about her and Gabrielle coming back.

RENEGADE #2 (fearful):

Xena and Gabrielle? My Queen--

ANDROMACHE (angrily):

They're just two women. We take out their Queen, the rest of the tribe will fall. (determined) I know it. We have to kill Livia--and anyone else who stands in our path.

Pan to Melanippe, who stands apart from the other Amazons, looking troubled.

CUT TO

Forest. A small abandoned cabin comes to view. A large group of Renegades stand outside the cabin.

CUT TO

Inside the cabin. Andromache pulls a couple of the floorboards loose. Melanippe and four other Renegades have gathered in the cabin. Andromache reaches underneath

the floorboards and pulls out a small bottle with a wick at the end of it. It looks to be a bomb of some sort.

ANDROMACHE:

I hid these here, years ago, when I was planning a rebellion. It's time we put these to use.

RENEGADE #1:

There aren't that many.

ANDROMACHE:

That's why we have to use them wisely. We're not storming the village yet.

There's a shrill whistle outside the cabin. The Renegades leap to their feet, drawing their swords. Andromache quickly puts the explosives back in the hiding place.

VOICE (off-camera):

One of the Amazons is coming!

ANDROMACHE (somewhat puzzled):

One?

CUT TO

Outside the cabin. The Renegades come out, swords drawn. A few other Renegades are standing watch outside. A lone Amazon approaches; it's Antiope.

MELANIPPE:

Antiope! Sister!

ANDROMACHE (turns to Melanippe):

So this is your little sister. (sword drawn, she approaches Antiope) Sister or not, she's probably a spy.

MELANIPPE (imploringly):

Andromache, don't--

Antiope takes out her sword. Melanippe looks bewildered. Antiope drops the sword to the floor.

ANTIOPE:

I'm here to talk.

A tense silence; finally Andromache sheathes her sword.

ANDROMACHE:

So talk.

CUT TO

The Greek city of Ascania comes to view. We recognize this as the city from "Grey Areas" that has ownership of the Lanis settlement.

CUT TO

A dining room. King Melodic and his queen are at a large table, dining with courtiers. The din of conversation fills the room.

The doors burst open with a clatter, making everyone look up in alarm. A guard comes in.

KING MELODIC (shocked):
What is going on?

GUARD:
Sire...a messenger just rode into the city, badly wounded...with bad news...

Alarmed mutterings among the dinner guests in which one can make out the words "War," "Attack," "We're in danger!"

KING MELODIC (rises quickly):
Where is he?

The king strides toward the doors and rushes out into the hallway.

CUT TO

The hallway. Several servants have gathered, looking alarmed. Two guards are supporting a barely conscious Teras.

KING MELODIC (recognizing him):
By the gods...you're from that settlement, Lanis!

TERAS (gasping):
My lord...

KING MELODIC:
What happened, man?

TERAS (barely able to speak):
The settlement--attacked...destroyed...I rode as fast as I could--

KING MELODIC (distraught and furious):
Attacked, by whom?

TERAS:
The...Amazons.

He passes out, slumping on the guards' arms.

KING MELODIC:

Get this man some help! (mutters) They will pay for this.

CUT TO

The forest. The Renegades are gathered around a campfire over which some rabbits and birds are being roasted. Antiope is with them, obviously uneasy.

MELANIPPE:

I can't believe this. You're telling me that Livia changed. Livia, the Bitch of Rome, the woman who murdered and enslaved--

ANTIOPE (confidently):

I'm telling you, Melanippe--she *has* changed. I have never seen anyone more devoted to the Amazon nations.

MENALIPPE (snaps):

What does it matter? She's still a killer! You know, we managed to find five of the Amazons she captured. *Five*. Do you know what she did? When she found out that she couldn't sell them into slavery, she threw them overboard. *In chains*. (She points to the brown-haired Renegade who had been fighting Eve before.) There, Phania can give you a firsthand account...if you're not worried about losing your dinner. A few of them had managed to unlock their chains while still on the ship, and then free themselves when they were thrown overboard. They made it to a small island where we found them. They had to watch the others drown--dragged down by the weight of their shackles. Some of them were eaten by--

ANTIOPE (sickened):

Stop.

MELANIPPE:

And you accept this woman as your queen?

Antiope stares at her sister for a moment.

ANTIOPE (vehemently):

I accept you as my sister.

MELANIPPE (taken aback):

What are you talking about?

ANTIOPE (angrily, tears in her eyes):

You and your friends slaughtered innocent villagers, Melanippe. And you call yourselves Amazons?

ANDROMACHE:

Yes. The *true* Amazons--ones who would never tolerate interlopers on their lands.

Antiope shakes her head.

ANTIOPE:

Andromache--there is no need for us to go to war. Our numbers are already small enough.

ANDROMACHE (snorts):

Thanks to your new queen.

ANTIOPE:

Thanks to many things. The point is--we shouldn't be fighting!

CUT TO

A field outside the Amazon village. It looks like the same field where Xena saw Ares in the "Scorpion/Swan" scene in PATH OF VENGEANCE. She stops and looks around.

XENA:

Ares. Come on out--you don't have to play hide and seek with me...

Ares materializes behind her in a flash of blue light.

ARES (chuckles):

As if I could.

Xena turns toward him and manages a smile, although it looks a little forced, as if she is trying to read through him.

ARES:

So...someone is picking on the Amazons again. If it's not one thing, it's another.

Xena looks troubled but is trying not to show it.

XENA (softly):

War and bloodshed have always been part of this tribe. Whether I like it or not.

ARES:

Well, if you could stop Artemis, I'm sure you can handle a ragtag bunch of Amazon outcasts.

Xena stares off into the distant, and there is a short silence between them.

ARES (continues):

But you know...

XENA (warily):

Yes?

ARES:

They might have been better off with me as their patron god. I offered them my

protection when Varia was queen. Of course, you had to show her the error of her ways...

Xena whips around and stares at him intently.

XENA:

Is this about getting more worshipers? (off his heavy stare) It is, isn't it?

ARES (shrugs):

Forget it. What's done is done.

XENA (awkwardly):

So...how are things... (trails off)

ARES:

...on Olympus? (a note of sarcasm creeps into his voice) Great, just great. No one else has died. (after a tense pause, he shakes his head) More gods find their powers weakening. (he looks at her intently) We all know about Eve's dream--from Artemis.

XENA (in a near-whisper):

What?

ARES:

When the mortals turn their back on the gods, the gods will fall.

They stare at each other for a moment.

ARES:

So right now, it's not just about ego. Having worshipers is--a matter of life and death.

XENA (quietly):

Life and death....

He reaches out to stroke her face; she puts her hand on top of his and they stand still for a moment, looking at each other.

ARES:

See you later.

He vanishes. Xena stands still, lost in thought.

[END OF FLASHBACK]

Present battle.

Xena flips through the air, landing on the ground and unsheathing her sword. Gabrielle is shown backing up next to her.

GABRIELLE (out of breath):

It's about time...

The camera pulls around to show five Renegades charging towards them. Xena and Gabrielle assume a battle stance. The camera pulls back. We see Ares materialize on the roof of a hut, watching intently.

[FLASHBACK]

FIVE HOURS BEFORE THE BATTLE

A small abandoned temple of Ares comes to view. The camera pulls around to show two rats fighting over a small crumb. The door creaks open and the wind brushes the dead leaves away from the entrance. The rats scurry off.

Footsteps walk towards the altar. The camera pulls up to reveal King Melodic. He approaches the altar, which is covered in dust.

KING MELODIC (uncertain):

Ares, God of War, for years my people have lived in peace and I have not needed your service, but now things have changed. I am preparing for war and I ask for your blessing--in return for my city's allegiance.

ARES (off-camera):

I'm listening.

King Melodic turns around to see Ares leaning against a pillar.

KING MELODIC (shocked):

Ares, God of War?

ARES (nonchalantly):

In person.

King Melodic looks to be star-struck, not knowing how to handle himself.

KING MELODIC (stammers):

I--I didn't expect...

ARES:

That I would actually answer? Well, I did. So, what do you want?

KING MELODIC (kneels and bows his head):

Your help. Your blessing--for a war. It's--it's for a good cause, to strike back against barbarians who have savagely attacked my people. If it goes well, I pledge to you that I will rebuild this temple, resume the sacrifices--whatever it takes.

ARES:

You have my blessing, and whatever help you need.

KING MELODIC (overjoyed, rises to his feet):

Thank you, lord Ares. I will move on the Amazons right away.

Close-up on Ares, who looks momentarily taken aback.

ARES:

The--Amazons. (pauses) You're going to war against the Amazons.

KING MELODIC:

Yes, my lord. They are the ones who attacked my people. A settlement--built on their lands, it's true...but we had an agreement! They broke it unprovoked. I have no choice but to strike back.

The camera zooms in on Ares' troubled, conflicted expression.

KING MELODIC (doubtful):

Are they--under your protection?

ARES (dryly):

No.

KING MELODIC:

So--I still have your blessing?

After a moment of silence, Ares nods slowly.

ARES:

You do.

King Melodic smiles, satisfied with his approval, then carries as if he wants to ask something else.

ARES (irritated):

What else do you want?

KING MELODIC:

Well...the thing is, my lord Ares...when we first had trouble with the Amazons a couple of months ago, Xena--

Pan to Ares, who flinches slightly.

KING MELODIC (continues):

--the Warrior Princess, threatened that if I ever attacked the Amazons I'd have to deal with her. I, huh...

ARES (sarcastic):

So you're scared that Xena will crush you and your army?

KING MELODIC (embarrassed):

Well--she is a very great warrior, my lord--and one hears that she has your special favor--so I was wondering...

Ares reflects for a moment, then sighs.

ARES:

Don't worry about it. I'll deal with Xena.

King Melodic smiles in acknowledgment.

KING MELODIC:

Thank you, my lord. In your name--I will lead the attack myself.

A grim-looking Ares vanishes in a flash of blue light as we:

[END OF FLASHBACK]

FADE OUT

ACT THREE

FADE IN

[FLASHBACK]

ONE HOUR BEFORE THE BATTLE

An overhead view of a valley with a large army riding across it.

DISSOLVE TO

A wide shot of the army approaching; King Melodic is riding at the head of it.

Ares' stern expression is superimposed over the screen.

CUT TO

The Renegades stealing through the forest.

CUT TO

The walls of the Amazon village. Gabrielle and Cyane are perched on the walls, watching intently. Amazon archers stand nearby.

CYANE (to Gabrielle):

Look--someone's coming!

Gabrielle narrows her eyes, as the camera pulls around to show her point of view. Three female figures emerge from the woods.

As they approach the camera zooms in to show Antiope with Andromache and Melanippe behind her.

GABRIELLE:

It's them. I'll go alert Eve. (Thinks a moment, then to Cyane) Make sure they're not armed.

DISSOLVE TO

A long shot of Andromache and Melanippe surrendering their weapons to Cyane and another Amazon.

CUT TO

Antiope leading Andromache and Melanippe through the village.

MELANIPPE (looking around):

It hasn't changed much.

ANTIOPE (with a little anger in her voice):

No. But *you* have.

ANDROMACHE (sarcastic):

You sound a little bitter. What's the matter?

ANTIOPE (gives her a cutting look):

Nothing. Let's just go see the Queen.

CUT TO

Eve pacing around somewhat nervously in the Queen's hut. Xena and Gabrielle stand by watching her.

EVE:

At least she agreed to talk.

GABRIELLE:

How do you know she's not trying to trick you? They're probably just stalling for time.

Xena gives Gabrielle a troubled look.

EVE:

Are you saying that we shouldn't even *try* to talk to them?

GABRIELLE (sighs):

No, of course not. But look, this woman is not just a victim of bad circumstances. Othila said she tried to overthrow Marga before. If you let her back into the tribe--

EVE (interrupts):

Right now, I just want to prevent a war.

XENA (brusquely):

No one is talking about *trusting* her, Gabrielle. We're well-guarded against a surprise attack.

EVE (sighs):

Right. They'll be here any moment...maybe you should go.

GABRIELLE:

Eve--this is my tribe too.

EVE:

Let me handle this on my own. (imploringly) *Please*.

Xena looks from Gabrielle to Eve, then takes Gabrielle's arm and steers her toward the doorway.

XENA:

Come on, Gabrielle--let's go check the defenses by the walls.

GABRIELLE (to Eve):

Be careful.

XENA (jokes uneasily):

I thought that was *my* line. Come on.

Xena and Gabrielle start to leave. In the doorway, they run into Antiope and another Amazon who are escorting Andromache and Melanippe. Xena and Andromache exchange a curious, unfriendly look.

Xena and Gabrielle leave while Andromache, Melanippe, Antiope and the other Amazon come in. There is a short, tense silence.

EVE:

Sit down.

ANDROMACHE (mockingly):

For talks with the Bitch of Rome?

Eve flinches slightly.

EVE:

The past is the past, Andromache. We need to talk about the present, and the future.

ANDROMACHE (still the same mocking tone):

The past is the past. That must be your *favorite* line. Livia of Rome--Queen of the Amazons.

EVE:

My name is Eve.

ANDROMACHE (continues, unfazed):

Who did you have to *kill* to get the job?

Her barbs are clearly getting to Eve, who tries not to show it.

ANTIOPE:

Eve inherited her right of caste from Queen Gabrielle.

ANDROMACHE (to Eve):

I see your flunky does the talking for you. Does she do your fighting as well?

EVE (exasperated):

Andromache, I did not ask you here to trade insults.

ANDROMACHE:

Well, I hope it wasn't to trade pleasantries because I can assure you--

Eve strides up to her briskly and stops, face to face with her. Andromache is somewhat taken aback.

EVE (resolute):

I want to stop this war. We can't afford any more losses. And yes, I know that that's partly my fault. But that makes me all the more determined to stop the fighting. This was your tribe--these were your sisters. You can still come back.

ANDROMACHE:

Under *your* leadership? Never.

EVE:

What makes you think you're better than I was, Andromache? You destroyed a village full of innocent people.

ANDROMACHE:

Because *you* allowed interlopers to live on our lands.

EVE:

And that justified pointless slaughter?

ANDROMACHE:

It wasn't pointless. It was a way to send a message--that the Amazon nation is reborn, with a new purpose--a new spirit.

EVE:

What spirit? The spirit of murder?

ANDROMACHE:

The spirit of strength. (She looks disdainfully at Eve) I know the story of how Gabrielle became queen. That was a mistake. The mask should have gone to Velasca. She was a true Amazon--one who wanted a strong, fierce nation--

EVE (restraining her anger):

This is not getting us anywhere, Andromache. What do you want?

ANDROMACHE:

I want my tribe back--and I'm not coming back except as queen. You want to avoid a war? Then fight me. I want the royal challenge.

Eve stares at her, pondering this.

EVE:

You were banished. You're not a part of this tribe anymore.

ANDROMACHE:

I'm more a part of it than you'll ever be.

EVE:

You challenged Marga--and when you lost, you continued to plot against her. The answer is no.

ANDROMACHE (sarcastic):

I knew you'd say that...my Queen.

She lunges suddenly at Eve, elbows her in the stomach and wrestles her down. The other Amazon rushes toward them with a cry of alarm but Melanippe kicks her legs out from under her and sends her sprawling to the floor.

ANTIOPE (cries out):

Melanippe--no!

She rushes toward Melanippe, who assumes a combat stance.

MELANIPPE:

Stay out of this, Antiope! Livia has to die!

Zoom in on Eve and Andromache as they struggle. Andromache goes for Eve's neck and nearly succeeds in grabbing it but Eve manages to grab her wrists and throw her off.

As the other Amazon scrambles to her feet, Andromache leaps up, grabs an oil lamp from the table and hurls it at the wall. A sheet of flame goes up.

ANTIOPE:

No!

Close-up on Andromache as she lets out a loud, piercing war cry.

CUT TO

Phania and several other Renegades hiding out in the trees by the village.

Andromache's war cry is heard in the distance.

RENEGADE #2:

Shh--did you hear that?

The camera pans to show the Amazon village with the flames shooting up above the hut.

PHANIA:

NOW!

The Renegades fight their explosives and run toward the village, flinging the explosives at the walls.

CUT TO

The walls going up in flames.

CUT TO

Gabrielle looking around, her eyes wide, as the explosives go off.

GABRIELLE (shouting):

Get down!

CUT TO

A wall crumbling in flames.

CUT TO

CYANE (shouts):

We're under attack!

CUT TO

Andromache and Melanippe race out of the burning hut and run through the village.

CUT TO

Amazons running and shouting.

CUT TO

The Renegades advancing into the village.

CUT TO

Xena runs through the village, sword drawn, as pandemonium erupts around her.

XENA (shouts):

GABRIELLE! EVE!

DISSOLVE TO

Montage of shots:

--The Renegades advancing

--Xena fighting her way through a group of Renegades

--Gabrielle and Cyane fighting back to back

--An Amazon falls, cut down by a Renegade

CUT TO

As the battle rages, Xena turns to scan the field. Eve and Antiope come running.

XENA (relieved):

Eve--you're all right!

They hug quickly.

EVE (bitterly):

Gabrielle was right. It was a trick. They used the negotiations as a cover for a sneak attack.

XENA (anguished, puts a hand on her arm):

Eve...you wanted what was best. Don't ever blame yourself for trying to solve things without fighting.

ANTIOPE (distraught):

My sister. My own sister--

EVE:

Antiope--we don't have time to think about that right now. We have to defend the village. (to Xena) Come on.

SMASH CUT TO

[END OF FLASHBACK]

A series of scenes flashes across the scene, almost in fast forward. We recognize them as the "Present battle scenes" scattered throughout the episode. We stop as we reach the last present scene, with Xena and Gabrielle facing off against the five Renegades.

Gabrielle spin kicks one, and then plunges her sais into another. Meanwhile, Xena spars and spin-kicks against the other three. The camera follows them as they back away into an isolated space between two huts. Xena slices through one of the Renegades, who falls to the ground, and knocks another down with a powerful kick that sends her flying into the wall. The third woman runs off. Xena is about to give chase when there is a flash of blue light in front of her and Ares appears. She stops in her tracks.

XENA (coldly):

In case you haven't noticed, this is not a good time to talk.

ARES:

Oh, but it is. I'm sure you'll want to hear *this*.

XENA (suspicious):

What?

ARES:

There's an army approaching the village--ready to strike.

XENA (disbelief):

What? What army?

ARES:

King Melodic's army. He thinks it was the Amazons who wiped out that little settlement of his.

XENA (suspicious):

And how do you know about that?

ARES (looks away):

I'm the God of War, Xena. There's an army on the move. Give me some credit.

XENA (narrows her eyes at him):

Did you promise Melodic your help?

ARES (sighs in exasperation):

All right--he did come to me for my blessing. Look--

XENA (interrupts angrily):

And you saw the chance to get more worshipers.

ARES:

Look. When he asked--I didn't know it was the Amazons he was going to war against, okay?

Xena snorts, still mistrustful.

ARES:

The best thing you can do now is pull out of the village.

XENA (in disbelief):

What are you talking about?

ARES:

Pull out. Let the outlaws take the village. Then Melodic's army will come and wipe them out.

XENA:

And level the village! What about the Amazons?

ARES:

They can move somewhere safe.

XENA:

You mean--lose these lands? Never!

ARES:

And how many people are you willing to lose?

They stare at each other heavily.

ARES:

Look, I warned you. What you do next is up to you. Melodic and his army will be here in about an hour.

He vanishes. Xena stands still a moment, then turns and runs back into the thick of battle.

CUT TO

Eve is fighting off a Renegade with a staff. She swings her staff around and strikes the Renegade across the face, knocking her to the ground.

ANDROMACHE (off-camera):

Well, if it isn't the so-called Queen of the Amazons.

Andromache charges at Eve, sword in hand. They start fighting and Eve deflects her blows, though neither seems to have the upper hand.

Pan back to Melanippe, coming up behind Eve with a sword in her hand, ready to strike from behind.

Pan to an arrow swishing through the air.

The arrow strikes Melanippe in the chest. Close-up of her face, her eyes bulging.

The camera pulls back to see Melanippe fall to the ground.

Pan to Antiope, bow in hand, a look of pain coming across her face.

ANDROMACHE (cries out):

Melanippe!

She bends over Melanippe, who is dying, then stands up and charges Eve with renewed fury.

Xena comes running toward Eve.

XENA (shouting):
Eve! We have to retreat.

EVE (still holding off Andromache):
Retreat *where*?

XENA:
Pull out of the village. Come on, I'll hold her off. Gather the other Amazons and pull out! The losses are too heavy.

EVE:
But--

XENA:
Listen to me, Eve--do it!

Eve runs off while Xena and Andromache spar.

Shouts of "Retreat!" are heard in the background.

The camera pulls back for a wide shot of the village. Eve, Cyane, and Gabrielle are leading the retreat as the Amazons flee.

Pan back to Xena and Andromache sparring.

ANDROMACHE:
You know, I never thought I would get to fight the great Xena herself.

XENA:
Enjoy it while it lasts.

They exchange a few more blows; then Xena steps back quickly, sheathes her sword and flips away with an ululating cry, finally leaping to her feet and running off after the other Amazons.

ANDROMACHE (stands still, watching her with a grin):
I certainly never thought I'd see the great Xena run from *me*...

Two Renegades run up to Andromache.

RENEGADE #1:
My Queen--they're retreating!

ANDROMACHE (with satisfaction):
Yes. I know.

RENEGADE #2:
Should we chase them down, my Queen?

ANDROMACHE:

No. Let them run. (grins) For now.

CUT TO

Xena running past the village gates.

Zoom out for an overhead shot of the village. We see the Amazons retreating, the Queen's hut in flames, a portion of the village wall burning, and the Renegades dancing in the village square celebrating their victory, their triumphant cries heard faintly as we:

FADE OUT

ACT FOUR

FADE IN

Amazon village. The Renegades have gathered in the center of the village. Andromache stands before them.

The Renegades cheer, chanting Andromache's name. Andromache stands still, obviously pleased, then finally speaks.

ANDROMACHE:

Hear me out.

The cheers continue and she raises her voice.

ANDROMACHE:

Quiet!

The cheers begin to die down and Andromache speaks.

ANDROMACHE:

It's too early to celebrate. We may have the village, but Livia and the fools who choose to follow her are still out there. (reflects for a moment) They retreated too easily.

PHANIA:

Do you think it's a trick?

ANDROMACHE:

Yes--they're probably just trying to bide some time and regroup. No matter. If they come back, we'll be ready for them.

The others cheer around her.

CUT TO

King Melodic's army advancing through the woods.

OFFICER #1:

Watch out for any movement in the trees. The Amazons are famed for their tree-fighting tactics.

The soldiers look around, clearly intimidated.

CUT TO

A cave. The Amazons are all gathered inside, including some young girls as well as Alyssa and the children from the Lanis settlement. Some of the women are seen tending to the injured. Many seem in shock.

The camera pans over to Xena, who is tending to a cut on the shoulder of a seated Gabrielle. Eve is standing next to them. Gabrielle sighs and closes her eyes.

XENA:

You all right?

GABRIELLE (sighs again):

Yeah, just--so tired all of a sudden. (She yawns.)

XENA:

It's been a long day.

EVE:

So Ares warned you that King Melodic--

XENA (curtly):

Yup.

GABRIELLE:

So...what next?

XENA (businesslike):

Next--I assume Melodic's army will attack the village.

EVE:

They'll think that Andromache and her band are the Amazons.

GABRIELLE (uneasily):

And--they'll wipe them out.

Xena, Gabrielle and Eve exchange troubled looks.

XENA (dryly):

I guess that'll take care of the outlaw Amazons.

EVE:

And then Melodic will destroy the village and take over these lands.

There is a short pause as the three of them look uneasily at each other.

EVE (softly):
Mother?

XENA:
I promised I wasn't going to let that happen.

Cyane approaches.

CYANE:
What are we going to do?

They look at each other silently.

DISSOLVE TO

Melodic's army approaches the edge of the woods and rides out into a clearing, with the village straight ahead of them.

CUT TO

The Amazon village. A Renegade runs fast through the village, out of breath, approaching the area where the others have gathered.

RENEGADE (shouting):
We're being attacked!

ANDROMACHE (shocked):
They're back?

RENEGADE:
No--not them! Soldiers--an army! They're just outside the gates!

Andromache looks shocked for a moment, then lets out a loud whistle.

ANDROMACHE (shouting):
Defend the village!

DISSOLVE TO

The village gates. King Melodic and his men approach on horseback. As the Renegades run out toward them, brandishing spears and swords, they are met with a volley of arrows that immediately brings down a large number of them.

ANDROMACHE (yells):
Get down! Take cover!

Andromache hurls a spear, killing one of the archers; as he falls, he knocks several others out of balance and the volley of arrows stops.

ANDROMACHE:

Amazons, attack!

KING MELODIC:

Kill the savages! Avenge the settlers of Lanis! (he brandishes his sword) With Ares on our side, we can't lose!

The camera pulls up to show Ares materialize on an intact part of the wall, watching.

A full-scale battle erupts. A montage of images:

- * A Renegade falling, struck down by one of Melodic's men.
- * Another Renegade is cut down by a soldier on horseback.
- * A soldier is killed by a Renegade's spear.
- * Everywhere, Renegades and soldiers are fighting.
- * Andromache kills a soldier, running him through with a savage cry.
- * Phania battles two soldiers with punches and kicks.
- * A Renegade falls on her side, facing a dying or dead soldier on the ground; they stare at each other with unseeing eyes, in a tableau reminiscent of the warrior and the boy on the ground in CALLISTO.
- * More scenes of Renegades and soldiers fighting, the Renegades being overpowered by the soldiers' superior numbers though many soldiers are being killed or wounded as well.
- * Phania falls to the ground, wounded
- * Ares on the wall, watching impassively, his arms folded
- * A soldier shouting, "For the glory of Ares!"
- * An overhead shot of the village with the battle raging near the gates.

The camera zooms down for a tight overhead shot of Andromache and three other Renegades, surrounded by the soldiers who are pointing swords and spears at them. Melodic rides up on his horse.

KING MELODIC:

Surrender! There is no way out for you!

Andromache looks around, her mouth drawn into a snarl.

ANDROMACHE:

No. But at least we can take some of you with us. (screams) Amazons--*attack!*

The Renegades charge at the encirclement with loud battle-cries. Two soldiers fall but the Renegades who killed them are quickly cut down, as is a third. Andromache's sword is knocked out of her hands; she spins, kicks and punches furiously.

KING MELODIC:

Take her alive!

Andromache is brought down with a blow to the head and falls.

KING MELODIC:

Victory is ours!

The soldiers cheer, raising their swords in the air. The cheers die down.

KING MELODIC:

Now let's burn this village to the ground!

XENA (off-camera):

Not so fast.

A close-up on King Melodic as he turns his head, startled.

Zoom out to show that Melodic's men are surrounded by the Amazons, their bows and spears trained on the soldiers. Eve stands in front of Amazon ranks, her expression stern, her staff at the ready; Gabrielle and Cyane are at her side. Xena stands slightly apart from them, her sword pointed toward Melodic.

KING MELODIC (shocked):

Xena. (pauses, digesting what happened) So this was a trap. You let us kill your own fellow Amazons so that you could ambush--

EVE:

They are not our fellow Amazons. They're outlaws who were banished from our tribe a long time ago.

XENA:

They're the ones who attacked your settlement. They attacked this village as well.

The camera pulls in on Andromache; while everyone's attention is directed towards the Amazons, she grabs a hold of a dagger off one of the dead soldiers. She pulls back and throws it through the air. The camera follows the dagger as it heads straight towards King Melodic.

Xena quickly takes notice and throws her chakram forward. A shot of the dagger and the chakram flying through the air. The chakram hits the dagger, shattering it, then whizzes uncomfortably close to the stunned King Melodic's face, and returns to Xena, who catches it.

Two soldiers grab Andromache and tie her up.

KING MELODIC (catching his breath; to Xena):

Uh... Thank you.

XENA (grimly):
Don't mention it.

KING MELODIC:
So...you're telling me that the Amazons did not attack the settlement?

EVE:
They did not.

KING MELODIC:
And how do I know that you're telling me the truth?

VOICE OFF-CAMERA:
My lord--if I may speak...

The camera pans to Caleb. The Amazons part their ranks to let him through. He is accompanied by Othila. His head is bandaged.

EVE (surprised):
Caleb!

KING MELODIC:
Who are you, boy? Are you from the Lanis settlement?

CALEB:
I am. (He is obviously fighting back tears) My lord, those savage women--led by her--(he points to the bound Andromache, a flash of anger and hate in his face)--they came and destroyed our village--killed my mother--killed everyone and burned our homes. (His eyes fill with tears) They weren't the Amazons. The Amazons came and helped us. They also sheltered my sister and the other children.

KING MELODIC (slowly):
I--I see. (strokes his beard) Well--that does obviously change things.

EVE (to Melodic):
Take the people responsible for attacking your settlement--and leave us in peace.

KING MELODIC (plaintively):
But--my people expect a victory over the Amazons--

XENA (grins):
Well, it looks like they're not going to get it, doesn't it.

KING MELODIC:
But--but lord Ares--

Xena frowns, obviously hurt.

Ares materializes next to King Melodic, a stern look on his face. The camera pans to Xena, her eyes narrowing on the God of War. Ares remains standing next to Melodic, with his arms folded across his chest.

ARES (staring at Xena as he talks to Melodic):
Take the outlaws and get out of here.

KING MELODIC (confused):
What?

ARES (raises his voice, obviously irritated):
Take them and go!

KING MELODIC:
But my lord--you said--

A close-up on Xena's face; she remains impassive.

A close-up on Ares' face, staring at her grimly.

The camera pulls back to show King Melodic staring in confusion from Xena to Ares. Ares vanishes with no further word.

KING MELODIC (composing himself):
All right then. (looks around) How many of them are alive, besides (nods toward Andromache) this one?

SOLDIER:
It looks like there's only one other, my lord.

Two soldiers approach dragging the wounded Phania, who is barely conscious.

Shocked, Eve stares at Phania as we:

DISSOLVE TO

[FLASHBACK]

Phania's face, younger and without a scar. The camera pulls back to show her in shackles, in an Amazon outfit, on the deck of a Roman ship. There are two Roman soldiers standing at her side, and other shackled Amazons behind her. A splash and a shout is heard. Phania flinches.

The camera pans around to show Livia standing on the deck, a cold look on her face.

LIVIA:
Next!

The soldiers push Phania toward the edge of the deck. She wrenches herself free and runs up the gangplank that leads from the deck to the railing. Then she stops for a moment, gives Livia a look full of contempt, and jumps.

[END OF FLASHBACK]

EVE (forcefully):

You are *not* taking this woman.

KING MELODIC (taken aback):

And why not?

Pan to Xena, who gives Eve a sympathetic look; then to Phania, who looks up at Eve, her eyes opening for a moment. There is a flash of hatred in her eyes as she moans.

EVE (thinks on her feet):

Because--she's not one of them.

Gabrielle darts Eve a surprised look but says nothing.

EVE (continues more confidently):

She's one of our own wounded--she was left behind in our retreat.

Some of the Amazons give her surprised looks.

SOLDIER (doubtful):

My lord, that can't be true--I'm quite sure I saw her being struck down--

KING MELODIC (to Eve):

Now look here, lady--

EVE:

You've got their leader. (Pan to Andromache, a nasty sneer on her face) The rest of them are dead. What difference does it make if you bring back one more prisoner? (More forcefully) You are not taking this woman!

KING MELODIC (sighs in resignation):

Fine. But my soldiers *must* be allowed to collect trophies from the dead to bring home.

EVE (nods coldly):

All right.

KING MELODIC (nods toward Andromache):

Put her on a horse.

As two soldiers start dragging Andromache, she screams suddenly, turning toward Eve.

ANDROMACHE:

You're going to let them *kill* me?

EVE (shakes her head):

You brought it on yourself, Andromache. You and your friends attacked and slaughtered innocent people.

ANDROMACHE:

You should talk! We were all victims of your bloody raids! I know what you did to the slaves on that ship--

EVE (edgy):

I can't help you.

ANDROMACHE:

You could at least let me die with honor--at the hands of my sister Amazons and not these--*men*! Are you going to let them drag me through the streets like an animal?

Eve hesitates, looking as if she's almost physically in pain. The soldiers drag a struggling Andromache toward a horse.

EVE:

Wait--

KING MELODIC (impatient):

What now? We had a deal. She and those others killed our people. She must answer by our law.

ANDROMACHE (shouts):

I should die like an Amazon!

Eve makes as if to step forward. Gabrielle turns away, looking as if she's going to be sick. Xena grabs Eve's arm.

Othila steps forward.

OTHILA:

I saw your handiwork in that settlement, Andromache. If you're an Amazon--I'm ashamed to bear the name! (She spits on the ground, then turns to Eve) My queen--she deserves no mercy.

XENA (quietly):

Let it be.

A long shot of Xena, Gabrielle, Eve and Cyane, watching in anguish as Andromache is slung over the saddle of a horse.

DISSOLVE TO

A quick montage of clouds in the sky with the sun setting, then rising.

"Two Days Later" appears across the screen.

DISSOLVE TO

King Melodic's room.

King Melodic is sitting in a chair at his desk. Sitting across from him is Eve. She is draped in a dark cloak with a hood.

KING MELODIC (business-like):

Well, I'm glad we were able to work things out. I appreciate your helping the survivors at Lanis.

EVE (likewise):

It was the least we could do.

KING MELODIC (a note of surprise in his voice):

It seems that some of them want to stay in your village for now--rather than return to Ascania. You have no objection?

EVE:

We'll take them in.

KING MELODIC:

Well, thank you again. As for your lands, there will be no more settlements. I hope you're satisfied.

EVE (rises to her feet; bitterly):

Do you think I *wanted* any of this?

King Melodic clears his throat uneasily and is rescued from the awkward situation by a knock on the door.

KING MELODIC (visibly relieved, raises his voice):

Come in!

The door opens and a guard comes in.

GUARD (bows):

Your majesty--it's time for the execution.

KING MELODIC (brightens):

Oh yes--the execution.

He gets up and walks toward the door, then turns to Eve.

KING MELODIC:

Well, uh--thank you, again.

Eve remains silent.

CUT TO

Ascania city square.

Andromache stands on a scaffold, her arms bound behind her back. She stares rigidly ahead of her. The crowd gathered in front of the scaffold is shouting and jeering at her. Cries of "Death to the Amazon!" and "Murderer!" are heard.

A soldier places a noose around Andromache's neck.

Another soldier stands by a wooden lever at the side of the platform.

The noise of the crowd dies down as the camera pans back to show King Melodic sitting in a chair on a podium across from the scaffold. He raises his hand.

KING MELODIC:

Let justice be done!

Andromache stares forward. Suddenly, her eyes flicker. The camera follows her point of view to show her locking eyes with Eve, who is standing in the crowd wearing her cape with the hood.

ANDROMACHE (in a sneering voice):

All hail, my Queen--Livia!

Melodic looks worried for a moment. There is a puzzled murmur in the crowd. After a moment Melodic brings his hand down.

The soldier pulls the lever. A quick shot of Andromache falling through the drop, then pan to the jeering crowd and zoom in on Eve's anguished face.

CUT TO

Eve walking through the city streets.

VOICE (shouting off-camera):

Read all about it!

Eve turns to see a man on a corner selling scrolls.

VENDOR (yells):

Read all about it! Only three dinars! The true story of King Melodic's glorious victory over the Amazons!

Eve shakes her head, her mouth tightening in disgust, and walks on.

CUT TO

A wide shot of the Amazon village. The battle has definitely taken its toll on the village. The Amazons, many still sporting cuts and bruises, are doing their best to clean up and rebuild.

Zoom in on Gabrielle, who is holding onto Darion's hand and walking next to Lykia.

LYKIA (shocked):

I just can't believe this. I should have been here. I should have been fighting.

GABRIELLE (gently):

Lykia...everything is fine. You can help rebuild.

DARION (suddenly excited):

Hey, look! There are boys living here now?

Pan to Caleb coming out of one of the huts. He sees Gabrielle and waves to her.

LYKIA (surprised):

It's--the boy Morai put on trial.

GABRIELLE:

Yes, he is one of the survivors from the village. Lykia, he helped out Xena, Eve and me when Artemis gained control of the tribe. For now--he's staying here. (after a pause) You should talk to him.

Lykia gives her a bewildered look.

GABRIELLE (to Lykia):

He's been through a lot. His mother died in the attack. His home has been destroyed. Maybe you could--help him.

LYKIA (uncertainly):

Maybe.

She nods, looking thoughtfully at Caleb as he approaches.

CUT TO

Xena is sitting by a stream, throwing pebbles into the water. The trees part and Gabrielle approaches.

XENA (looks up):

Hey, you're back. How are you?

GABRIELLE:

Fine. (sits down next to Xena and suppresses a yawn)

XENA:

Not getting enough sleep?

GABRIELLE:

It was a long trip to Corinth.

A brief silence.

XENA:

So...how's Darion?

GABRIELLE:

He's fine. (She smiles a little) I think Lykia and Caleb are--getting along well.

XENA:

Oh. (after a moment's silence) Gabrielle...you were right. Trying to talk peace to Andromache was pointless--and it almost cost my daughter's life. (she sighs, staring into the river) I'm not sure why I encouraged Eve to go ahead with the talks.

GABRIELLE (pensively):

It's something I would have done, once...

XENA:

Maybe that's why...

Gabrielle looks stricken for a moment. Absently, she picks up a small rock and throws it in the stream.

Suddenly, Xena sits up straight, as if sensing something. Gabrielle glances at her and nods slightly, understanding.

GABRIELLE:

Well, I'm going to go back to the village and...make Darion some lunch.

XENA:

Yeah. See you later.

Gabrielle walks away and Xena sits silently for a moment.

XENA (her voice flat):

Ares. I know you're here.

Ares materializes next to a tree.

ARES (dryly):

Curses. Foiled again.

Xena stands up to face him.

XENA:

I...I don't know whether to thank you for the warning, or-- (her voice breaks off for a moment) or to hate you for--what you did.

ARES:

And what's that?

XENA (vehemently):

You promised Melodic your help!

ARES:

I told you--when he asked me for help, I didn't know he was going up against the Amazons.

XENA:

And when you found out--

ARES:

Look. I warned you so that you'd move the Amazons out--get them somewhere safe.

XENA (angrily):

I'm not going to let them lose these lands, Ares! It's about survival!

ARES (stares at her heavily):

You're right. It's about survival.

He vanishes in a flare of light.

XENA (softly):

Ares, wait.

Nothing happens. Xena stares silently into the empty space where he vanished as we:

FADE OUT

THE END

[The Amazons' unbroken streak of bad luck continued during the production of this motion picture.]