

SHIPPER SEASON NINE

“Crossroads”

Production #XWP196/SS62
Episode #9.15

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Logline

Eve struggles with difficult decisions when she learns something that could be key to the fate of the Olympian gods. At the same time, as Queen of the Amazons, she has to deal with the case of a young mother about to be exiled for breaking an age-old law, and to confront the rights and wrongs of Amazon tradition. Xena and Gabrielle try to help, realizing that the very survival of the Amazons is at stake.

Airdate

December 18, 2006

TEASER

FADE IN

An open field. The light harsh and painfully bright. The sound of swords clanging breaks the silence and is drowned out by the sound of footsteps pounding the ground as well as rapid, heavy breathing. The camera follows two boots running across the field. It is obvious this is Gabrielle, from the sais sticking out of the boots.

CUT TO

Xena, fighting a large warrior, obviously very strong. His beard and hair are matted and there is a wild glint in his eyes. Their swords cross. Xena and the warrior both push against the other, trying to throw one another off balance but it is a stalemate.

CUT TO

Gabrielle running toward them. Her breath is becoming heavier and more and more frantic. She comes to an abrupt stop when she sees Haimon, holding Darion in his arms standing on the edge of the field. They exchange a long glance and it falls eerily silent, finally broken when the warrior growls. Gabrielle turns from Haimon and Darion and takes off across the field again.

CUT TO

The warrior throws Xena off balance and she sprawls on her back, her sword flying out of her hand. He raises his sword above his head, about to deliver the killing blow. A hand grabs his shoulder and he is spun around, confronting Gabrielle, her face twisted in rage. With a howl, Gabrielle drives her sai in to his neck. His eyes fly open in shock and he clutches his throat as blood begins to spurt through his fingers. He crumples to the ground as Gabrielle watches, an almost dispassionate expression on her face.

A faint cry from a baby can be heard in the distance and Gabrielle looks around. It is heard again. Close-up on Gabrielle's terrified, anguished face. The camera pulls back as Gabrielle takes off running, speeding up as she runs.

CUT TO

A river with a basket floating in it. Gabrielle leaps in and splashes frantically towards it. Reaching it, she looks inside and the basket is empty.

CUT TO

A campfire. Xena sits on a log, casually sharpening her sword as Gabrielle paces frantically.

GABRIELLE:

I know I put her in the basket and floated her downstream. I was going to pick her up later. But now I can't find her.

Xena looks up and frowns.

XENA:

It's time to face the facts and wake up, Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE:

...and I would have called to her but I couldn't remember her name.

XENA:

Gabrielle, wake up!

SMASH CUT TO

Close-up on Darion, looking alarmed.

DARION:

Gabrielle, wake up!

Gabrielle gasps and her eyes fly open. Her face is pale and sweaty and her hair matted to her forehead. She looks around trying to figure out where she is. It is a campsite and it is high noon. Darion is kneeling above her, his hand on her shoulder.

DARION:

You were having a bad dream.

GABRIELLE:

Darion... (she reaches out and lays her hand on his forearm) I...that... (she shakily tries to sit up and Darion helps her) Water?

Darion hands her a skin and Gabrielle gulps down some water. After a moment she is a little more clearheaded and looks around.

GABRIELLE:

Where's Xena?

DARION:

Hunting. She didn't want to come to the Amazons empty handed.

GABRIELLE:

You didn't want to go with her?

Darion shrugs and looks away.

DARION:

I thought maybe I should stay with you. (he looks at her, suddenly appearing years older) Gabrielle, are you okay? Is it the baby?

GABRIELLE (smiles weakly):

I'm fine, Darion...fine... (she pats his knee) Why don't you start packing up the camp? We should be getting a move on soon if we want to make it to the Amazon village before dark.

Darion gives her a worried, suspicious look and finally nods warily.

DARION:

...okay...

He gets up and busies himself with his bedroll. When he is not looking, Gabrielle lowers her head and puts a hand over her eyes. She sighs deeply.

CUT TO

Overhead view of the Amazon village, bustling with activity. The camera zooms down to sweep over the village. Some Amazons are working on fixing up huts--there's still damage left from the war with the renegades. A group of older women are tending to a vegetable garden while some teenage girls are training in the archery range on the edge of the village. There are other Amazons walking idly through the village.

Suddenly there's a commotion--Klymene is seen running through the village, out of breath. She nearly knocks down a woman carrying a bucket of water.

WOMAN (displeased):

Watch where you're going, child!

KLYMENE (breathless):

Sorry!

She continues to run. The woman looks after her, shaking her head.

CUT TO

Eve is outside the Queen's hut, talking about something to Cyane.

KLYMENE (off-camera, shouting):

Eve!

Cyane and Eve stop talking and look in her direction, alarmed. She runs up to them, panting.

EVE:

What is it?

KLYMENE (catching her breath):

Scyleia. The healer says it's time.

Eve and Cyane exchange an anxious look.

CUT TO

Klymene walking quickly through the village, followed by Eve and Cyane. They hurry toward one of the huts. A woman's scream is heard from inside.

CUT TO

Eve, Cyane and Klymene enter the hut. An older Amazon, the healer, is standing next to a bed where a woman is lying.

EVE:

How is she?

HEALER:

It won't be long.

The woman lying in the bed moans. Eve steps up to the bed. The woman is hugely pregnant and clearly going into labor.

EVE (takes the woman's hand and squeezes it):

This will be over soon, Scyleia.

SCYLEIA (nods):

My Queen... (she moans and closes her eyes as another contraction overcomes her body)

Klymene comes over with a mug of water and hands it to Scyleia.

KLYMENE (worried):

Here you go.

Scyleia opens her eyes, takes the mug with both hands and drinks avidly while Klymene holds up the mug.

SCYLEIA (gasping):

Thank you...

HEALER:

Make way, child.

Klymene steps aside. The healer dips a cloth into a bowl of water and places the damp cloth on Scyleia's head. Scyleia groans and shifts in the bed, clearly uncomfortable. The healer feels her stomach.

HEALER:

Breathe and push!

She gets in the position to help Scyleia with the birth.

CYANE (reassuringly):

You're going to be all right.

Scyleia moans, sweat dripping down her forehead; she grits her teeth, then screams.

HEALER:

You're doing good. Come on.

Scyleia relaxes for a moment, breathing deeply.

SCYLEIA (turns to Eve):

Eve...?

EVE:

I'm here, Scyleia.

SCYLEIA:

When the baby comes... (close-up on her face) don't let them banish me--please.

Scyleia cries out again as she is hit with another contraction.

Eve and Cyane look at each other, both looking conflicted.

[FLASHBACK]

Amazon Council chambers.

On-screen writing: Four Months Ago

The Amazon leaders are all seated in a circle.

OTHILA:

The law is clear. If an Amazon becomes pregnant outside the mating season, she is punished with loss of rank if she bears a girl child. If it's a male child--they are both banished from the tribe.

EVE (shaking her head):

This is insane.

NARI (forcefully):

Is that any way for the Queen to talk about our laws?

EVE:

After all of the losses the Amazons have suffered, do you really think that banishing a woman for such an offense is something we should even consider?

OTHILA:

Scyleia knew what she was doing. She *broke the law!*

EVE:

Sometimes, humanity is more important than the law.

NARI:

We start making exceptions and it won't be long before Amazon girls start throwing themselves at any man that will take them.

CYANE:

Isn't that called a mating season?

There are gasps of shock from several council members.

CYANE (calmly):

Well, don't we encourage girls to have--relations with men from nearby villages during mating season? (shrugging) Sorry, but I never understood the difference.

OTHILA:

The difference is tradition. (harshly) And I would expect you both, as Amazon queens, to have a little more respect for it--considering your namesake, Cyane... (to Eve) *and* your history.

Silence falls over the council.

OTHILA (more calmly):

We have upheld these traditions for...hundreds of years. We can't change them now. (pause) Scyleia must be banished if her child is a boy. It is the only way we can ensure that our way of life--and the Amazon nation itself--will survive.

Eve looks down, conflicted.

[END OF FLASHBACK]

Close up of Scyleia as she screams. There is silence for a moment, then a baby's cries are heard. The healer steps back from Scyleia who is panting heavily. The healer turns to Eve and Cyane, holding the baby in her arms. She has a grave look on her face.

Eve and Cyane look at each other.

HEALER:

A boy.

FADE OUT

ACT ONE

FADE IN

The camera pulls in on Xena, Gabrielle, and Darion making their way down the countryside. Darion is riding behind Xena on Argo, while Gabrielle is riding alone. The camera pulls around to show a destroyed village at the bottom of a hill--the village the Renegades attacked in "The Outlaws."

DARION (looks down at the remnants of the village):

What happened here?

GABRIELLE:

It--it was attacked.

Darion looks away grimly, obviously remembering the day his own village was attacked.

Xena peers down into the distance, then brings Argo to a halt and holds out a hand to stop Gabrielle.

XENA (puzzled):

There's somebody down there.

GABRIELLE:

Impossible. There shouldn't be anybody there--it's just--

The camera zooms in to show three figures moving around the ruins. It's too far away to see who they are.

XENA:

I'll go down there and check it out. (after a moment's pause, she turns to look at Darion, then glances at Gabrielle) Maybe you two should stay here.

DARION (sullenly):

We'll go.

CUT TO

The remnants of the village. Xena, Gabrielle and Darion are walking down what used to be the main street, Xena and Gabrielle leading their horses. Darion looks around, obviously disturbed.

Pan to the remnants of a house, with most of the front wall still standing though charred, and a door hanging off the hinges.

XENA (pointing to the house):
There!

There is movement in the doorway. The door swings open and out comes Lykia. She looks surprised; pan to the shocked faces of Xena, Gabrielle and Darion.

DARION:
Lykia?

LYKIA:
Darion! Hey...

She runs toward her brother and they hug and kiss each other.

LYKIA:
Is it just me or did you get bigger since the last time I saw you?

She releases Darion and looks up at Xena and Gabrielle.

LYKIA (nods, a little distant):
Um...hi.

XENA:
Whatch'a doing here?

Before Lykia can answer, Caleb comes out of the wrecked house, followed by his sister Alissa.

LYKIA (gestures toward them):
I was just here with them. We wanted to look around and see if there was anything we could do rebuild this place.

GABRIELLE (warmly):
Caleb, Alissa! (She comes up to hug them) It's good to see you.

CALEB (hugs her back a little stiffly):
Good to see you too, Gabrielle-- (nods to Xena) Xena. Hey, Darion.

DARION:
Hey.

XENA:
Rebuild... (she looks around and shakes her head bitterly) There's nothing but ruins here--you'd

have to build the whole place from scratch. (She look at the house; then to Caleb, with an understanding, anguished look) This was your house.

Caleb nods uncomfortably.

GABRIELLE:

Why aren't you back at the Amazon village?

Caleb and Alyssa look away uneasily.

LYKIA (fidgets):

It's...complicated.

Xena and Gabrielle stare at her, obviously taken aback.

DISSOLVE TO

The Amazon hut. Scyliea is lying on the bed, holding her baby in her arms, wrapped in a blanket. She runs her finger over the baby's cheek and the baby gurgles. Scyliea smiles.

SCYLIEA:

He's so beautiful...

Eve and Cyane stand still, looking at mother and child. Eve motions to Cyane that they leave the hut. Cyane nods, understanding.

EVE (gently):

Scyliea, you need rest. We'll--see you later.

SCYLIEA (looks up):

Eve...Cyane...thank you. (sighs) Even if you can't--do anything...your being here means a lot.

CYANE (at a loss for words):

We'll--try.

Eve nods wordlessly and they start to walk out.

CUT TO

Outside the hut. Eve and Cyane come out. The camera pulls around to show Othila coming toward them.

OTHILA (formal):

So. I am told Scyliea has given birth.

EVE:

She has. She and the baby are-- (she pauses) fine.

Othila looks at her expectantly.

EVE (sighs):

A boy.

OTHILA (looks at her steadily):

My queen--you know the law. She has one week to leave Amazon lands with her child.

EVE (vehemently):

I would like the council to reconvene and reopen this question.

OTHILA (shrugs):

It's within your power to call the council, but I don't see what you hope to accomplish. The law is what it is.

Zoom in on Eve as she looks pensively at Othila.

CUT TO

Elsewhere in the Amazon village. A group of girls, ranging in age between about six and twelve, are gathered around a dark-haired Amazon. As the camera zooms in, we recognize her as Phania, the scarred Renegade Livia once threw overboard.

PHANIA (a hateful look on her face):

...and then, we were all marched out on the deck--in chains--and, one by one, the prisoners were thrown into the water. In chains. I heard them scream as they fell--and then I, too, was dragged to the edge of the deck--

The camera pans over the girls' faces in close-up. They listen raptly and fearfully.

PHANIA (continues, off-camera):

She was standing there with a sword in her hand--and I heard her say, "Next!"

AMAZON GIRL #1 (a redhead of about eight; speaks up timidly):

You mean--Queen Eve?

Pan back to Phania, a nasty sneer on her face. Behind her, we see Antiope walking by, glancing suspiciously in Phania's direction.

PHANIA:

Back in those days, she called herself-- (spits out the word) *Livia*.

Behind her, Antiope comes closer.

AMAZON GIRL #2 (dark-haired and about 10 years old; firmly):

I don't believe you!

PHANIA (laughs harshly):

You poor, deceived children. Some day you'll find out--

Antiope comes up and grabs Phania shoulder, interrupting her. She whips around. The Amazon girls all back away, nervously.

ANTIOPE (angrily):

What do you think you're doing?!

PHANIA (casually):

Just telling the girls a story. *My* story.

ANTIOPE (looks at the frightened girls):

Go on, girls.

AMAZON GIRL #1:

But is that true what she said about Queen Eve?

PHANIA (jeering):

Go on, tell them. (laughs scornfully) Tell them the truth.

ANTIOPE (to the girls):

We'll talk about this later. Now *go*!

The girls walk away, turning to look nervously at Phania and Antiope and whispering among themselves.

ANTIOPE (to Phania):

You know, whatever Eve may have done in the past--she took you into this tribe. She could have turned you over to Melodic and his men to be hanged like a common thug.

PHANIA (snarls):

And I'm supposed to forget what she did, to me and to the other Amazons? Well, *I* would rather have died with Andromache--my *true* queen--than live under Queen Livia!

ANTIOPE:

The entire time you've been here, you've done nothing but incite people against her. (forcefully) This has to stop.

PHANIA (chuckles):

And what are you going to do about it, Antiope? Kill me like you killed your sister?

Antiope screams and tackles Phania. Phania dodges her attack, spins around and kicks Antiope hard in the stomach. Antiope gasps and doubles over; Phania punches her, shoving her to the ground. She's just about to slam her foot down on Antiope's back when Antiope rolls away, then leaps back up and goes on the attack again with a ferocious yell. She kicks Phania in the shin, making her stagger momentarily, then lands a couple of punches. Phania lands a punch in turn, then leaps, kicking out her legs and slamming her boots into Antiope's chest. Antiope staggers but manages to grab Phania's ankles and throw her down on the ground so that she lands on her back. Phania kicks hard at Antiope's ankle and she sprawls as well, falling face down.

Phania is the first to leap to her feet. Two Amazons are already running toward them, one of them carrying a staff. Phania tackles her, taking the woman by surprise, and manages to grab her staff from her, then down her with a kick, giving a fierce yell.

Antiope is starting to rise on her hands and knees. With another yell, Phania swings the staff and is about to bring it down on her head when a whooshing sound is heard. Phania whips around; the two

Amazons turn toward the sound and Antiope looks up. The chakram hurtles toward them, slicing off the upper half of the staff Phania is holding. Phania gives a start, her face a grimace of rage.

Quick pan to Xena, who catches the chakram, grinning nastily at Phania.

XENA (hooking the chakram back on her belt):
Problem?

The camera pulls back to show Gabrielle, Lykia and Darion standing behind her.

With a cry of rage, Phania charges Xena with the remaining portion of her staff.

XENA:
You don't wanna do *that*.

Phania swings and tries to hit Xena; Xena grabs her arm and twists it, making her drop the staff. (Meanwhile, in the background, Antiope finally scrambles to her feet.) Phania cries out in pain and tries to kick Xena but Xena quickly subdues her, takes off her belt and ties her hands with it behind her back.

PHANIA:
Let go of me!

XENA (stands up, leaving Phania tied up on the ground):
You need a little time out.

Other Amazons start to come up. Eve makes her way past them and surveys the situation.

EVE (dryly, to Xena):
Mother...welcome back.

XENA (sarcastic):
Never a dull moment in this village.

DISSOLVE TO

Another street in the village. Xena and Gabrielle are walking with Eve and Cyane.

XENA:
So Phania hasn't been too cooperative.

EVE (shaking her head):
Ever since she's been here, she's been nothing but trouble.

CYANE:
And it didn't take her long to find some of Morai's friends and Artemis' old groupies.

GABRIELLE:
Then why not banish her?

EVE (guilty):

I've ruined her life as it is. But listen...we have bigger problems.

XENA:

What, the survivors from Lanis? (off Eve's surprised look) We met Caleb and Alyssa in the village-- what's left of it. Apparently, they're not welcome to stay here much longer.

EVE (sighs):

Yes--it's still the same issue as-- (glances at Gabrielle) with Darion. (pause) The council felt that we can no longer afford to feed children and old people who aren't part of the tribe. The girls can join the tribe if they want, but... (she shakes her head and trails off) That's not what I meant.

GABRIELLE:

There's more?

EVE:

One of the Amazons, Scyleia, got pregnant by a villager from Lanis. He was killed in Andromache's attack. Now, by law, she must be punished for being with a man without the tribe's knowledge or permission, outside of the mating season. The child was born today. And-- (she pauses)

GABRIELLE (understanding):

It's a boy.

EVE (nods slowly):

Which means that both mother and child have to be banished from the tribe forever.

GABRIELLE (shakes her head, appalled):

No...

CYANE (to Xena and Gabrielle):

Scyleia was from my tribe, an orphan that the late Queen Yakut took under her wing. No matter what anyone says--she's got the heart of a true Amazon. We've lost so many already; must we lose her, too?

EVE:

The council convenes in two days. We're going to make one last attempt to change their minds, but... (shakes her head) If they don't--she'll have to leave with the baby in a week.

XENA (grimly):

Like I said, never a dull moment in this village.

CUT TO

An Amazon hut. Scyleia is sitting up in her bed breastfeeding her baby. She stares at her baby, smiling every time he coos and gurgles during his feeding.

Light floods into the room and she looks up to see Gabrielle moving the flap of animal skin that is covering the doorway to the side. She walks into the hut.

GABRIELLE:

Scyleia?

SCYLEIA (tentatively):

Queen Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE:

Can I talk to you?

SCYLEIA (indicating a stool):

Sure.

GABRIELLE (sits down):

How are you doing?

SCYLEIA:

Okay. (looks down at the baby in her arms, smiles and looks back at Gabrielle) Isn't he precious?

GABRIELLE (smiles):

He's beautiful.

SCYLEIA:

I just wish...his father were here.

Gabrielle gets an uneasy and reflective look on her face. She looks away for a moment, then back at Scyleia, putting on a smile.

GABRIELLE:

Have you thought of a name?

SCYLEIA:

No. Part of me was praying that... (looks down) ...I wouldn't have a boy. It just makes everything more complicated...

Gabrielle sits down on the edge of the bed, looking directly at Scyleia.

GABRIELLE:

Eve is doing everything in her power to help you. So is Cyane. We don't want you banished any more than you do. But Amazon law... (sighs) I've tried to change it before, for Darion. I failed. (Scyleia nods, understanding) It's not going to be easy.

SCYLEIA (sighs):

I guess I deserve this.

GABRIELLE:

No, you --

SCYLEIA:

It was my choice to be with Miekos. I could have stayed away. But I fell in love with him and... (trails off)

Gabrielle looks down, putting a hand on her stomach.

GABRIELLE (quietly):

I know. (she looks back at Scyleia) Look, no matter what happens, you have a beautiful, healthy child. Even if they banish you--they can't take that from you.

Gabrielle squeezes Scyleia's shoulder reassuringly and then stands up.

GABRIELLE:

Try not to worry.

SCYLEIA (smiles wanly):

Thank you, Gabrielle.

CUT TO

The Queen's Hut. Eve is sitting at a table with some scrolls piled on it. She is reading through one of them; obviously not finding anything useful, she throws it down on the table and drops her head in her hands, groaning in frustration.

Xena walks in.

XENA (trying to be lighthearted):

Not going well, huh?

Eve looks up at Xena, a look of near hopelessness on her face.

EVE:

I've been looking through these (gestures toward the scrolls) trying to find *something* that could help with Scyleia's situation. (she shakes her head) Nothing. Mother--maybe I'm just not cut out to be queen.

XENA:

Eve--

EVE:

I wasn't born or raised an Amazon. I don't have true knowledge of their ways. How can I guide them through these difficult times? How can I ask them to change their traditions when I was never a part of those traditions-- (her voice drops) when I'm responsible for so much damage to them in the past? (she lowers her head) I'll never be good enough.

Xena sits down next to her and looks at her sympathetically, putting an arm around her shoulders.

XENA:

I understand how you feel, Eve. You know, Gabrielle often felt the same way--she wasn't born into the nation either. And yet she led the Amazons through some *very* hard times--and often guided them toward more peaceful--more compassionate ways. (pause) You are a good queen, Eve. You just have to believe it.

EVE:

Thanks. (She sighs and hugs Xena back) I just wish my believing it could help Scyleia.

XENA (kisses her forehead):

I know.

They sit in silence for a moment; then Eve rises to her feet

EVE (shakes her head):

I feel so--frustrated. I think I'm going to take a walk by myself.

XENA (looks at her sympathetically):

Sure.

Eve walks to the doorway, then pauses for a moment to grab a staff with an ornate bird's head standing by the wall, and leaves. Xena looks after her, concerned.

CUT TO

A long shot of the village, Eve walking through the street, staff in hand. It's late afternoon and the sun is already low.

CUT TO

A forest path. Dusk is starting to fall. A rider on a gray horse comes into view, seen from the back; he is a man of strong build, wearing a pleated leather vest, with light brown hair.

There is the sound of a woman's war-cry and the man stops, looking around. The sounds of fighting come from further down the path. The man pauses, then touches the horse's reins and moves on cautiously.

CUT TO

The man, still seen from the back, reaches the edge of a forest clearing. He cautiously parts the bushes and peeks to see what is going on.

Eve has the staff in her hand and is jumping and flipping, practicing her fighting moves. There is no one around; she is practicing with herself. Her moves are beautiful yet fierce; she seems to be letting out some pent-up energy and frustration as she swings her staff at the bushes and finally hits a tree, letting out a scream. She lowers the staff and sighs, closing her eyes.

Suddenly, Eve tenses slightly and stands up straight, then whips around, holding out the staff in a combat stance.

EVE:

Who's there?

The branches part and the rider comes out into the clearing. It's Virgil.

Eve lowers her staff and stares at him, her face reflecting shock, a flash of joy, and many conflicted feelings.

VIRGIL:

Hello, Eve.

He dismounts and walks toward Eve, stopping only a few paces from her. He smiles at her, his smile filled with tenderness and awe.

VIRGIL:

That was amazing.

EVE :

Virgil...what are you doing here?

VIRGIL:

I came here to see you, Eve. I want to make this work.

Close-up on Eve's shocked face as we:

FADE OUT

ACT TWO

FADE IN

On the same scene, Eve staring at Virgil.

VIRGIL (dubiously):

You--don't seem too glad to see me.

EVE (finally able to speak):

I--am. It's just that...things are complicated right now.

VIRGIL (smiles):

You mean, as opposed to--how simple they usually are.

Eve can't help chuckling. Virgil steps closer and takes her hands; after a moment's hesitation they embrace each other, and when Virgil moves to kiss Eve she does not resist but responds. It's a long, sweet, tender kiss; after a few moments Virgil pulls back and smiles at her.

EVE (sighs):

Very complicated.

CUT TO

A hut. Gabrielle is lying on some fur bedding, staring pensively into the ceiling. Xena comes in.

XENA:

Hey. You all right?

GABRIELLE:

Yeah....

XENA:

Where's Darion?

GABRIELLE:

Lykia should be bringing him back soon. (she sits up) I went to see Scyleia.

XENA:

How's she doing?

GABRIELLE:

Okay, considering the circumstances. (She sighs) I hate seeing children at the mercy of laws like this. If Scyleia is banished, where is she going to go with her baby? His father is dead. She has no one. (shakes her head) It's not right.

XENA (looks at her sympathetically):

Maybe Eve can do something.

GABRIELLE (sighs as she looks down):

It got me thinking about--my own baby--and-- (she trails off)

Xena comes over and sits down next to Gabrielle.

XENA:

Gabrielle--do you wish you'd told Haimon?

GABRIELLE:

I had to let him make his own choices. (looking into the distance) I'm sure he'll be back...someday.

She turns and looks at Xena with a wistful smile; Xena smiles back at her.

GABRIELLE (continues):

But for now--I guess it's just you and me again, huh?

XENA (nods):

I guess...

Her smile slowly fades and Gabrielle looks troubled.

GABRIELLE:

Xena, look--I--I didn't mean to suggest that it's over between you and Ares. I--

XENA:

It's okay.

GABRIELLE:

Have you seen him since--

XENA (curtly):

No. (She looks away)

GABRIELLE:

Talk to him.

She gives Xena an encouraging smile. Xena smiles back uncertainly.

XENA (changing the subject):

Eve is having a hard time.

GABRIELLE:

You should have faith in her. (pause) I do. That's why I gave her my place as queen.

XENA (sighs):

And now she's facing the same problem that you were. She's been trying to find some loophole in the law...

GABRIELLE (shakes her head):

There is none. (She gets up) I think I'll make some supper before Darion gets back.

XENA:

Need any help?

GABRIELLE:

No thanks--I'll be fine.

XENA (after a moment's hesitation):

I'll be back later.

GABRIELLE (looks at her, understanding):

Good luck.

CUT TO

A field outside the Amazon village (the same one as in the "Scorpion and Swan" scene in *PATH OF VENGEANCE*). The sun has set and it is almost dark.

Xena walks through the field in a determined stride, then stops.

XENA (calls out, her voice loud and harsh):

Ares.

There is no answer as the camera pans over the empty field, a few fireflies dancing in the dusky air.

XENA (louder):

Ares. (still no answer) Ares, we need to talk.

CUT TO

A close-up of Ares' face, looking very grim.

The camera pulls back to show that Ares is in the great hall of Mount Olympus. Zeus is seated on his throne, with Hera and Athena seated on smaller thrones next to him. Ares, Artemis, Hephaestus,

Aphrodite, Hades, Persephone, and Apollo are standing in a semicircle in front of the throne, while Hermes is slumped in an armchair by one of the walls. He looks pale and sickly.

ZEUS:

I want a full report on what's happening.

The camera zooms in on Ares and Artemis, who is standing next to him. Zeus' voice fades into the background.

ARTEMIS (whispers):

So I heard the king of Crete heard about you abandoning King Melodic after you gave him your blessing. That big temple he was building for you? (she clucks her tongue in mock sympathy) I hear it's being rededicated to Athena.

Ares doesn't say anything as the camera pans over to Athena who is listening intently to her father, then back to Ares and Artemis.

ARTEMIS (chuckling):

It was all fun and games when Xena used to mess up your plans years ago. Now it's a matter of life or death, and she's still screwing you over.

ARES (snaps at Artemis, aloud):

You're just jealous because you are losing worshipers much faster than--

ZEUS (shouting):

Ares!

Ares turns his head to see Zeus looking furious and all the other gods are glaring at him. Ares looks over at Artemis, who is staring innocently at Zeus.

HERMES (angrily):

This is ridiculous! I'm over here suffering and he doesn't even care because he has enough worshipers to survive!

ARTEMIS (venomously):

For the time being.

APOLLO (to Hermes, sarcastic):

Come on. Don't go all postal on us, Hermes.

He laughs loudly at his own joke; Hermes snorts.

HADES:

He's got a point. (everyone directs their attention towards Hades) I spend all my time worrying about the underworld; I don't have time to sit around all day gathering up a fan base.

HERA:

We are a family. We should be working together.

APOLLO (rolling his eyes):

So I'm supposed to share *my* worshipers with a god who goes around on his flying slippers delivering messages all day. I don't think so.

APHRODITE (to Apollo):

Come on! Have some sympathy, *Mr. Popularity*.

ARTEMIS (laughing):

You're one to talk. You're probably going to outlive us all--after all, (mocking) you're the goddess of luuuve. Those stupid mortals--

ZEUS (off-camera):

Enough!

Silence falls as the camera pulls back for a wide shot of the hall. Suddenly, Persephone cries out and points at something.

PERSEPHONE:

Look!

The camera pulls around to show a ghostly figure approaching from the hallway. It's Demeter.

PERSEPHONE (softly):

Mother.

DEMETER (to the gods):

You fools. The more divided you become, the faster you will die.

The gods stare at her silently. Persephone starts to cry.

DEMETER:

Then you will become nothing but ghosts for eternity. (anguished) Without powers--without feeling--without the ability to appear to mortals.

Persephone runs to her but Demeter vanishes.

The stunned silence is interrupted by a "whoosh" and a flash of light when Ares vanishes into the ether.

CUT TO

Xena in the field. She looks around and rolls her eyes.

XENA:

Well, if you want to play hard to get...fine with me.

She turns to walk away when there is a flash of blue light behind her.

ARES (off-camera, dryly sarcastic):

And I thought I was the one who hated that game.

Xena looks around. Ares is standing with his arms folded across his chest.

ARES:

So, what did you want to talk about?

Xena is silent for a moment. She looks down, then raises her eyes.

XENA:

How are...things?

ARES:

You mean, the Twilight? I'm alive, thank you for asking.

XENA (quietly):

I'm sorry this has...come between us.

ARES:

Well, I didn't ask for this.

XENA (snaps):

You think / did? (Off his silence) Look, if my daughter has something to do with it, I'm sorry. But if it's meant to be...

ARES (finishes for her wryly):

...then we're all supposed to just roll over and die.

A tense silence between them. Xena steps closer to him.

XENA:

Ares--I know you need worshippers to keep you alive. (She reaches out to touch his hand) I understand that. But--

ARES (cuts her off, catching her wrist in his hand):

Do you? Demeter is still around, but she's a ghost--without body or powers, without ability to affect the world in any way. For all we know, she will linger on like this for eternity. We can see her because we're family--and we're gods. If this happens to me, I lose everything... (he stares at her, then finishes quietly) including you.

Xena looks at him, tender and anguished. He lifts her hand and kisses it, then lets go and vanishes before she can say another word. She stands silent and sad as the night deepens around her.

CUT TO

Xena walking back through the village. It is now dark and the village street is lit only by a few torches.

Xena is about to head toward the hut she shares with Gabrielle; then she stops in surprise, seeing Eve walking with Virgil at her side. He is leading his horse.

XENA (surprised):

Virgil?

VIRGIL:

Hello, Xena.

XENA:

What are you doing here? Is everything all right?

VIRGIL:

Yeah. I just... (he glances at Eve, who looks away, then back toward Xena) ...I just wanted to see Eve.

XENA (looks at him intently):

Just a social call, hmm?

EVE (to Virgil):

Come on--I'll take you to my hut. You can stay there tonight... (visibly embarrassed) in--in the spare room. (to Xena) Mother--I really have to talk to you and Gabrielle about the situation with Scyleia.

XENA:

We'll come over.

VIRGIL (looks from Xena to Eve):

I guess I picked a pretty bad time for a visit, didn't I?

There's a brief silence. Then Eve smiles at him.

EVE (quietly):

Virgil...it's okay. I *am* glad to see you.

She and Virgil walk away while Xena stands still for a moment, looking after them.

CUT TO

The Queen's hut. Eve is clearing the remnants of a meal from the table. Xena and Gabrielle come in.

EVE:

Oh, there you are.

GABRIELLE:

Where's Virgil?

EVE (smiles):

Asleep in the other room...it was a long journey.

Her smile fades as she looks at Xena and Gabrielle, who come into the hut. Gabrielle sits down while Xena remains standing.

EVE:

What am I supposed to do? As if things weren't already difficult enough...

GABRIELLE:

He's in love with you.

EVE:

Yes.

GABRIELLE:

And you--

EVE:

Even if we can somehow put the past behind us--what are we supposed to do about the fact that I'm an Amazon Queen? If the council agrees to my taking him as a mate, I could see him a few times a year as the law allows. Or I could resign as Queen and leave the tribe with Virgil as my husband...the way your friend Ephiny did when she married Phantes.

Xena comes over and puts a hand on her shoulder, sympathetic.

XENA:

Eve, I'm sure you'll--

EVE (looks up at her, smiling wanly):

--do the right thing? (sighs) I wish I knew what that was. (she shakes her head, as if forcing herself to snap out of it) Actually, I wasn't going to talk about my personal troubles. I was going to ask you about Ephiny.

GABRIELLE (puzzled):

What about her?

EVE:

She had a son--a centaur boy. Wasn't she able to keep him with her in the village? If you know how she managed to get past the law, maybe I can use that to help--

She stops, noticing Gabrielle's stricken look.

EVE (alarmed):

What's wrong?

GABRIELLE (shakes her head, looking almost ashen):

She...she wasn't. (looks up at Eve, in a stronger voice) At least, not past his first year. It's just that I...I remembered when Ephiny and I talked about it and... (she shakes her head and trails off)

[FLASHBACK]

A long shot of Xena and Gabrielle at the funeral pyres of Hope and Solan, at the end of MATERNAL INSTINCTS.

DISSOLVE TO

Gabrielle sitting in a hut, staring ahead of her as if in a trance. Ephiny comes over and touches her shoulder.

EPHINY:

Gabrielle, come with me. Come back to the Amazon village. You'll be among your people--people who care about you, who'll see you through this.

Gabrielle looks up at her, as if not quite realizing where she is and who's talking to her.

GABRIELLE (listlessly):

All right.

EPHINY:

I'm leaving now. Come on, get your things and let's go.

Gabrielle rises from her chair and rubs her face, looking more alert.

GABRIELLE:

Where's Xenan? Isn't he coming?

Ephiny pauses for a moment, a look of sadness coming over her face.

EPHINY:

No, I just said good-bye to him...he's staying here.

GABRIELLE (surprised to the extent that she's still capable of any emotion):

Why?

EPHINY (sighs):

He's a boy, Gabrielle. *And* a centaur. Under the law, the Amazons are allowed to keep their boy children only until they're weaned. After that, they're sent to live with their fathers. I was allowed to keep Xenan a little longer because his father is dead, but about six months ago I had to send him here. (She sighs) I didn't want to tell you this.

GABRIELLE (somewhat numbly):

You must miss him...

EPHINY (getting emotional for a moment):

Terribly. At least he's close by and I come to visit him, but--it's not the same thing. Sometimes I dream about him at night and then I wake up and can't go back to sleep thinking about him... (she snaps out of it) But what can I do? We aren't supposed to talk about these things. We're Amazons--that's how we've always lived.

GABRIELLE (nods, reflective, and speaks in a dry whisper):

At least your little boy is alive...

EPHINY (stricken, puts an arm around her):

I'm so sorry, Gabrielle...

[END OF FLASHBACK]

GABRIELLE:

It really hurt her to give him up. (She sigh and instinctively places a hand on her own belly.) I don't think she talked about it to anyone else except me. Like she told me--Amazons aren't supposed to talk about such things.

Xena suddenly gives her a very thoughtful look.

XENA:

You know...maybe Ephiny has given us a solution to this problem after all.

EVE (puzzled):

What do you mean?

GABRIELLE (looks at Xena, smiling):

She means she has a plan.

XENA:

Just an idea...it may or may not work.

GABRIELLE (teasing):

And she's going to be cryptic about it.

EVE:

Look, whatever it is, I hope you're right. Because if we fail, then Scyleia and her baby will be thrown out of here in a week.

They exchange worried looks as we:

FADE OUT

ACT THREE

FADE IN

Eve is asleep in the Amazon hut. She twitches and moans slightly in her sleep. We move in slowly toward her face as we:

DISSOLVE TO

Inside Eve's dream.

Eve stands amidst a barren landscape. Broken pillars of a temple are lying on the ground, the fragments of a large stone statue of a woman with a bow and arrow are scattered amongst the ruins.

A tablet broken in half, with Greek lettering on it, lies on the ground. Subtitles appear on the screen to translate the inscription: "All hail, Great Goddess Artemis." Eve looks around in the eerie silence.

Suddenly, she hears the sound of people talking. She turns her head to see a small group of Amazons walk past her. They stop in front of the ruined temple and continue talking in low voices, though Eve cannot make out the words.

There is a flash of green light and Artemis appears in front of the group but they do not appear to see her, or at least don't show any recognition of her presence. Eve watches as the goddess reaches out to touch one of the Amazons; her hand passes right through the body of the woman, who doesn't react at all.

Artemis flinches and pulls her hand back. She examines her hands balefully, then looks up, directly meeting Eve's gaze. They stare at each other for a long moment.

ARTEMIS:

The world is changing around us--but we're not ready. (pause) Are you, Eve? Are *you* ready to face your destiny?

Artemis vanishes--with no flash of light or sparks, just dissolving as if she hadn't even been there. When Eve turns, the Amazons are gone too.

EVE (to herself):

Change--the Amazons must change. I know that. (She whispers as she walks through the ruins) I *know* that.

VOICE (off-camera):

Eve.

Eve turns her head to see Eli approaching her. He is wearing a white robe.

EVE:

Eli--

ELI:

It's not just the Amazons who must change.

EVE (understanding):

The gods?

ELI:

What you just saw is what's to come.

EVE:

I know. The gods will fade.

ELI:

They all will, in time. They will no longer be able to affect the world around them, or even to be seen or heard by mortals. As people begin to forget the gods and turn their faith and hope toward the One God--the God of Love--the many gods will cease to exist to everyone but themselves. This is their destiny.

Eve nods slowly.

ELI:
But they can change it.

EVE:
They can? (confused) You mean--by holding on to worshipers?

Eli shakes his head, then points ahead and Eve looks where he is pointing.

The temple ruins are gone; in their place, a swirling portal forms. Inside the portal, we see an image of Ares giving up his godhood to heal Eve and Gabrielle in "Motherhood" appears. Eve watches as Ares stands up gingerly and removes the chains from his body.

ARES (inside the portal):
I gave up my immortality to save them.

The image in the portal begins to fade and the portal disappears from sight, leaving a blank, desolate land ahead of Eve. Eve looks at Eli.

ELI:
They have a choice, Eve.

EVE:
To become mortal?

ELI (nods):
Everyone in this world has a choice, including the gods. The God of Love never wanted them destroyed. They will fade because their existence now depends on people believing in them--worshipping them. But if they so choose, they can forfeit their godhood and live out a mortal lifespan. (pause) If they do not--

He pauses.

EVE (finishes for him):
--then they *will* fade and live for eternity as ghosts.

ELI:
So it must be.

Eli gently kisses Eve's forehead. She closes her eyes. When she opens them, he is gone.

CUT TO

The hut. Eve opens her eyes and sits up. A close-up on her pensive face.

DISSOLVE TO

Inside a large hut, an old woman sits in a rocking chair. She has long gray hair and is wearing a tribal purple outfit. The hut is filled with Amazon decorations.

A group of about a dozen girls of varying ages sit on a rug on the floor, listening to the woman.

WOMAN:

The Tretomlec people were attacked by a group of barbarians from the north.

The camera zooms in on her before the screen fades to:

[FLASHBACK]

A village is being attacked by a tribe of barbarians. A quick succession of images of men being slaughtered killed houses on fire, women wailing over their fallen husbands.

OLDER WOMAN (voice-over):

The men of the tribe were slaughtered, the village razed to the ground. The women had to flee for their lives.

DISSOLVE TO

Night. The Tretomlec women are gathered around a fire. Their leader is speaking to them.

LEADER:

Tretomlec women--I propose a new mission for us. In honor of our lost fathers, sons, brothers, and husbands--we take no more men into our tribe--but dedicate our lives to helping others! I say--we lay to rest with our beloved men the name Tretomlec--and embrace the name given to us by the Atmah. (raises her voice) From this moment on--we are the Amazons!

[END OF FLASHBACK]

We fade into the old woman.

OLD WOMAN:

And so, from bloodshed and tragedy, the Amazon Nation was born.

The camera pulls back to show Eve standing by the wall, listening very thoughtfully.

OLD WOMAN (smiles):

That's enough for today. Time for your exercises.

The children start getting up, starting to chatter.

OLD WOMAN:

I hope you listened well--there's going to be a quiz, later on!

GIRLS (in a disjointed chorus):

Thank you, Kleita.

They start filing out of the hut, each stopping to bow her head slightly before Eve with a murmured, "My queen." A couple of girls give her wary looks; they're the ones who were listening to Phania the day before.

EVE:

Go on.

As the children leave, Eve turns to the old woman.

EVE (warmly):

I really appreciate your doing this, Kleita. (pause) It's good for the children to know their history.

The older woman smiles as she gets up from her rocking chair.

KLEITA:

Thank *you*, my Queen. I'm so glad to see you place such importance on the schooling of the children. In our tradition, history was one of the first things taught to Amazon girls. But now-- (she sighs) it seems there has been so much war and so much bloodshed, we forget what message we're sending the next generation.

EVE (quietly):

I know. (after a pause) Tell me, Kleita--in our history, have there ever been exceptions to the rule that a woman who had an illicit relationship with a man, and gave birth to a male child, must be exiled from the tribe?

KLEITA:

You're asking because of Scyleia.

EVE:

Yes. (uncertain) I don't want to banish her and her baby. But the Amazon Council... (trails off) They are so sure that what they are doing is right, because the Amazons have lived this way for hundreds of years--

KLEITA:

Even if the council were to change its mind about Scyleia's exile, her child would have to be sent away as soon as it's weaned. You realize that, don't you? (Off Eve's quiet nod) Where is the child's father now?

EVE:

Dead.

KLEITA (digests this for a moment, then nods):

It's a bad situation. I don't know what advice I can give you, Eve.

Pause.

EVE:

I've heard that the Amazons' relations with men have grown much more peaceful over the generations.

KLEITA:

Oh, yes. There was a time--long, long ago--when the only way an Amazon was permitted to lie with a man was if she had defeated him in battle, or captured him in a raid on a village. Anything else was deemed shameful.

EVE:

And then--?

KLEITA:

Then, some Amazon leaders began to realize it was a custom that did the nation more harm than good. It kept us in a state of perpetual warfare. Too many women seeking to take mates and continue the race of Amazons were instead killed or maimed in battle, in the prime of their life, to fulfill the demands of law and custom. And so--

Close-up on Eve, who listens, rapt.

KLEITA (continues, off-camera):

things changed. The requirement became merely a ritual one, so that, once an Amazon chose a man, they would cross swords and he would let himself be disarmed before they could be together...

The camera pulls back to show Kleita talking to Eve, in medium close-up.

KLEITA (continues):

...or so that our elders would make an agreement with a nearby village to abduct some of their men in a pretend raid. (She smiles somewhat mischievously at Eve) I think the Amazons also found that their--dealings with the men were much more pleasant that way. (She puts her hand on Eve's shoulder) So, you see, my Queen...even Amazon tradition can change.

Eve looks at her thoughtfully.

CUT TO

Klymene, a staff in her hand, charging forward with a cry.

The camera pulls back that she is fighting another teenage Amazon. Then the camera zooms out further to show about two dozen Amazon girls doing combat exercises in the training grounds. Some are practicing with staffs, others doing kicks and jumps or swinging from bars.

Eve and Cyane are standing on the sidelines watching.

CYANE:

So, Nari says you have a male visitor. (smiles a little at Eve)

EVE (uneasily):

Yes. It's Virgil.

CYANE:

You know the rules--

EVE (a little exasperated):

Yes, I know. He can't stay here more than three days unless the council grants special permission.

I doubt he'll be staying much longer than that. (obviously anxious to change the subject) Did you talk about Scyleia?

CYANE:

Yes. Nari and Othila are willing to compromise.

Eve turns abruptly, giving Cyane a surprised look.

CYANE (continues):

Scyleia will be exiled for one year--

EVE:

And?

CYANE:

And, she must give up her child before she returns.

EVE (shakes her head):

Her child has no other family.

CYANE:

There are orphanages--

EVE:

She'll never agree to that.

CYANE:

Then you're asking that she be allowed to keep her son here. (after a pause) That would mean-- changing our entire way of life.

Eve and Cyane stare at each other for a long moment. The camera pans to Klymene, who knocks the staff out of her opponent's hands and raises her own staff with a cry of triumph.

CUT TO

Darion pumps his fist in the air in a victory cry. The camera pulls back to show Darion and the children from the Lanis settlement--boys and girls together--playing ball in a large field.

Pan to Gabrielle and Virgil standing together at the edge of the field. The huts of the Amazon village are seen in the background.

VIRGIL (smiles warmly):

Wow. Congratulations.

GABRIELLE (pats her stomach and sighs):

As loosely as I lace them, these leathers are getting too tight for me. I'll have to change into something more comfortable soon.

VIRGIL:

I'm sure you're going to be a wonderful mother. (pauses) Just like you've been to Darion.

GABRIELLE (with an uncertain smile):

Thanks. (after a pause) So, you came here all the way from Athens to see Eve.

VIRGIL:

Yeah. (pauses) I love her, Gabrielle. I want to try to make this work.

GABRIELLE (sighs):

I hope you can. I know that it was very hard for Eve when--you left.

VIRGIL:

Last time we parted, in Moesia, she asked if I could imagine telling our children that their mother killed their grandfather.

Gabrielle sighs and looks away. The sounds of the children at play are heard off-camera, with Caleb shouting, "Throw me the ball!"

VIRGIL (continues):

Well, I've thought of an answer. What I can tell our children--is that their grandfather was killed by Livia, a vicious, cruel Roman commander--who is no longer alive. And I can tell them that it was their mother--Eve--who killed Livia. (after a pause) Do you think that sounds crazy?

GABRIELLE (moved):

No, I think it sounds wonderful. (smiles) But you need to tell it to Eve--not to me.

VIRGIL:

I will. (sighs) Even if we manage to get past that, she's still the Queen of the Amazons. Which means-- (trails off)

GABRIELLE (looks out wistfully at the children playing):

No men allowed.

The camera follows Darion as he throws the ball to Alyssa.

XENA (off-camera):

There you are.

The camera pulls back to show Xena approaching, brisk and businesslike.

XENA:

You know that idea I had last night about how to deal with Scyleia's problem?

GABRIELLE:

Yeah?

XENA:

It's just crazy enough to work. (looks inquiringly at Gabrielle) Are you up for some sensitive chats?

GABRIELLE (only half-joking):

I hope I haven't lost my touch.

VIRGIL (grinning, to Xena):

Well, she definitely has *my* vote of confidence.

GABRIELLE (smiles to him warmly):

Thanks.

Xena stands still for a moment, looking at the children playing. Caleb stops and waves to her; Xena waves back, then turns to Gabrielle.

XENA:

If this works, we could make sure the survivors from Lanis are allowed to stay here too. Well, come on--we haven't got much time!

The camera zooms out for an overhead shot of the children playing and Xena and Gabrielle heading back to the village as we:

FADE OUT

ACT FOUR

FADE IN

The village square. High noon. There is a large platform positioned against a line of trees behind it (the same platform that we had seen in the season 7 episode "Sisterhood" where Varia had been talking to the Amazons and where Eve addressed the Amazons). Amazons are beginning to gather around the platform, talking amongst themselves, some of them obviously wondering what the gathering is about.

Eve walks through the crowd and toward the platform.

As the camera pans over the crowd, we see Phania; then, Virgil at the back of the crowd. The sight of him causes some murmurs among the Amazons.

Pan to show Gabrielle and Lykia standing in the crowd with Darion. Gabrielle is talking quietly to two Amazons, one a blonde in her late twenties, the other a dark-haired, dark-skinned woman who seems to be in her forties. Behind them is a small group of children and old people (male and female), which includes Caleb and Alyssa.

Eve walks up the platform and turns to face the crowd.

EVE:

I'm glad you all came. We'll start the meeting as soon as the council arrives.

Cyane, Nari, Othila, and the other council members come up to the platform and take their seats. Nari and Othila do not look happy.

EVE (to the council):

Thank you for coming. I know this meeting was called hastily--

NARI (looks out into the crowd, then to Eve):

Queen Eve. Why are there outsiders here? This is a town meeting of the Amazons. They have to leave.

EVE:

They are our guests. And this concerns them, too.

OTHILA:

You're flouting our tradition!

There are some approving cries from the crowd--"Yeah!", "You tell her!", "Get them out of here!" while a few voices shout, "No!" and "Eve is right!"

EVE:

Is our tradition so weak that it will crumble from letting a handful of men and little boys attend a town meeting?

Much of the crowd erupts in loud cheers.

NARI (displeased):

All right, let them stay so we can get on with business.

Pan over to the crowd as another loud murmur arises. We see Xena coming up with Scyleia, who is holding her baby in her arms.

NARI (leaps to her feet and shouts):

This woman has been banished from the tribe!

Pan to Scyleia, who shrinks back. Xena puts a comforting hand on her shoulder.

XENA:

No, she hasn't--not until the council has confirmed its decision.

CYANE:

This is about her. She has a right to be here.

Pan to the crowd as the murmurs grow louder.

LYKIA (cries out):

That's right!

Pan back to the platform.

OTHILA (also rises, with clenched fists):

You have no respect for our way of life!

EVE (calmly):

Yes, I do, Othila. But I cannot follow tradition in everything. I see that some things need to change--to make it better for*all* of us.

OTHILA (sneers as she sits down again):

You mean, you want to let men into the tribe so you can have your boyfriend around.

EVE (ignoring her gibe):

It's not about me, Othila. It's about all of us. Tradition is important--but it can change. There was a time when, for Amazons to have children, they had to go out on the battlefield and conquer a man with a sword, or raid a village and abduct men by force. There were many pointless deaths--pointless hostilities.

Pan to Kleita, who stands in the crowd.

EVE (continues, off-camera):

Then, that changed. When we pay our respects to that tradition today, it's only as a ritual.

Kleita nods, smiling.

The crowd murmurs in assent.

EVE:

Hundreds of years ago, the Amazons began as a nation of women because they wanted to honor their fallen husbands, brothers, fathers, sons. It was never meant to be out of hostility to men. Our foremothers wanted us to be a people who helped others in need. Now, in the name of this tradition, we are denying a home in our tribe--to people whose village was destroyed by our own renegade sisters...

As she speaks, the camera pans over the faces of the Lanis survivors and over Phania's face, contorted with hate; then over the faces of the Amazons as they listen.

EVE (off-camera):

In the name of this tradition, we are about to banish one of our sisters, a good Amazon ...

Pan to Scyleia and her baby.

EVE (continues, off-camera):

... for the crime of loving a man at the wrong time and bearing a child of the wrong sex.

Close-up on Eve.

EVE (continues):

In the name of this tradition, we forced our queen--

Quick pan to Gabrielle and Darion.

EVE (continues, off-camera):

--Gabrielle, to resign--because she would not abandon an orphaned boy.

Gabrielle nods with a small, wistful smile, almost tearing up.

EVE (continues, off-camera):

In the name of this tradition--one of our greatest queens, Ephiny, had to live with a broken heart because she sent away her only child, a centaur and a male. And in the name of this tradition--

Close-up on Eve.

EVE (continues):

--we break our sisters' hearts every day. (looking into the crowd) Tell them, Anara!

Pan to the blonde Amazon in her twenties standing next to Gabrielle. She hesitates.

GABRIELLE:

Tell them. Tell them what you told me.

ANARA:

Eve is right. In the past five years, I have given up three children because they were boys. According to this tribe, I have no children at all because I have never had any girls. (her voice grows shrill, filled with anger and pain) But I'm a mother too and I miss my children! I try not to think about them but--I can't help it. One of them fell ill and died when he was two years old--I got word from his father about this. (She starts to cry) I never even had the chance to see him after I gave him away. And now, I'm afraid to try for another baby because if it's a boy again, I just can't bear to-- (she shakes her head and trails off)

Gabrielle squeezes her hand comfortingly, then glances at the dark-skinned Amazon in her forties standing next to her.

GABRIELLE (quietly):

Tekmessa--?

Tekmessa steps forward.

TEKMESSA:

I gave away a son twenty-two summers ago. Except, by the time I sent him to his father, his father was already married with a child on the way. His new bride didn't want an extra child to feed, and so--he went to an orphanage and was raised there. When I came to visit him, he couldn't understand why I couldn't take him home with me. He was very angry with me for abandoning him. (She sighs deeply) He is now married and with a baby of his own--and I don't think I will ever get to hold my granddaughter.

A murmur rises in the crowd, growing louder and louder. Another young Amazon, a brown-haired girl barely out of her teens, steps up.

YOUNG AMAZON:

I gave away my first child last summer. It was a boy. Sometimes, I wake up at night and I think I hear him crying. (her eyes fill with tears) I know I'll never see him--when he's old enough to understand, his father plans to tell him that his mother is dead.

OTHILA (off-camera, forcefully):

Enough!

Pan to the stage. Othila has risen to her feet, shaking with rage, her lips trembling.

OTHILA:

What is this disgusting spectacle? We are Amazons! Yes, our duties are hard sometimes--but we bear them with fortitude and dignity!

CYANE:

You mean, suffer in silence. Maybe if more Amazons had spoken out, something would have changed sooner. (She looks meaningfully at Othila)

OTHILA (nails her with a hard stare and snarls):

What Don't you *dare!* (to the crowd) This meeting is over! The council will now retire for a private conference and make its decision.

The square fills with shouts. The camera pans over the crowd to show women shouting, arguing, gesturing in agitation.

Pan to Virgil, smiling in the back of the crowd as he looks admiringly at Eve; to Gabrielle, who squats down to hug and kiss Darion; and finally to Xena, who pats Scyleia's shoulder reassuringly as she looks proudly at Eve.

Pan to Eve, who steps up to the edge of the platform.

EVE (shouting over the noise):

I just want to tell you one more thing. Listen to me!

The crowd quiets down a little.

EVE (continues):

From the beginning, the Amazons showed the world an example of what strong, powerful women can do on their own. But if we now accept some men into our midst--that does not make us any less strong or less powerful. It makes us more balanced--and confident enough to not be threatened by the presence of men.

Most of the crowd erupts in cheers.

VOICE (screeching off-camera):

Nooooooooooooooooooooo!

Quick pan to Phania, who is pushing her way to the front of the crowd.

PHANIA:

Don't you see what she's doing? She's ruining this nation! She tried to destroy us before--now she's just doing it in a different way!

Voices in the crowd:

--She's right!

--Don't listen to her! She's a murderer!

--Shut up!

Pan up to Eve, who looks pained.

Phania looks around, finding no support, then turns to Eve again, snarling in rage.

PHANIA:

I challenge you! It's my right!

EVE:

No, it's not. (forcefully) I will not fight you.

PHANIA:

Yes, you will!

She runs up the platform before anyone can stop her and charges at Eve. The other queens leap to their feet in alarm. Quick pan to Xena, who stands alert, her hand on the hilt of her sword.

Eve side-steps Phania and knocks her to the ground. With a shout of rage, Phania gets up and charges Eve again. Eve grabs Phania's shoulders and, in a move reminiscent of her time as Livia (the move she showed Varia in COMING HOME), flips over Phania's head, landing behind her. She then spins and knocks her down so that Phania lands on her stomach. Before she has a chance to rise, Othila steps up and presses her sword to the back of Phania's neck.

OTHILA:

Don't move, Phania. Queen Eve may not have the heart to kill you--but I do.

PHANIA (growls):

Then just *do it!*

Eve looks on, heartbroken, then turns to some spear-wielding guards standing at the foot of the platform.

EVE:

Take her to the prison.

The guards walk up the platform. Othila moves her sword; the guards grab Phania by the arms, hauling her to her feet. Phania struggles but the Amazons hold her tight, binding her hands as they drag her down from the platform. As she is being taken away, Phania spins around and looks back at Eve, who looks determined yet regretful.

PHANIA:

You murdering bitch! Just kill me and finish off what you started!

Eve looks down. As Phania is led away, the crowd breathes an audible sigh of relief.

DISSOLVE TO

Outside the council hut. Xena, Gabrielle, Darion, Lykia and Virgil are waiting; a few other Amazons are milling about.

Eve comes out of the hut, a smile on her face.

XENA:

Good news?

EVE:

Yes. Scyleia can stay here with her child. So can any boy who does not have a father to take him in.

Medium close-up on Gabrielle and Lykia, both of whom glance at Darion. Gabrielle presses her lips together and nods slightly, obviously thinking back to when she had to leave the tribe. Lykia looks moved and confused.

EVE (continues off-camera):

Eventually, we'll fine-tune the rules for everyone else.

The camera pulls back to show the entire group.

EVE (continues):

Oh, and the Lanis survivors will be allowed to stay too.

GABRIELLE:

You did it.

VIRGIL:

I knew you would.

EVE:

We did it. (to Gabrielle) If you and Xena hadn't talked to some of the Amazons and persuaded them to speak at the meeting--

XENA:

Sometimes, all it takes for everyone to see an injustice is for a few people to speak up. (looks curiously at Eve) Did Othila give up a son once?

EVE (nods):

Yes, ten years ago. But--she has always been firmly tied to tradition. Until now.

Xena looks over Eve's shoulder, clearly reacting to something. Pan to show Othila coming out of the hut. She looks composed.

OTHILA (reluctantly):

My son's father was killed by bandits two winters ago. I got word from a village elder. (She sighs) She said that Mykon--that's my boy--was not being treated well by his foster family, and that-- (her voice almost breaks but she steadies herself) he kept telling people his mother was an Amazon who'd come back for him some day and set things right. (She chuckles bitterly) I couldn't do anything, of course. Now, maybe I can. (to Eve) I guess I should thank you. (To Xena and Gabrielle) And you two, because something tells me you had a hand in this.

XENA (puts her arms around Eve and Gabrielle's shoulders):

No, no--the credit belongs to Eve and Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE:

Just to Eve. (smiles) She's the one who went up there before the crowd and pulled it off. You've done good, Eve. I'll go tell Scyleia. (To Darion) You want to see Scyleia's baby?

DARION (enthusiastic):

Sure! (to Lykia, who stands still, lost in thought) Lykia, you come with us too--come on!

Lykia looks uncertain but Darion tugs at her hand and she follows. Gabrielle, Lykia and Darion walk away as the other council members file out of the hut. Cyane is smiling, as are some of the others; a few including Nari look somewhat stunned.

CYANE (to Eve):

You did it. (smiles) A happy ending, for once.

Shouts are heard off-camera. Eve turns in alarm.

EVE:

Now what?

Antiope comes running, looking distressed and out of breath.

ANTIOPE:

Queen Eve...

Xena, Eve, Cyane and Virgil exchange alarmed looks.

CYANE:

What is it?

CUT TO

Xena, Eve, Cyane and Antiope stand outside the prison hut, looking inside through the open door. Phania's feet, dangling in the air, are visible inside.

ANTIOPE:

She told me she'd rather have been hanged with Andromache than live under your rule. (sighs) I guess she meant it.

Stricken, Eve leans on Xena's shoulder. With an anguished look, Xena puts an arm around her.

XENA:

Eve...you can't always save everyone. You did your best.

Eve stands up straight.

EVE:

Cut her down. Rebel or not, she'll have a proper Amazon funeral.

DISSOLVE TO

A long shot of Gabrielle and Darion talking to Scyleia, who is sitting on a bench outside her hut, her baby in her arms; Lykia stands to the side, looking away. Darion reaches out to touch the baby's hand and Scyleia smiles at him. She turns to Gabrielle and says something that looks like "Thank you."

DISSOLVE TO

Gabrielle, Lykia and Darion are walking down the village street. Gabrielle looks thoughtfully at Darion and Lykia, obviously struggling with herself. Finally she speaks.

GABRIELLE:

Darion, you know...now that the rules have changed--you're free to stay here in the village with your sister. You'd be treated no differently than all the other kids.

Lykia looks at her in shock and comes to a halt. All three stop. Darion is looking at Gabrielle, his face full of doubt.

DARION (glum):

I understand.

GABRIELLE (taken aback):

You understand...what?

DARION:

You're having a baby of your own now and...I'll just be in the way.

Lykia purses her lips, looking away. Gabrielle, an anguished look on her face, leans down to hug Darion.

GABRIELLE (near tears):

Don't say that. I couldn't love you any more if you were my son by birth. We *are* family and nothing is ever going to change that. I just meant that--I thought you wanted to be with your sister and--

DARION:

I want to go with you.

Lykia nods and looks away. Gabrielle kisses Darion, obviously moved, then stands up and turns to Lykia.

GABRIELLE:

Lykia, I--

LYKIA (in a neutral voice):

It's okay. I know you'll take good care of him.

Darion looks at her, obviously realizing that he has hurt his sister's feelings. He comes up to her and tugs at her arm.

DARION:

Hey. I'll come back and visit a lot. I promise. (to Gabrielle) That's going to be okay now, right?

GABRIELLE (smiles through tears):

Right.

LYKIA (nods slowly):

I'd like that.

She gives Gabrielle a none-too-friendly look. Gabrielle looks from her to Darion. Close-up on Gabrielle's face; she looks torn between relief that Darion is staying with her and guilt that he'd rather be with her than with his sister.

DISSOLVE TO

Evening. A funeral pyre is burning bright in the middle of the Amazon village. Amazons are gathered around, with Eve standing next to Xena, Gabrielle, Klymene, Lykia and Antiope. They look at the pyre somberly. In the background, mournful chanting by Amazons is heard.

DISSOLVE TO

Later that evening. The fire in the funeral pyre is dying down and most of the Amazons have left. Eve turns and starts to walk away, Xena and Gabrielle at her side.

XENA:

Eve--it's not your fault. Phania lived in the past and could never get beyond it--that was her choice. You are a good queen--and the choices you've made today are going to give this nation a better future.

Eve stops and looks at her pensively.

EVE:

I hope you're right, Mother. (sighs) I, uh--have to go and talk to someone. I'll catch up with you later.

She goes off, striding briskly. Xena and Gabrielle look after her, curious.

GABRIELLE (grins a little):

I guess she and Virgil are going to try and work things out after all.

XENA:

It's about time.

CUT TO

Eve walking through the field where Xena talked to Ares before. It is night and the field is flooded with moonlight. Eve stops and looks around.

EVE:

Ares.

There is no answer. After a brief pause, Eve speaks louder.

EVE:

Ares. I need to talk to you. It's important. (pauses) It's a matter of life and death.

After a pause, there is a flash of blue light and Ares appears in front of Eve.

ARES (eyes her suspiciously):

Now this is a surprise.

Eve stands up very straight, obviously uncomfortable.

ARES (continues):

So. Whose life and death are we talking about here?

EVE:

Yours. And the other gods'.

ARES (understanding her, turns very serious):

The Twilight.

EVE:

Eli came to me in a dream.

Pan to Ares, who flinches at the mention of Eli.

EVE (off-camera):

He told me about the fate of the Olympians.

Ares stares at her in nervous anticipation.

Pan back to Eve.

EVE:

As you lose worshipers--you will grow weaker and finally die. Then, you'll linger forever as ghosts in this world--mere shells, unable to make mortals see you or hear you.

ARES (snorts):

Tell me something I don't know. That's what's become of Demeter.

EVE:

Eli has told me more. (pause) You all have a choice.

ARES:

And what choice is that?

EVE (quietly):

A choice you already made once.

ARES (understanding):

To become mortal.

EVE (nods):

If you're mortal, the Twilight will have no effect on you and you can live out the rest of your life.

ARES (shakes his head):

Become mortal. (He chuckles bitterly) Not sure how well that'll go over with the family. How long do we have?

EVE:

I don't know. I wouldn't wait too long if I were you.

A brief pause.

ARES (curious):

And why are you telling me this?

Eve thinks for a moment.

EVE:

Because the Olympians should be able to make a free choice. Eli wanted you to have that chance and--he was right. Now it's up to you. (She hesitates for a moment) And besides...you once gave up your godhood to save my life. I know it was for my mother's sake. Now--I owe this to both of you.

She turns around and walks away. Ares remains standing in the field, his arms crossed, a thoughtful and somber look on his face.

CROSS-FADE TO

A medium close-up of Xena and Eve sitting together in an Amazon hut in the candlelight, Xena's arm around Eve and Eve leaning on her mother's shoulder, as we:

FADE OUT

THE END

[The staff wishes to thank the Athens Academy of Natural Sciences for its generous grant for the study of the Amazons' mating habits.]