

SHIPPER SEASON NINE



**Production #XWP200/SS66
Episode #9.19**

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Logline

Xena and Ares settle back into the "real world"; however, their homecoming is cut short when they cross paths with Aphrodite who is in need of help to get out of a very unusual situation.

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June 20, 2007

TEASER

FADE IN

The camera pans across a wall painting that depicts a younger Zeus holding a lightning bolt and wielding it against the Titans.

The titles appear across the screen: **ONE MOON AGO**

The camera zooms out to show Zeus staring at the wall painting, deep in thought. Behind him there are a series of flashes of light as many figures begin to materialize.

The camera pulls away for a wide shot of a small chamber with rock walls, lit dimly by torches, and held up by ancient columns. Zeus turns around to face the gods that have just arrived. Hera and Athena step up calmly toward Zeus. The other gods (Aphrodite, Hephaestus, and Hades, and a human-formed Poseidon) look somewhat confused. The camera zooms in on Hephaestus, looking pale and sickly.

APHRODITE (scanning the area):
Whoa. This is different.

ZEUS (nods):
I've called you here because there's a very important problem the Olympian Council has to discuss.

POSEIDON (looking around):
I take it Artemis wasn't invited.



ZEUS (sighs):
No, I'm afraid Artemis *is* the problem. (he pauses for a moment) She's becoming too powerful. She has the full power of Ares' godhood as well as her own--and it seems that Apollo, at the moment of his death, transferred his power to her as well. Not content with that--she has been stealing temples from other gods in her quest for power, and taking away what worshipers they still have. (forcefully) She has to be stopped.

HADES (skeptical):

And how do you propose to do *that*?

ZEUS:

Artemis and Apollo stole the Eye of Hephaestus from Olympus and used it to trap Ares. Xena freed Ares from the Eye, but when I went to the caves in search of it--it was gone. Artemis most likely took it, knowing that it could be used against her.

HEPHAESTUS (connecting the dots):

So I take it you want me to make another one.

ZEUS:

If the Council agrees.



POSEIDON (grasping onto his trident):

So because Artemis is becoming too powerful, we're just going to lock her up for eternity. (sarcastically) Gotta love family.

ATHENA (stepping in):

Forgive me, Uncle, but we don't have much of a choice. Artemis' methods are--unacceptable. She has already gone against the family.

HERA (softly):

She's--desperate. Her brother's gone...her mother Leto has passed on as well...

Zeus gives her a quick, somewhat guilty look at the mention of his former mistress.

HERA (continues):

She has nothing left to live for--except power...and immortality itself. And she'll do anything to keep what she has.

HADES:

You know, this is probably just what (spits out the words) *Eli's God* wants. For us to turn on each other and start a war. (growing agitated) This is sick! He allowed us to come back from the dead, and now we have to sit around and wait to die?! Right now, my wife is growing weak, my mother-in-law continues to haunt us... (He pauses and points a finger at the gathering, angrily) And I do *not* want to hear any mother-in-law jokes about this!



APHRODITE (softly):

Look, we're all in this together...

POSEIDON (rolling his eyes):

Give it a rest, Aphrodite. You still have plenty of worshipers. The Fates have told us one god may yet survive the Twilight. It'll probably be you.

ATHENA:

Or it may end up being Artemis if we don't act now.

HADES:

You know, Athena--last time you told us we had to act quickly, we all ended up getting slaughtered by a certain Warrior Princess. So forgive me if I don't want to jump right in.

POSEIDON:

At least we don't have to worry about Xena anymore. No sign of her or Ares for weeks.

Aphrodite shoots him a glare.

HERA:

Look, if we don't act now--

HEPHAESTUS (interrupting):

--then I'll be dead. (everyone goes silent) Isn't that what you're trying to say? I don't have much time left, and you obviously need me if you want something to capture Artemis with. (sarcastically) Surprise, surprise.

Hephaestus turns to walk away. Aphrodite reaches out to grab his arm.

APHRODITE (softly):

Heph...

He dematerializes. She looks around at the other gods, then shrugs and disappears as well.

Athena sighs.

HADES (snorts):

These meetings are useless. They always turn to family squabbles. I have other matters to attend to.

Hades dematerializes, followed by Poseidon.

Zeus, Hera, and Athena remain.

ATHENA (sarcastically):

Well, that went well.

DISSOLVE TO

A chamber on Olympus. The walls are decorated with metallic objects ranging from weaponry to masks, and other art projects. The rest of the room is draped in pink, almost as if it's trying to hide the objects hanging on the wall.

APHRODITE (off-camera, irritated):

Heph, please!

The camera pulls around to show Aphrodite leaning against a statue of herself. Across from her is Hephaestus.

HEPHAESTUS (grunting):

Mortal? I struggled enough as a god, and now I am just supposed to give up everything I know to live the life of a common man?

APHRODITE (pleading):

Heph--you're *dying*.

Hephaestus shakes his head and walks away, limping across the room. He sits down on a couch by the wall, looking tired and useless.



HEPHAESTUS:

I realize that. And the last days of my life have to be spent on creating something for Olympian to use against Olympian. I never created the Eye for that--it was supposed to be used against the Titans, not our own kind!

Aphrodite comes over and sits next to him.



APHRODITE (softly):

It doesn't matter. None of that matters anymore. Heph, we have to be there for each other. (she tries to smile)

HEPHAESTUS (bitterly):

We? I don't see *you* having any problems. You have more worshippers than Zeus himself!

APHRODITE (lays a hand on his arm):

But Heph--I-- (she falters)

Hephaestus looks down at her hand, then rises abruptly and limps away.

Close-up on Aphrodite as she watches him, still sitting on the couch, looking heartbroken.

APHRODITE (whispers):

But I love you...

CROSS-FADE TO

Steam rising from the water.

A title appears on the screen: **THE PRESENT**

The camera pulls away to show a hot spring under a cliff. Xena is seated in the water in the rocky basin. She is leaning back, her eyes closed; Ares sitting behind her, massaging her shoulders.

XENA (softly):

You haven't lost your touch.

ARES (smiles):

I hope not.

He kisses her neck. Xena turns around to face him, clasps her hands on the back of his neck, and covers his face with passionate kisses, then kisses his mouth.

XENA (breaking the kiss):

I love you.

ARES (breathless):

Xena--

He captures her lips with his. After a brief but passionate kiss he suddenly pulls back, looking concerned. There is blood on his mouth. The camera pulls around on Xena to show blood dripping from her mouth as well. Her eyes widen as she begins to cough up blood.

ARES (frightened):

Xena!

She tries to talk, but her mouth is full of blood. She collapses into his arms; the camera pulls around to show an arrow sticking out of her back. Ares looks up, horrified. Pan to another Xena, dressed in her normal leathers, standing by the spring. She slowly lowers the crossbow she is holding in her hand.



Bewildered, Ares looks from her to the Xena lying in his arms, now face up, her face covered with blood and her eyes open and frozen in death.



ARES (confused):

Xena?

Extreme close-up on Xena as she grins wickedly.



XENA (mockingly):
Yes, it's me.

The camera pulls back to show her standing in the Monarch's red dress and veil. She throws her head back and laughs gleefully.

SMASH CUT TO

Ares sits up abruptly. It's dark. Ares is breathing hard, awakened from his nightmare. The embers glow from the dying fire. He looks around and sees Xena sleeping nearby. Gabrielle can be seen sleeping on the other side of the campfire.

Ares wipes his forehead and starts to lie back down, but his eyes focus on the woods. A dark figure can be seen moving in the distance. He quickly reaches for his sword and slowly gets up. He steals forward toward the trees. A dark shadow appears behind him.

Ares turns back. The figure reveals itself--as Xena.

XENA (whispers):
Shh...

She is holding on to her chakram, which reflects in the moonlight. Quietly, they both make their way into the trees, going in different directions, Ares holding his sword and Xena her chakram.

The camera pans on a tall man standing by a tree, almost hidden in the darkness. He sees Ares moving towards him and moves to the side--only to find Xena's chakram at his neck. He gasps and raises his hands in surrender.

MAN:
Don't hurt me--please!

XENA:
What are you doing following us? Who sent you?

MAN (gasping):
The great goddess...

XENA (clenching her teeth):
I knew it. One of Artemis' goons.

MAN (shakes his head):
No, no--not Artemis...

Xena looks at him, frowning.

MAN:
Aphrodite.

ARES (confused):
Aphrodite?

MAN:
She--she wants to invite you to a baby shower.

XENA (raises her eyebrow, incredulous):
A baby shower?

The man lowers a hand to reach inside his vest.

ARES (points the sword at him):
Hey!

Slowly, the man pulls out three scrolls tied with pink ribbons.

MAN (sheepishly):
Your invitations.

Putting the chakram back on her belt, Xena takes one of the scrolls, unties the ribbon, unfolds the scrolls and reads it. Then, she looks up.

XENA:
Well. This is...different.

She and Ares exchange an amused look as we:

FADE OUT

ACT ONE

FADE IN

Morning. Forest clearing.

Xena, Gabrielle, and Ares are sitting next to a dying fire. A frying pan is lying next to Gabrielle, as the three of them finish off what appears to be scrambled eggs. Gabrielle is wearing a new outfit. It looks

similar to Xena's pregnancy outfit from Season 5, except that it is brown with red accents along the sleeves and on the decorative pleats of the skirt. The roundness of her belly is very evident now.

GABRIELLE:

So I--uh, *she*--ended up an Amazon Princess? (off Xena's nod in ascent) That's so strange. How you can follow a totally different path and end up in the same place.

XENA (somewhat grimly):

Well, it didn't work out that way for all of us.

GABRIELLE (puts a hand on her arm, gently):

I'm sorry.

They all sit in silence for a brief moment.

GABRIELLE:

Thanks for telling me. (Xena nods, Gabrielle looks at Xena for a moment) It's so good to have you back. (glances at Ares) Both of you.

XENA (smiling):

It's good to be back.

GABRIELLE (rises):

Well, we should probably start packing up if we want to make it to this baby shower on time.

Ares chuckles, then pulls out his invitation and looks at it.

ARES:

Weird--it's not really like Sis to send a messenger. You'd think she'd pop in herself once she heard we were back.



GABRIELLE:

She was around a lot while you were gone, helping me out. But then she had something else to worry about. (She sighs) Hephaestus--hasn't been well.

A close-up of Ares as he realizes what this means. He nods grimly.

GABRIELLE:

I haven't heard from her in at least three weeks.

ARES:

Poor sis. She took it pretty hard before when--

Xena darts him a quick guilty look; Ares break off and clears his throat.

ARES (gets up, with forced joviality):

So. I guess we need to get moving.

GABRIELLE (sighs and nods):

It's too bad Darion isn't here. (smiles) A baby shower. It would have been so much fun for him.

XENA (cheerfully):

Well, I bet he's having a lot of fun with the Amazons for his sister's birthday. (She rises) Come on. I'll take care of the dishes and the water skins.

CUT TO

A riverbank. Xena is at the water's edge, scrubbing the dishes from breakfast. The camera zooms in on her as she scrubs absent-mindedly, lost in thought. Then she pauses, her expression changing.

After a short pause Xena whips around, her arm shooting out.

The camera pulls back to show her holding the frying pan at Ares' neck while Ares looks at her nonchalantly, in an obvious visual homage to the scene in *Chakram* after she joined the two chakrams.

XENA (grinning):

Sneaking up on me?

ARES:

You can still do that when I'm mortal, huh?

XENA:

Me and my many skills. (lowers the frying pan a little) Don't tell me you came to help with the dishes.



ARES (mock glare):

The God of War does *not* do dishes.

Xena shakes her head, amused and a bit exasperated, as she lowers the frying pan.

XENA:

Riiiiight. (after a brief pause, she nods toward the water skins) Well, then maybe the God of War can fill up those water skins while the Warrior Princess does the dishes.

ARES (uncomfortably):

Actually, I, uh--I wanted to talk to you--

XENA (her expression inscrutable):

Yes?

ARES (fidgets a little):

We haven't really had a chance to talk much since we came back and... (there's a short, uncomfortable silence) Are we okay?

XENA:

Why not?



ARES (looking at the ground):

Xena... (looking up at her) Look, I've waited all this time for a chance to be with you, and now that we're together-- (pauses) I--I mean...I know I messed up, but--the point is--

Xena is about to say something when Gabrielle's voice is heard off-camera.

GABRIELLE (off-camera):

There you are!

The camera pans around to show Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE:

Need any help with those dishes? (smiles brightly) I'm all packed up and ready to go.

Pan back to Ares, who rolls his eyes.

ARES (mutters under his breath):

Great timing, as always.

DISSOLVE TO

Long shot of a temple on top of a small hill. Xena, Gabrielle and Ares are seen coming up the hill, Xena and Gabrielle riding, Ares walking by their side.

Close-up of Xena, Gabrielle, and Ares standing outside the temple looking at the big wooden doors, which are closed.

GABRIELLE:

Are you sure this is it?

XENA:

It's the only temple of Aphrodite in this town.

ARES:

Well, once I've caught up with Sis, I'll be heading back into town if you don't mind. I mean, if word gets around that the God of War attended a baby shower...

GABRIELLE (smirks a little):

Former God of War.

Ares scowls at her with a displeased "hmph."

Xena picks up a brass knocker hanging by the door and knocks.

Suddenly the doors are thrown wide open; two teenage girls in light pink robes stand in the doorway.

GIRL #1 (in a rather irritating baby voice):

Welcome to the Temple of Aphrodite.

GIRL #2 (in a similar voice):

Please, come in. The Love Goddess awaits!

Xena rolls her eyes, glancing at Gabrielle; Gabrielle nudges her slightly and smiles, while Ares' scowl deepens. Xena, Gabrielle and Ares enter the temple, the camera following them inside.

GIRL #1:

Please have a seat.

She motions toward a large, heart-shaped pink sofa in the center of the temple.

GIRL #2:

The Goddess will be with you shortly.

The girls leave as Xena, Gabrielle, and Ares take a seat on the pink sofa. The camera pans around to show the temple draped in pink, decorated with statues and vases--a typical temple of Aphrodite.

XENA:

Since when does Aphrodite have greeters at her temple?

ARES:

I know. Not really her style, is it?

APHRODITE (off-camera):

As if you'd know anything about style, bro!

The camera pulls around to show Aphrodite standing behind them, leaning against a statue. She is dressed differently than her usual outfit, in a white dress, with a decorative flower top. Xena, Gabrielle and Ares turn toward her.

APHRODITE (beams at them, spreading her arms and giggling):

Well, there you are!

They get up from the couch, as Aphrodite giggles with excitement and charges Ares--embracing him in a hug. Ares seems a little taken back.

APHRODITE:

Aw, I've missed you, bro. Olympus is a bore without you.

Ares pats her back rather awkwardly. Aphrodite breaks the hug, then turns to Xena, embracing her in a hug as well.

APHRODITE (grins):

It's good to see you again too, Warrior Babe. You had us all worried sick, you know!

XENA:

It's good to see you too, Aphrodite.

Aphrodite turns to Gabrielle.



APHRODITE (indicates her stomach and squeals):

Whoa! You get bigger by the second!

GABRIELLE (blushes):

Um...thanks.

APHRODITE (sincerely):

Sorry I haven't popped in lately. Things have just been so--crazy. (She pauses a moment, thinking

about something else, then snaps out of it and turns to Xena and Ares) But once Athena told me that you two were back, I just *knew* I had to throw the biggest baby shower of the century!

Xena scans the empty temple, looking a little confused.

XENA:

So, huh...where are all the other guests?

APHRODITE (sighs, disappointed):

I hate to break this to you, but--well, I've had a bit of a glitch with my messenger service, so--you guys are the only ones I could get hold of.

Ares frowns, puzzled.

GABRIELLE (pats her on the arm, smiling):

Don't worry, it's the thought that counts. Besides, I like it this way. Just the four of us, all cozy and intimate.

APHRODITE (brightens):

Well, what are we doing just standing around? We've got a lot of catching up to do! Sit down, sit down!

She sits down on the sofa, pulling Ares down with her. Xena and Gabrielle sit down as well.

ARES (a little uneasily):

So how are things on Olympus?

APHRODITE:

Well, Artemis is still on her crazy power trip. She's left Olympus and now she's making a huge pitch to mortals, like she's the One Goddess.

GABRIELLE (concerned):

Aphrodite...how's Hephaestus?

Aphrodite hesitates, visibly saddened; then she perks up, quickly changing the subject.

APHRODITE:

Oh, look! The drinks!

Xena, Gabrielle and Ares exchange concerned looks.

One of the girls in pink approaches, carrying a tray with four drinks on it.

APHRODITE:

Thank you. Just set those down here.

GIRL #1 (curtsies):

Yes, my goddess.

She sets the tray down on a table and walks away. Aphrodite grabs two of the drinks and hands them to Xena and Ares.

APHRODITE:

That's two Bloody Bacchae for you guys...a Hestian Virgin for the pregnant one... (she hands Gabrielle her drink) non-alcoholic, of course...and a Screaming Barbarian for me. (She picks up her own glass) Cheers!

They clink glasses. Then, Aphrodite starts to gulp down her drink a little too quickly.

ARES (worried):

Sis--everything all right?

APHRODITE (cutting him off):

Your present! Gabby, I still haven't given you your present.

GABRIELLE:

Oh Aphrodite, I...

APHRODITE (claps her hands):

Girls! Come on, can a love goddess get some help around here? (pouts) I'll be right back.

She quickly gets up and walks toward the back of the temple.

XENA (quietly):

Look, I think it's best not to bring up Hephaestus. It obviously upsets her.

GABRIELLE (distressed):

You don't think he's--gone, do you?

ARES:

Don't know, but there's something else going on. (snaps his fingers) I just can't put my finger on it.

Aphrodite comes back with a present wrapped in pink sparkly paper and bows. She hands it to Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE:

You shouldn't have.

APHRODITE (smiling):

Just open it.

Gabrielle unwraps the gift, which ends up being a brown leather bag.

APHRODITE (excited):

It's a diaper bag! (as Gabrielle opens the bag) Well, that and much more, sweet pea. See you keep the diapers in there, the bottles in that compartment, and in there you can keep...

GABRIELLE (shocked):

My scrolls!

Gabrielle opens a compartment that contains a couple of scrolls.

APHRODITE (giggles):

Yeah, I dug up a couple classics. The one about how I enchanted your scroll. That was a trip, wasn't it? (laughs) You can fit in some of the baby's toys in here, too...and it's even got a holder for your sharp pointy things!

Gabrielle flips the bag over to see slots for her sais.

APHRODITE:

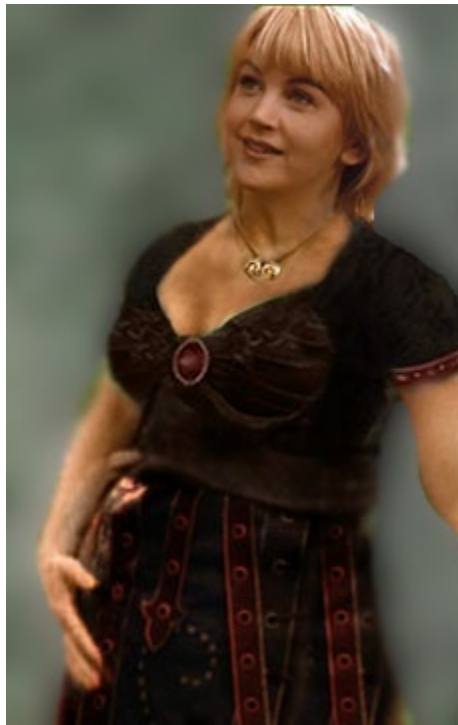
And to top it all off...

GABRIELLE:

There's more?

APHRODITE:

D'uh! It totally matches your new outfit!



GABRIELLE (sincerely):

Aphrodite...this is amazing. Thank you so much.

She hugs Aphrodite.

APHRODITE:

Anything to have my favorite bard be the coolest, kick ass mom in Greece.

XENA (smiling):

You've really outdone yourself, Aphrodite.

There is a knock at the door. Everyone turns to look ("whoosh" sound effect).

XENA:

Well, what do you know. Looks like someone else made it.

APHRODITE (giggles):

That must be the surprise!

Xena and Gabrielle look at her warily.

GABRIELLE:

The--surprise.

APHRODITE (to Ares):

Bro, you might want to close your eyes for this one.

Ares stares at her, puzzled.

There is a second knock, even louder than the first and clearly impatient.

APHRODITE:

Come on!

She pulls Xena toward the doors as the two attendants throw them open. Ares follows.

XENA:

What's this?

The girls open the door. Two stern-looking, tall, muscular men are standing outside, wearing uniforms with a star badge engraved with Greek letters attached to their brown leather vests.

XENA (frowns):

They look like officers from the town guard. (looks at Aphrodite) What is going on here?

APHRODITE (whispers, eyes wide):

No, no...those must be the strippers!

XENA and ARES (in a shocked half-whisper):

Strippers?

APHRODITE:

Yeah. (looks the men over critically as they come in) Not as cute as I was hoping, but--

XENA (loud, angry whisper):

You invited strippers to Gabrielle's baby shower?

APHRODITE:

Come on, Warrior Babe. She's a pregnant woman with raging hormones. It's perfectly normal for her to enjoy this.

GABRIELLE (behind them):

What's going on?

XENA (without turning her head):

Don't ask.

ARES (whispers to Xena):

You know the good thing about being a god? I could have just (clicks his fingers) zapped myself out of here. Now what do I do?

XENA (whispers back):

She's *your* sister.

The camera pulls back on Aphrodite as she sashays toward the two men, seductively sipping her drink.

APHRODITE (sipping her drink,):

Sorry, officers, were we being too loud?

OFFICER #1:

Ma'am, you are under arrest.

APHRODITE (whispering):

No, not me. The party is for the pregnant girl.

She points toward Gabrielle, who approaches, looking puzzled.

Officer #2 pulls out handcuffs and puts them around Aphrodite's wrists.

APHRODITE (shouting):

Whoa--hold on. I'm not into this kinda stuff. I thought you were just gonna take your clothes off.

OFFICER #2:

You're coming with us.

The two girls look terrified.

GIRL #2:

My goddess...?



APHRODITE (whimpers, struggling with the handcuffs):

This is some kind of mistake! Let me go!

Xena draws her sword and points it at the men.

XENA (forcefully):

You heard her. Let her go!

ARES (disgusted):

What kind of strippers are you?

GABRIELLE (shocked):

Did you say "strippers"?

OFFICER #1 (sarcastically):

Sorry to disappoint you, mister, but we aren't strippers. (to Xena) Now please, lower your weapon. We are officers of the law (flashing his badge) and your friend here is under arrest.

Xena slowly lowers her sword.

GABRIELLE:

For what?

OFFICER #2:

Illegal occupancy of a temple. She's been living here for two weeks, and hasn't budged even after she was asked to leave. She claims to be the Goddess of Love.

APHRODITE (shouting):

That's because I am!

OFFICER #1 (chuckles):

Oh, really. Well, surely the Goddess of Love can free herself from a pair of handcuffs.

Aphrodite stands motionless, as Xena, Gabrielle, and Ares stare at her.

ARES (softly):

You're mortal.

Aphrodite slowly nods, whimpering.

OFFICER #2:

She's also under arrest.

The camera zooms in on Aphrodite's fearful expression as we:

FADE OUT

ACT TWO

FADE IN

Outside the temple.

Officer #2 leads Aphrodite up to a horse-drawn wagon and helps her inside, her hands still cuffed, then shuts the door. Officer #1 gets into the driver's seat and grabs the rein of the horse while Officer #2 mounts his horse. They ride away.

The camera pulls around to show Xena, Gabrielle, and Ares standing in the temple doorway.

ARES (angrily):

We could have so taken them.

GABRIELLE:

They're officers of the law! It wouldn't be right.

ARES:

Oh, and letting them arrest my sister is right?

XENA:

Listen, they told us we can go to the jail and bail her out. So that's what we'll have to do.

ARES (shakes his head):

Mortal...I *knew* something was different about her.

XENA:

Well, yeah. The lousy messenger service should have been a tip-off.

ARES:

I don't get it. Why would she give up her powers so soon?

GABRIELLE:

It doesn't matter now. Lets just go down town and get this worked out.

CUT TO

Aphrodite, with her hands shackled, is sitting in the back of the van. There are tears streaming down her face.

HEPHAESTUS (off-camera):

Don't get angry at *me*!

DISSOLVE TO

[FLASHBACK]

Hephaestus and Aphrodite's quarters on Olympus--the room we saw in the teaser.

APHRODITE (upset):

You got them killed, Heph. What am I supposed to say?

Hephaestus shakes his head in frustration and begins to walk away from her.

Titles appear across the screen: **THIRTY YEARS AGO**

HEPHAESTUS:

Xena's child was the bringer of the twilight. She had to die.



APHRODITE (nearly in tears):

And what about Gabrielle?

Hephaestus walks into the corner of the room and stands by a pillar with a small marble statue of himself and Aphrodite on it, locked in a kiss. He most likely crafted them himself, and it looks to be designed for their wedding.

HEPHAESTUS (looks wistfully at the statues):

Gabrielle was in the cart with Xena and Eve. She died in the crash. (gritting his teeth) There was nothing I could do.

The camera pulls on Aphrodite, tears are running down her cheeks. Hephaestus turns to look at her.

HEPHAESTUS (rolling his eyes):

By the Fates, Dite. She was just a mortal.

APHRODITE (irate):

She was my *friend!*

HEPHAESTUS (yells):

Then she shouldn't have sided with Xena and her child! She had it coming!

Aphrodite screams in anger as she throws her hand forward and hurls a fireball towards him. Hephaestus jumps out of the way as the fireball hits the pillar and the statues, knocking them to the ground.

Hephaestus looks up in shock to see Aphrodite still angry and breathing heavily.

APHRODITE (holding herself back):

Get out.

HEPHAESTUS (trying to reason):

Aphrodite--

APHRODITE (forcefully):

I don't want to see you again. *Ever.*

Hephaestus sighs and then vanishes in a flash of light.

[END OF FLASHBACK]

Aphrodite stares out the window as the cart comes to a stop.

CUT TO

A wide shot of the town is shown.

DISSOLVE TO

Jail. A rather large, thickset law officer is working the front counter. He is chewing on something. The doors in front of him open up as Xena, Gabrielle, and Ares enter. The officer swallows whatever he was eating and looks up.

LAW OFFICER:

What can I do you for?

GABRIELLE (politely):

We are here to pay the bail for a friend of ours. She, uh--she was arrested for living in Aphrodite's temple.

The officer grabs a sticky, round pastry from a wooden box beside him and takes a bite. The cream filling from the pastry squirts out all over his mouth and fingers.

LAW OFFICER (with his mouth full, trying to wipe the mess off of his face to look at least somewhat presentable):

O-ohhh--you mean the one who thinks she's the Goddess of Love? (chuckles)

GABRIELLE (softly):

Yeah, that's her.

The law officer chuckles again and nearly chokes on his pastry, as the camera pans over to Ares, who looks like he could strangle him. The law officers has a fit of coughing.

LAW OFFICER:

So you're all friends of hers?

GABRIELLE (nods):

Yeah.

ARES (stepping up):
I'm her brother.

LAW OFFICER (chuckling):
Let me guess. Hermes--messenger of the gods.

Ares rolls his eyes.

LAW OFFICER (taking another bite of his pastry):
Nah, I'm just kidding. Hold on a minute.

The officer moves to the back of the room. There's a series of rather tall, cumbersome looking contraptions standing along the back wall. They look like a bunch of wooden chests lined with bronze stacked one on top of the other. Each chest has an inscription of a Greek letter on the front, starting with "alpha" and ending with "omega".



The officer walks up to the first chest tower and looks at the top chest that reads "alpha". He turns a bronze handle and the front of the chest pulls down (rather than opens at the top like most chests do). He pulls down another bronze handle on the inside of the chest that triggers a spring to activate in the back of the chest and a wooden shelving unit extends out of the chest, scrolls hanging from it in alphabetical order. He fingers through the scrolls, looking for the right one.

After a moment he gives a muffled "ah-hah" and takes the scroll off of the wooden bars it hangs on, pushes the shelving back inside and closes the chest.

LAW OFFICER (looking at the scroll):
Well, it seems as if *Aphrodite* has been transferred.

XENA (confused):
Transferred?

LAW OFFICER:
Yup. Looks like they sent her to the funny farm. (off their confused looks) An asylum, you know, for the-- (he twirls his fingers at his temple) It's just a coupla streets down from here.

GABRIELLE:

Why would they do that so quickly?

LAW OFFICER (guffaws):

Well, the woman claims she's the Goddess of Love. She's obviously a few olives short of a jar.

Xena, obviously irritated, turns to Gabrielle and Ares.

XENA:

Come on. Let's get going.

ARES:

We're getting her out of there.

LAW OFFICER:

Good luck with that! (chuckles) They're not just going to let somebody go until they get 'em fixed up here. (He points at his head, then takes another bite on his pastry)

XENA (sarcastically):

Well, thanks for your help, officer.

LAW OFFICER (tries to grin, his mouth full):

Anytime.

The three exit the jail.

CUT TO

Xena, Gabrielle and Ares are walking briskly down the street, Xena in the middle, Gabrielle and Ares at her side.

GABRIELLE:

This is ridiculous.

ARES:

We have to get her out of there. She's mortal, she lost her husband, and if they put her in there then she probably *will* end up going crazy. (shakes his head) She's been there before. *I've* been there before. And I'm *not* letting that happen to her again.



XENA (gives Ares a warm look and puts a hand on his arm):
We'll get her out.

ARES:
Got a plan?

XENA:
Not yet. (annoyed) Why does everyone always think I have a plan?

GABRIELLE (smiles):
Because you usually do. (thinks a moment) Look, what if we just go in there and tell them that we know her and she really *is* Aphrodite, she just lost her godhood?

ARES (snorts):
Yeah, that'd get us locked up right next to her. You're a big help.

Xena stops suddenly in her tracks, abruptly laying a hand on Gabrielle and Ares' shoulders to bring them to a halt.

XENA:
I do now.

ARES (confused):
You do now what?

XENA:
Have a plan.

ARES (puts an arm around her shoulder):
That's my girl.

CUT TO

Exterior shot of the insane asylum. It is a large, stone building built out of pure white limestone bricks, reflecting the sun so much that it is almost blinding. The asylum is surrounded by a stone wall.

DISSOLVE TO

Inside the asylum. Healers wearing long white gowns are walking down the stark white halls. The camera pulls around to show the entrance. A man comes in pushing Aphrodite who is sitting in a small wooden chair with rickety wheels. Her hands are tied; she looks frightened and confused.

A tall man with dark hair walks up to her.

ASSISTANT (to the man pushing the cart):
Lets see what we got.

The assistant holds up a wooden board with a scroll pinned to it, skims the scroll and then looks down at Aphrodite and smiles.

ASSISTANT:

Hello, my name is Caprinus.

APHRODITE (forcefully):

I'm not crazy.

CAPRINUS (reading the scroll):

Uh-huh...it says here you call yourself Aphrodite, the Goddess of Love. Asked to leave the temple where you took up residence three times before you were arrested... (reading on) Had two girls from town serving you at the temple and made them believe you were the Goddess of Love... (He looks up at her, shaking his head reproachfully) Tsk, tsk. (goes back to the scroll) Told the arresting officers your father Zeus would make sure they burned for eternity in Tartarus...

APHRODITE (playing innocent):

I'm kinda having a bad day.

CAPRINUS (puts his hand on her shoulder):

Listen, *Aphrodite*, here at the Cyrilla Asylum for Troubled Souls, we want to help you find your true self. (reassuringly) We are here to help you.

APHRODITE:

Listen, when my friend Xena--

CAPRINUS:

Oh, Xena's a friend of yours? The Warrior Princess? (He shakes his head and sighs.) Right. (To the man pushing the cart) Take her to her room. The medic will see her shortly.

Aphrodite begins to struggle.

APHRODITE (shouts):

Get me out of here! I'm not crazy! (yells) *I'm not crazy!*

DISSOLVE TO

Fade in on a small room. The walls are painted white; a very small window in the back allows a small amount of light to enter. The camera pulls around to show Aphrodite slouched helpless in the corner, seated on a mat. She is wearing a blue tunic and pants. The door to the room in front of her is closed and we hear the sound of a bolt being moved shut.

She sighs helplessly.

HEPHAESTUS (off-camera):

Aren't you even going to talk to me?

[FLASHBACK]

Aphrodite's temple. Hephaestus is kneeling at the altar. The temple is empty aside from some decorations and statues of the goddess.



HEPHAESTUS (searching for words):

I...I don't know how else to reach you. (whispering) It's been five years since they died, and since... (voice trails off) I miss you Aphrodite.

Titles appear across the screen: **TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO**

The camera pulls around to show Aphrodite in her quarters on Olympus. Before her is a portal in which she's watching Hephæstus.

HEPHAESTUS (choking up, off-camera):

I'm sorry for what I did. (pauses) I just want our marriage back. (softly) I love you, Aphrodite.

The camera zooms in on Aphrodite's troubled face, then pulls out to show the portal and zooms in on Hephæstus, who remains at the altar, waiting for her to appear. He lowers his head and disappears.

The camera pulls back on Aphrodite.

ARES (off-camera):

Not gonna talk to him, huh?

Aphrodite whips around to see Ares standing next to her.

APHRODITE (pouts):

Hey! What are you doing watching me?



ARES:

I got a lot of time on my hands.

The camera zooms in on Ares. His expression is strangely emotionless and dead.

Aphrodite shakes her head and turns to walk the other way.



APHRODITE:

Well, I'd appreciate it if you stayed out of my business, bro.

ARES (raising his hands):

Hey, I just stopped by to see how you were doing.

Aphrodite stops, and turns to face him.

APHRODITE (softly):

I'm...I'm sorry.

There is a short silence between them.

APHRODITE (quietly):

I haven't talked to him since the day that--the prophecy was shattered. (shakes her head) I don't know what to say to him. I don't think I can forgive him. (almost in a whisper) But I still miss him...it's hard to lose someone you love.

Tearing up, she looks at Ares as he looks away, avoiding eye contact.

[END OF FLASHBACK]

CUT TO

Outside the psychiatric hospital. Inside the walls of the hospital is a garden surrounding the building. The camera pulls in on Gabrielle and Ares as they walk down the path. Gabrielle is wearing a blue dress and some fancy jewelry, while Ares is dressed in fancy green clothes. They do not look pleased to be there.

GABRIELLE (mutters):

I can't believe we are actually going along with this plan.

ARES (rolls his eyes):

Well, it wasn't *my* idea.

GABRIELLE:

Yeah? Well, she got it from something you said. So I'm holding you responsible.

ARES (through clenched teeth):

Let's just get it over with.

They approach a portly middle-aged woman in a white gown sitting at a table, scribbling on a scroll.

GABRIELLE (sighs):

Here goes nothing.

As they come closer, the woman looks up.

WOMAN:

Can I help you?

GABRIELLE (acting very pompous):

Hello, I'm Eutropia. This is my husband, Andros.

Ares gives the woman a forced smile. The woman extends her hand for a handshake.

WOMAN:

I'm Erika. It's a pleasure to meet you both. (to Gabrielle, glancing at her stomach) You--do know this isn't a maternity hospital, right?

GABRIELLE (blushing):

Right. Um, this isn't for me.

ERIKA (with a big, fake smile):

Well, congratulations. I'm sure you'll be great parents. Is this your first?



ARES (grins evilly):

No, it's our fifth. She just (clicks his fingers) pops 'em out one after the other.

Gabrielle looks daggers at him, then laughs heartily.

GABRIELLE (laughing):

Oh, my husband is such a kidder. It's our first.

ERIKA:

I'm sure you've already got a name picked out.

GABRIELLE:

Well...

ARES:

If it's a boy, we're naming him Ares. You know, after the God of War and all.



GABRIELLE (laughs again):

Such a kidder. (She pats Ares on the arm, laughing, while the camera pans down to show her kicking him in the leg.) As if we'd name our firstborn after such a brutal, violent god.

ERIKA (with a fake friendly laugh):
Of course not.

Ares looks irritated; Gabrielle nudges him and he pretends to laugh.

ERIKA:
So how long have you been together?

GABRIELLE: **ARES:**
Three years. Seven years.

They both look at each other. Erika looks at them, puzzled.

GABRIELLE (slightly at a loss):
Well, you see, we've been *married* for three years, but, uh...

ARES (lowers his voice to a conspiratorial near-whisper and leans toward Erika):
...but it feels more like seven.

Gabrielle glares daggers at him. Erika looks scandalized for a moment.

ERIKA (dubiously):
Well, as long as you're married... (glances at Gabrielle's stomach) You *are* married, right? (off Gabrielle's indignant look, she gives another fake laugh) How silly of me. Of course you are. I can tell you're just *perfect* for each other.

Gabrielle looks like she's about to be sick while Ares playfully puts his arm around her.

ARES:
I know. She tells me every day she just can't believe how lucky she was to find a man like me. (to Gabrielle, squeezing her shoulder) Don't you, baby?

Gabrielle manages a forced smile. The camera pans over to show her digging her nails into Ares' back. He winces visibly.

ERIKA (frowns):
Something wrong?

ARES (in a stifled voice):
No, no--just--a cramp.

GABRIELLE (grits her teeth):
You're right, honey. I'm *incredibly* lucky to have found a man like him. Uh, like you.

ERIKA:
Adorable. (pauses, then huffs and shakes her head at her own chattiness) Well, look at me, taking up your valuable time. What is the purpose of your visit, please?

GABRIELLE (puts on a sad expression):
We would like to check in a family member.

ERIKA:

Oh, I'm so sorry to hear that. And who is this family member?

ARES:

That would be my wife. (laughs)

Erika gives him a shocked look. Gabrielle forces another merry laugh.

GABRIELLE:

Don't mind my husband--ha-ha--I'm used to his sense of humor. (she slaps Ares jovially on the shoulder while the camera pans down to show her kick him in the ankle.) I'm afraid it's my sister.

ERIKA:

What's wrong with her?

GABRIELLE:

Well, I was told that your asylum specializes in the cases of people who think they're someone else.

ERIKA:

That's right.

GABRIELLE:

You see, my sister, she thinks she--

XENA (off-camera):

YIYIYIYIYIYIYIYIYI--YA!

Xena appears on the scene, doing cartwheels along the garden path. She lands on her feet. Her hair is a mess, and she is wearing what looks like a cheap Xena Halloween costume.

She lunges toward Erika and tips over the table. Erika jumps to her feet.

XENA (pointing at Erika):

Are you Callisto?

Her personality seems to be a cross between Meg and insane Xena in *The Furies*.

ERIKA (frightened but trying to maintain her dignity):

No, I'm not. My name is Erika. And you are?



XENA (whispering):

The name's Xena. Some call me the Warrior Princess. (yells) YIYIYIYIYIYI - YAAAH!

Xena begins to do cartwheels.

ERIKA (to Gabrielle and Ares):

I think you brought her to the right place.

Xena lets out another horrendous war cry as we:

FADE OUT

ACT THREE

FADE IN

A hallway in the asylum. Gabrielle and Ares are walking down the hallway with Erika, talking.

ERIKA (to Gabrielle):

You see, what we do is make them realize that their *true* personalities are just as important as the people they are pretending to be.

ARES (somewhat sarcastic):

Sounds good to me.

Xena's loud horrendous war cry echoes down the hall and the camera pans over to show Xena running down the hallway screaming.

GABRIELLE (laughing):

Oh, ha-ha-ha--there's my sister. I was afraid we'd lost her.

XENA (breathless, grabs Gabrielle's shoulders):

We have to get out of here, *Gab-ri-elle!*

ERIKA (calmly):
What's wrong, Fenora?

XENA (snarls):
I told you my name is *Xena*!

ERIKA (reasoning, as if with a child):
Now, Fenora--



XENA (to Erika):
You ever heard of the pinch?

ERIKA:
You mean, when Xena--

Xena grabs Erika's shoulder and actually pinches her. Erika lets out a yelp.

GABRIELLE (shocked):
Xena, stop! (catches herself) Uh--I mean, Fenora--

ERIKA (glares at her sternly):
Now, you see how dangerous this poor woman's condition is? Her delusions are starting to rub off on *you*!

XENA (to Gabrielle):
Ares is after us! He's trying to make me his Warrior Queen!

ARES (chuckles):
You know, you should probably just take him up on that.

Xena growls at him.

GABRIELLE (to Xena):
Listen, you are going to stay here for a while. They are going to help you.

XENA:
They are going to show me how to defeat evil? To fight for the Greater Good?

GABRIELLE (smiles indulgently):

Yes.

Xena squeezes her in an exaggerated hug; the camera zooms in as she whispers into Gabrielle's ear, then pans down to show her passing Gabrielle a piece of parchment.

XENA:

I'll miss you.

ERIKA (to Xena):

Now come with me. I'll show you where you will be staying.

Xena follows her, then stops, turns, and once again lets out that horrible war cry.

The camera pans over to Gabrielle and Ares.

ARES (dubious):

I--think she enjoyed that a little too much.

They begin heading towards the exit.

GABRIELLE (holding the parchment Xena handed her):

All right, let's get this plan in motion.

CUT TO

Aphrodite room at the asylum. She sits slouched in the corner, an aggravated expression on her face. Across from her, on a stool, sits a woman with dark hair wrapped tightly in a bun, wearing a stern white gown with a name badge that has Greek lettering on it. She's writing in a scroll.

HEALER (in clipped tones):

Well, since you won't tell us what your real name is, I guess I'll just have to continue calling you Aphrodite for now.

APHRODITE (sighs):

Whatever.

HEALER:

So. Tell me some things about your past.

Aphrodite looks up at her listlessly.

APHRODITE:

My past... (sighs) I just want to move on and forget about the past.

HEPHAESTUS (off-camera, trailing into the flashback):

It's so good to hear you say that.

[FLASHBACK]

Hephaestus' forge. Aphrodite is in front of Hephaestus who is just holding a hammer, having just constructed some type of armor.

Titles appear across the screen: **TEN YEARS AGO**

HEPHAESTUS (quietly):

I'm so sorry for--what happened. (pause) I've missed you so much.

APHRODITE:

I've missed you, too.



HEPHAESTUS:

Can we start over?

He pulls out a small diamond ring and she extends her hand as he places it on her finger. They lean in for a kiss.

[END OF FLASHBACK]

HEALER:

Have you lost someone you loved?

[FLASHBACK]

From *Motherhood*. The gods are attacking Xena, Eve, and Gabrielle on the beach. Hephaestus throws his axe and Xena throws her chakram. The chakram strikes the axe causing it to fall to the ground. Xena catches her chakram and charges forward, picking up the axe and hurling it at Hephaestus. The axe strikes Hephaestus in the chest and he falls to the ground.

CUT TO



Olympus. Everything begins to shake as Aphrodite clutches her heart.

[END OF FLASHBACK]

APHRODITE (whispers):

Yes.

HEALER:

And then you felt as if life had nothing to offer you anymore?

Aphrodite looks down.

[FLASHBACK]

Daylight. The end of *Motherhood*.

Aphrodite, still in black, her face stained with tears, stands next to Ares in a grassy field by the ocean. They are watching Xena walk away toward Gabrielle and Eve.



ARES (sighs):

Thanks for bringing us down here. Would've been a long trek down from Olympus on foot.

Aphrodite nods silently. Ares looks at Xena, who is talking to Eve and Gabrielle. Aphrodite puts her hand on his shoulder.

APHRODITE (softly):

Don't let her walk away, bro. (Startled, he looks back at her) You're mortal now-- and you did it for *her*.

ARES (trying to be cocky):

Don't worry, we'll work it out.

APHRODITE:

At least you still have a chance to be with her. (she sniffles) Heph is gone...forever. What am I going to do?

Her face crumples and she bursts into tears, burying her face in Ares' shoulder. A little startled and not sure how to respond, Ares awkwardly puts a hand on her back, patting her gently.

[END OF FLASHBACK]

HEALER:

And would you say that you became--unbalanced after that loss?

[FLASHBACK]

Aphrodite is lying on her side in a bed. The look on her face is empty and lost. Red sheets are covering her body and there is a hand around her waist. Caligula rises up from behind her and kisses her bare shoulder.

Titles appear across the screen: **FOUR YEARS AGO**

CALIGULA:

You know...for the Goddess of Love, I expected you to be a little more...loving.

APHRODITE (her voice flat):

My husband is dead. My whole family's gone. I have to spend an eternity alone.

CALIGULA (chuckles):

Who would have thought that immortality would be such a chore. (strokes her shoulder) What if...I could help relieve you of this burden?

Aphrodite shrugs.

CALIGULA:

All it takes... (he kisses her neck) is for you to will it. With every kiss... (he kisses her neck again) a small part of your godhood--could pass to me.



APHRODITE (apathetic):

You can have it.

He turns her over so that she's lying on her back, then leans in and kisses her. Caligula's body begins to glow faintly as he starts to drain her powers. When he breaks the kiss, Aphrodite's body falls limp and her arm hangs over the side of the bed.

The camera pans over as Caligula lifts her hand and takes off the ring that Hephaestus gave her. He grins, a greedy glint in his eye.

[END OF FLASHBACK]

HEALER (looking over her scroll):

So, you lost your husband and it drove you into depression. You said you--forgot yourself. (pauses) Is this happening to you again?

Aphrodite looks into the distance.

[FLASHBACK]

Aphrodite is in her chamber in Olympus, standing in front of a full-length mirror, brushing her hair slowly.

Titles appear across the screen: **THREE YEARS AGO**

Suddenly, Aphrodite tenses, as if sensing something. She turns around. There is a flash of orange light; when it clears, Hephaestus is standing before her. Aphrodite's mouth falls open in speechless shock.



HEPHAESTUS (his eyes glistening):
Aphrodite.

He comes closer; she continues to stare, dropping the brush. Her knees buckle and she sinks down; Hephaestus is quick enough to catch her and kneels, holding her in his arms. She lifts a hand to touch his face.

APHRODITE (tearing up with joy):
You're...real? You're really here?

HEPHAESTUS:
Yes, I am.

APHRODITE (bewildered):
But how...

HEPHAESTUS:
I'll explain it later. (pauses) I'm back.



He leans toward her and their lips touch in a silent moment of supreme tenderness. Then, Aphrodite wraps an arm behind his head and he grips her waist and pulls her closer. They kiss, in a pose reminiscent of Auguste Rodin's sculpture *The Kiss*. A yellow glow envelops them as they embrace.

[END OF FLASHBACK]

Aphrodite stares ahead, then turns listlessly toward the healer. A tear rolls down her cheek.

[FLASHBACK]



Hephaestus is in the same condition that he was in teaser. His face is pale and white and he looks deathly ill. Aphrodite is hovering over his bedside. She reaches out to touch his hand.

[END OF FLASHBACK]

APHRODITE:

I don't want to talk about it. (sniffles)

The healer looks at Aphrodite and sees her distress.

HEALER (rolling up her scroll):

Well, I think that's all for now. We'll continue later.

The healer gets up and heads towards the door. Aphrodite looks up at her.

APHRODITE (suddenly animated):

Wait a minute, when are they going to let me out of here?

HEALER (imperturbable):

Only time will tell, dear.

APHRODITE (shouting):

You can't just keep me locked up in this place!

HEALER (shrugs):

You still don't remember who you are. You put up a fight when you were brought here. So I'd say you'll be staying here for a while--until we get you the help you need.

She turns and knocks on the door; it is opened from the outside and she walks out. Once again the door is slammed shut, then bolted. Aphrodite sighs and leans her head against the wall.

CUT TO

The asylum's dining hall. A dozen or so attendants stand by sullenly as the patients are eating their meals. The camera pans across to the corner to show Xena (now wearing a blue tunic and pants like the rest) holding a bowl and searching for a place to sit. She heads over to the table at the end and sits next to a small, skinny man in his fifties who is busy eating his meal.

MAN:

Hi. (mouthful of food) My name is Hercules.

XENA (in her normal voice):

Hello, Hercules. Pleasure to meet you. Name's Xena.

PSEUDO-HERCULES (surprised):

The Xena? The Warrior Princess?

XENA (chuckles):

The one and only.

PSEUDO-HERCULES (sheepishly):

Uh, actually, you're the third one this month. (smiles slyly) But you're the real thing, right?

XENA (raises her eyebrow):

Whaddaya think?

PSEUDO-HERCULES (nods contentedly):

Yeah. You're the real thing.

Xena glances down at her food. It's rather unappetizing-looking yellow mush. She tastes it, then makes a face and pushes her bowl to the side.

XENA (in a low voice):

So, Hercules, you don't happen to have heard about a Goddess of Love being brought in?

PSEUDO-HERCULES:

Oh, you mean Aphrodite?

XENA:

That's right.

PSEUDO-HERCULES:

Yeah, they brought her in. She's a wild one, that Aphrodite. (whispers) I heard she bit one of the healers! (giggles)

XENA (looking around the cafeteria):

I don't see her here.

PSEUDO-HERCULES:

Oh, I guess she's one of the special cases. She's probably on the third floor with the others.

XENA:

The third floor, huh.

He nods.

MAN (off-camera):

Xena? Is it really you?

The camera pans around as Xena turns to see a fat, grungy man with bad teeth standing behind her.

XENA (confused):

Do I know you?

MAN (deeply hurt):

You don't recognize me? Oh, Xena. It's me. Your soulmate. *Gabrielle*.

Xena's eyes go wide as he squeezes her in a bear hug.

CUT TO

Tavern. Gabrielle and Ares, still in their disguises, are sitting at a table in the corner. Gabrielle has finished her plate; Ares still has a little left. Gabrielle is studying the small piece of parchment that Xena handed her at the asylum.

GABRIELLE (pointing to Ares' plate):

You gonna finish that?

Ares raises an eyebrow as Gabrielle grabs the piece of bread and jam off of his plate and begins eating it, still looking over the parchment. The camera zooms in to show what seems to be a map of the asylum.

GABRIELLE (looking over parchment):

All right, if things go according to plan, we meet her here-- (points her finger at a spot on the drawing) at the west end of the building. At sunset.

ARES:

If things go according to plan?

GABRIELLE:

Don't worry, they will.

CUT TO

Cafeteria. Xena is talking with Pseudo-Hercules and Pseudo-Gabrielle.

PSEUDO-HERCULES (dubiously):

A distraction?

XENA:

Yeah. What do you think? Should be an easy job for a legendary hero.

PSEUDO-HERCULES (puffs up with pride):

You got it.

PSEUDO-GABRIELLE (timidly):

Xena?



"Gabrielle" reaches out to stroke Xena's hair. Xena growls a little through clenched teeth and tries to back away, then glances at "Gabrielle" and sees the adoring look on the man's face.

PSEUDO-GABRIELLE:

I'll do *anything* for you, Xena.

XENA (realizing he can be useful):

Oh...that's good to know, *Gabrielle*.

She pats the man's hand and submits to her hair being stroked, though not without a little gnashing of teeth. Out of the corner of her eye, she sees an attendant looking at them suspicious. Gently but firmly, she pries "Gabrielle's" hand off her hair.

XENA:

All right, then get ready.

DISSOLVE TO

The sky, with the clouds glowing orange in the sun. Sunset is near.

DISSOLVE TO

Ares and Gabrielle walking toward the asylum.

CUT TO

The dining hall. The meal is in progress with the attendants looking on. Zoom in on Pseudo-Hercules as he suddenly throws some of his mush at another patient.

PATIENT #1:

Hey!

He throws some of his own mush at "Hercules" but hits someone else. A domino effect quickly ensues.

PSEUDO-GABRIELLE (jumps up and yells):

Food fight!!!

The attendants quickly rush in to stop the epic food fight.

Pan over to Xena as she sneaks out of the dining hall. Alarm bells start to ring.

CUT TO

Outside the dining hall. People are heard running toward the hall. Pan to Xena hiding behind a column. Several attendants and healers run past her.

CUT TO

Pandemonium in the asylum's dining hall. Pseudo-Gabrielle jumps up on one of the tables.

PSEUDO-GABRIELLE (in a high-pitched voice):

Now, listen to me! There is only one thing that can end this cycle of violence, and it's--

A gob of mush hits him in the face.

CUT TO

An empty room with the door ajar. A healer's gown hangs on the wall. Xena's hand shoots through the door and grabs the gown.

CUT TO

The front gate of the asylum, in the light of the setting sun. Gabrielle and Ares stand in front of two guards.

GABRIELLE (in the same pretentious tone as before):

We're here to visit my sister. (sighs) The poor dear. She is so ill.

CUT TO

Xena, now in a healer's gown with her hair gathered behind her head, makes her way down a hallway. She approaches an asylum guard.

XENA (with a fake German accent, in very dignified tones):

Excuce me. I vass looking for a patient who vass brawt in today. She calls herr-self Affrodite. Can you tell me vere she iss?

GUARD (suspicious):

Who are you? Don't think I know you.

XENA:

Oh, excuce me. I'm noo here. Ze name is Healer Helewis.

CUT TO

Ares and Gabrielle at the gate.

GABRIELLE:

Such a shame, to see her suffering like this. She's such a gentle, frail, harmless creature. (to Ares) Right, Andros?

ARES:

Oh, yeah. (grins) Harmless as a newborn babe.

CUT TO

Xena and the guard in the hallway.

GUARD:

So how come you haven't got a name badge, huh?

XENA:

Oh, zat's becoss--aaargh!

Losing patience, Xena snarls and jabs her fingers in the guard's neck.

XENA (normal voice):

All right. I just cut off the flow of blood to your brain.

GUARD (gulps in horror):

You're--you're the new Xena!

XENA:

Good guess. Now, you got exactly thirty seconds--

GUARD (gasping for breath):

But...but you're not... (points to his throat) you mean this is--the real thing?

XENA (glares):

You wanna take a chance on that?

GUARD (hastily):

She's in that room over there! (points to a door)

XENA:

Thank you.

She motions to undo the pinch, then thinks of something else and reaches for his belt. The guard's eyes bulge in shock, but all Xena does is take a key chain off his belt and show him the keys.

XENA:

Which key?

GUARD (gasping, points at one of the keys):

This one!

Xena takes off the pinch; then, businesslike, she rips her asylum-issue tunic in half, ties the guard's hands, and quickly gags him.

XENA:

Sorry 'bout that. You guys shouldn't be so quick to lock people up.

CUT TO

Gabrielle and Ares walk in through the front gate and head toward the asylum building. They look around to make sure no one is watching them, then duck off the main path and across the garden.

CUT TO

Aphrodite sitting in her room. The key in the door turns and Aphrodite sits up, alarmed. The door opens and Xena is standing in the doorway.

Aphrodite's mouth opens in joyous shock.



APHRODITE (relieved):

Xena! You're here!

XENA (stretching out her hand):

Come on, I'm getting you out--

Suddenly Xena's jaw drops open, and she trails off. She sways and then falls to the ground, landing in a shot reminiscent of Xena falling with her back broken in *Ides of March*. We notice a dart sticking out of the back of her neck. The camera pulls back to show three guards standing behind her.

APHRODITE (shouting):

Xena!

CUT TO

The garden outside the asylum. Dusk has settled.

Gabrielle and Ares are waiting below.

GABRIELLE (worried):

They should have been here by now.

ARES:

Yeah, well, maybe something *didn't* go according to plan, huh?

GABRIELLE:

Okay, why don't we go inside and find out what's going on.

CUT TO

Inside the asylum vestibule. Erika is sitting at a table, reading a scroll. She looks up to see Ares and Gabrielle approach.

GABRIELLE (adopting the pretentious manner again):

Hello. My husband and I are here to visit my sister. I'd like to see her right away, please.

ERIKA (clucks her tongue):

Oh, my dear lady, I'm afraid I can't do that. (reproachfully) Your sister has given us quite a lot of trouble, you know. She attacked a guard and tried to help another inmate escape.

Ares looks worried.

GABRIELLE (keeping up the act, puts on an shocked expression):

No! I'm quite sure there must be some mistake. Fenora may behave--oddly, of course, but she's really a sweet little soul underneath. She wouldn't hurt a fly.

ERIKA:

Hmm--well, I assure you she hurt more than a fly.

GABRIELLE:

Well, then, all the more reason for me to see her. The poor thing must be scared and confused, all alone in a strange place, torn away from the love of her family--

ERIKA (purses her lips):

I'm afraid that's quite out of the question. She won't be ready to see anyone for a while.

ARES:

What?

ERIKA (unperturbed):

Well, after such violent behavior, she had to be shackled, of course. Not to mention, shot with a dart that had enough sleeping potion to knock out a horse-- (to Gabrielle) if you'll pardon the vulgar metaphor. She'll be out for a while.

GABRIELLE (looks deeply insulted):

Why, this is simply outrageous. We brought my sister here in the hope that she would be treated with tender loving care, not shackled like a criminal and put down with sleeping potions like some animal! (sniffles) We're taking her home right now. (to Ares, who is visibly fuming) Aren't we, Andros?

ARES (almost forgetting about his role):

Damn right we are!

ERIKA:

I'm afraid that's not so simple. Your sister is dangerously insane. As healers, we can't just--

She is interrupted by Ares grabbing her by the collar. He looks enraged.

ERIKA (gasps in shock):

Wait, what are you--

ARES:

Give her back, you stupid cow!

ERIKA (yells):

Heeeelp! Guaaaards!

Three guards come running. Letting go of Erika, Ares downs one of them with a punch and kicks down another. The third guard swings a club at him; Ares grabs his arm, wrests away the club and hits him over the head, knocking him out.

Pan to Erika, who looks at Ares, shaking her head.

ERIKA:

Must run in the family.

She scurries away.



Pan to Gabrielle, who stands hesitantly, not sure what to do.

Pan back to Ares, who clubs the first guard as he starts to get up.

The sound of a horn is heard, raising the alarm. Three more guards run up and are about to attack Ares from behind. Finally, Gabrielle makes a decision and charges into the fight; she spin-kicks one of the guards and elbows another in the chest.

MALE VOICE (off-camera):

Drop that weapon and put your hands up!

The camera pans around to show four guards armed with crossbows, advancing on Ares and Gabrielle.

Ares glances at Gabrielle, who raises her hands up in the air. With a sigh, Ares drops the club and raises his hands as well.

GUARD #1 (grins nastily):

Congratulations. You've just earned yourselves a ticket to the city jail.

Gabrielle and Ares stare glumly as we:

FADE OUT

ACT FOUR

FADE IN

Jail cell. Ares is sitting down on a small wooden bench while Gabrielle is pacing back and forth.

ARES (irritated):

Oh, this is great.

GABRIELLE:

There's got to be some way out of this.

ARES:

There *was* some way out of this--fighting off those four goons. I could have taken all of them by myself.

GABRIELLE (trying to reason):

Ares, they had crossbows.

ARES:

This is coming from someone who's dodged fireballs.

GABRIELLE (softly):

Ares, I'm not just putting *my* own life at risk anymore. (She pats her belly)

Ares responds with a grumpy "hmph" but looks a little sheepish.

GABRIELLE (gasps):

Oh!

ARES:

What, what? You know how to get us out?

GABRIELLE (shakes her head):

No, no, the baby--it's moving...

She smiles, feeling her stomach, then comes up to Ares.

GABRIELLE (motions toward her belly):

Here, you want to--

ARES (backs away):

Hey, hey--I think you got the wrong guy.

Gabrielle purses her lips and looks away. There is a short, awkward silence.

ARES:

Speaking of which, where *is* the boyfriend?

Gabrielle glares at him.

GABRIELLE:

Are you making fun of me?

ARES (raises his hands defensively):

Hey, I'm just asking a question.

Gabrielle's look softens as she realizes that Ares doesn't know about what happened.

ARES (continues):

What? Don't tell me he got himself killed or ran off with another girl. He's much too boring for that.



GABRIELLE (vehemently):

Well, since you take such an interest in my life--Haimon has gone away to join the Roman army. Happy now? (in a softer voice) He doesn't even know I'm-- (she gestures toward her stomach and looks away)

Ares fidgets a little, looking uncomfortable and embarrassed.

ARES (clears his throat):

So...do we find a way to get out of here, or wait for Xena to bail us out?

GABRIELLE (looks up resolutely):

Find a way.

CUT TO

Aphrodite is slumped in the corner of her cell. The door opens and she sits up, alert, only to see that it's the healer from Act 3. She looks disappointed.

HEALER:

Well, now. I understand you tried to escape. (She sits down on the stool.) And then you banged on the door of your room and demanded to be let out. This won't do you any good, you know.

APHRODITE (sullen):

Leave me alone.

HEALER:

Why don't you let us help you? All we want is for you to remember who you really are. How did you get to this point in your life?

Aphrodite sighs, reflecting.

[FLASHBACK]

Aphrodite and Hephaestus' quarters on Olympus.

Titles appear on the screen: **A FORTNIGHT AGO**

It's a similar scene from a previous flashback. Hephaestus is lying in bed, pale, his eyes closed. He is breathing very softly. He is close to death. Aphrodite is sitting at his bedside, weeping.

APHRODITE (sobbing):

It didn't have to be this way!

Hephaestus remains still, his breathing getting slower and slower.

APHRODITE (feeling his forehead):

If you had just given up your godhood...we could have lived out the rest of our lives together. (heartbroken) It would be better than this.

She begins to wipe away the tears from her eyes.

APHRODITE (sniffing):

I can't lose you again, Heph. I just can't.

She puts her hands over his chest. Her fingertips begin to glow, the light flowing into Hephaestus' body.

[END OF FLASHBACK]

Aphrodite remains in her cell, reflecting.

ATHENA (off-camera):

What made you go through with it?

[FLASHBACK]

Aphrodite and Athena are in a chamber on Olympus.

APHRODITE (softly):

I love him.

ATHENA:

Hephaestus has all of your powers now. But he doesn't know it. He thinks he managed to save himself.

APHRODITE:

Let him think that.

ATHENA:

Don't you want to talk to him?

Aphrodite shakes her head.

APHRODITE:

I don't want him to feel like he owes me. Just tell him I chose to be mortal. (pause)
Now please, get me out of here.

Athena manages a warm smile and touches Aphrodite's shoulder. They dematerialize.

[END OF FLASHBACK]

Aphrodite sighs and hangs her head.

CUT TO

Ares is pacing back and forth in the jail cell.

ARES (to himself):

Okay, so we call the guards in and--

GABRIELLE (off-camera):

Ares...

ARES (to Gabrielle):

No, I think I got it.

GABRIELLE (off-camera):

No, Ares...

ARES (to himself):

If they get close enough--

GABRIELLE (shouting, off-camera):

Ares!

ARES (irritated):

What is it?

The camera pulls around to show Gabrielle sitting on the ground. She's panting and holding on to her stomach.

GABRIELLE:

The baby!

Ares looks extremely nervous.

ARES:

Uh--what about it?

GABRIELLE (starting to breath heavily):

It's coming. Right now! (she clutches at her stomach again and gives a stifled groan)

Panicked, Ares rushes toward the bars of the cell, grabs them and starts shouting.

ARES (screaming):

Hey! She's having a baby in here! (yelling as loud as he can) Help!

Pan over to Gabrielle as she grits her teeth and groans, leaning back until she's lying on her back.

Two guards come running.

GUARD #1:

What's the commotion?

ARES:

She's in labor! Go get some help!

GUARD #1 (to Guard #2):

Wanna go fetch the midwife?

GABRIELLE (on her back, clutching at her stomach and convulsing):

Noooo, there isn't time! (Screams) It's coming right now!

The second guard quickly unlocks the jail cell and comes in.

GUARD #2:

All right, all right... I'll just have to handle this myself.

GUARD #1 (disgusted):

Are you kidding me?

GUARD #2:

Hey, I've done this before. There's nothin' to it.

The guards make their way towards Gabrielle as Ares hangs back, nervous.

GUARD #2 (to Gabrielle):

Don't worry, ma'am, everything's under control--just breathe and--

Suddenly, Gabrielle sits up and jabs her fingers into Guard #2's neck; he starts gasping for air, clutching at his throat.

GUARD #1 (shocked):

Hey, you're not--

A hand taps him on the shoulder. He turns around to see Ares' fist coming at him (in close-up) and collapses on the floor.

GUARD #2 (slumps down on his knees, gasping and wheezing):

What--what did you do to me--

ARES (nonchalant):

Let me explain. This is called the pinch. It cuts off the flow of blood to your brain, causing you to die a very unpleasant death in about -- (starts to tick off the seconds by tapping a finger on his wrist) one, two, three--

Guard #2 looks terrified.

GABRIELLE (to Guard #2, undoing the pinch):

Sorry about this.

Before he can recover, she takes off his belt, ties his hands with it, and takes his keys. She gets up, dusts herself off and then turns to an amazed Ares.

ARES:

So that whole thing was--

GABRIELLE (nods):

Yup.

ARES (sarcastic):

Oh! Oh, well thanks for letting me in on your brilliant plan.

They walk toward the door of the cell, continuing to bicker.

GABRIELLE (chuckles as she comes out of the cell):

I needed a real reaction out of you. (teasing) Besides, if you couldn't figure out I'm not due for a few more months, that's *your* problem.

ARES (follows her, still grumpy):

Hah! Pardon me for not thinking very clearly while I'm stuck in a jail cell with a woman who's screaming her head off-- (mimics Gabrielle in a falsetto) "the baby! The baby's coming!"

GABRIELLE (locks the cell door behind her):

It worked, didn't it?

ARES (slightly less grumpy):

Yeah, well, I gotta hand it to you--you were pretty good.

GABRIELLE (smirks):

From now on, we are doing things my way.

CUT TO

Close-up shot of Xena as her eyes begin to open. She looks around, dazed and confused to find herself lying on the floor, her hands chained behind her back, in a cell similar to Aphrodite's.

XENA (to herself):

This isn't good.

With a grunt, she manages to sit up. The door opens and a middle-aged, benign-looking bearded man in a healer's robe walks in.

HEALER #2:

So. Looks like we're awake.

Xena manages to scramble to her feet and launches herself forward, head-butting the healer.

HEALER (yells):

Heeelp!

Xena kicks out his legs from under him and he falls.

XENA (glances at the middle-aged man a little sheepishly):

Uh--sorry, Pops. Nothing personal.

A guard rushes in. It's the same guard Xena put the pinch on before. Seeing Xena, he backs away, scared.

GUARD:

Oh no...not *you!*

XENA (with an evil grin):

Oh yes. Me.

She charges forward and head-butts the guard, then kicks him down, thinks a moment and jabs the toe of her bare foot into his neck, putting the pinch on him.

GUARD (almost crying):

Not *that* again!

XENA:

Ya got exactly thirty seconds to unchain me, so hurry up.

Wheezing, the guard scrambles to his feet and undoes the chain. Xena grabs his keys, takes the pinch off him and runs out of the cell, locking it behind her.

CUT TO

Aphrodite's cell. Aphrodite sits on the mat by the wall, crying. The sound of the key turning in the lock is heard; Aphrodite looks up as the door starts to open.

APHRODITE (shouts):

Leave me alone!

The door opens; Xena stands in the doorway.

XENA:

Well, if you insist--

Aphrodite's face lights up with joy.

APHRODITE:

Xena! Thank the-- (stumbles) oh, whoever.

XENA (grins):

Let's just do this again, shall we?

CUT TO

Xena is running down the stairs while Aphrodite is behind her, trying to keep up. She is out of breath.

XENA (turns):

Aphrodite, come *on!*

APHRODITE (pants):

I never had to run as a goddess!

XENA:

Just another joy of being mortal.

A loud horn is heard, sounding an alarm.

XENA (grabs Aphrodite's hand):

Come on, we're almost there!

CUT TO

Xena and Aphrodite run up to an exit. There are two guards at the door. Xena slams them into each other, then throws them in different directions so that each slams into the wall and slumps down.

Xena unbolts the door and pushes it open, then signals to Aphrodite. They run outside.

CUT TO

Xena and Aphrodite run through the garden toward the wall. A few feet away from the wall, Xena halts and holds out a hand to stop Aphrodite.

APHRODITE (panting):

Now what?

XENA:

Now, you'll just have to trust me. (points to a tree next to them) We're climbing up this tree.

APHRODITE (whines):

We're climbing *trees?*

XENA:

Come on.

Pan to a long shot of Xena and Aphrodite climbing up the tree, Aphrodite going first, Xena pushing her upward.

Medium close-up of Xena and Aphrodite as they walk along a thick branch, Aphrodite clearly nervous and Xena holding her hand. Xena stops.

APHRODITE:

I still don't get it.

XENA:

I'm going to get you over that wall. Grab my hands.

APHRODITE (squeals):

Are you *crazy*?

XENA (looks back toward the asylum building):

Funny you should ask. Don't worry, you'll be okay. There's a flower bed on the other side of the wall, it'll break your fall.

APHRODITE (whimpering):

Xena!

XENA:

We have no time to lose.

She grabs Aphrodite's hands and swings her around as the terrified ex-goddess squeals, then throws her. The camera follows Aphrodite as she flies through the air, flailing and screaming, and disappears over the wall. A soft thud is heard.

APHRODITE (off-camera):

Ow!

Xena grins, then grabs onto a higher branch, swings back and forth a few times to gain momentum, and launches herself forward, somersaulting through the air and over the wall.

CUT TO

On the other side of the wall. Xena lands next to Aphrodite, who has just scrambled to her feet next to a flower bed that looks very much worse for the wear.

XENA:

Come on, we've got to get out of here.

VOICE (off-camera):

Hold it right there!

Pan to six asylum guard running toward them.

XENA:

Aphrodite, run!

APHRODITE (confused):

What?

XENA (shouting):

Run! That way! (points) I'll catch up with you.

Aphrodite takes off running, with two of the guards chasing after her while Xena is left facing the other four. Two of them draw swords and charge her.

XENA:

A-la-la-la-la-la-la -- SHEE-ya!

She launches herself in the air, flips and does a split kick that brings the two guards down. One of them drops his sword and Xena grabs it on landing, then points it at the third guard who advances toward her, his own sword drawn. Xena laughs wickedly and they start sparring.

Pan over to Ares and Gabrielle running toward Xena.

ARES:

Okay, she's out, but where's Aphrodite?

GABRIELLE:

Look!

She points to Aphrodite running away, two guards chasing her. They disappear around a corner.

CUT TO

A horse-drawn white covered wagon rolls out of the asylum gates; it is driven by a man in a gray cloak.

The camera pans over to the side of the wagon which has Greek lettering on it. Across the screen, the translation appears:

Cyrilla Asylum for Troubled Souls

Pan to Ares and Gabrielle looking at the wagon.

CUT TO

Xena is still sparring with the guard. Suddenly there is a swishing sound; Xena whips around to see a dart flying toward her (and toward the camera).

The camera pulls back to show Xena catching the dart, even as she blocks a sword thrust from the guard she's sparring with.

XENA (grins wickedly):

Right back atch'a.

She throws the dart at the guard, hitting him just above the collar of his leather shirt. He staggers, then collapses. Advancing on the guard she's sparring with, Xena spins around with a yell and kicks the sword out of his hand. It flies up and she catches it. Close-up on Xena as she laughs.

CUT TO

Aphrodite is running down a near-empty street with the two guards close on her heels. A few passerbys give her curious looks. Exhausted, she pauses to take a breath. The two guards catch up to her and grab her.

APHRODITE:

No! Let go of me!

GUARD #1:

You're going back with us.

The horse-drawn wagon we saw before, with the driver in the gray cloak, pulls up next to them.

VOICE (off-camera):

Get her in here!

The guards push a struggling Aphrodite into the wagon.

APHRODITE (screams):

Nooooo! (yelling) Xena! Xena!

The guards slam the doors shut.

CUT TO

Gabrielle runs up to Xena.

GABRIELLE:

Xena! Thank God you're okay.

XENA:

Where's Aphrodite?

Gabrielle looks worried.

CUT TO

Aphrodite in the back of the wagon. She is crying and banging on the door.

APHRODITE:

Let me *out!*

The wagon comes to an abrupt halt. Aphrodite cowers in the corner, terrified.

The back doors of the wagon open.

VOICE (off-camera):

Ma'am, if you keep doing that, I'll just have to take you back to the loony bin.

Pan over to show Ares, draped in the gray cloak, grinning at Aphrodite.

APHRODITE (squeals with joy):

Bro!

DISSOLVE TO

Fade in to the temple of Aphrodite where the baby shower took place in Act One, except now a statue of Artemis is sitting out front. A dozen or so people dressed in robes of green and gold are working on the temple in what appears to be "Extreme Home Makeover: Ancient Greek Edition."

The camera pans over to show Xena, Gabrielle, Ares, and Aphrodite standing on the other side watching.

APHRODITE (makes a face):

Gross! That Artemis cult is spreading like a disease. (in disbelief) *Four* of my temples, in one week. (to Ares) Not to mention most of yours. *And* Apollo's.

ARES (grimly but with some understanding):

I guess she's really into this survival thing.

APHRODITE (sighs):

So now I'm mortal *and* homeless.

Xena looks at her thoughtfully, obviously pondering something.

APHRODITE (catching her look):

What?

XENA:

Just an idea.

DISSOLVE TO

An exterior shot of the farmhouse from *Old Ares Had a Farm*. Xena, dressed in her leather tunic but without armor and barefoot, is sweeping the porch. Ares, in his leather pants but without a vest, is examining the rickety boards and poles with a critical eye.

Aphrodite appears in the doorway. She is wearing a farm dress similar to Gabrielle's dress from OAHAF, only red instead of blue. She poses in the doorway, smiling.



APHRODITE:

Well?

Xena and Ares turn to look at her.

XENA:

Nice look.

ARES:

It's...really you, sis.

Aphrodite chuckles and goes to sit down on the steps of the porch. Ares sits next to her.

APHRODITE (to Xena, who's gone back to her sweeping):

So I'm guessing this is your dumping ground for all gods who turn mortal.

XENA (chuckles):

Only the ones I like.

APHRODITE (to Ares, wistfully):

Remember that contest we had to see who could stay in here longer without using any powers?

ARES (grins, remembering their adventure from *Five in the Bed and the Little One Said...*):

I sure do.

APHRODITE (with a bitter chuckle):

I could barely make it for a day. Now I'm supposed to live here.

Suddenly, she looks nervous.

ARES:

Come on, Sis. It's not that bad. I did it.

XENA:

It just needs a little fixing up.

VOICE (off-camera):

Lucky thing you have the god of arts and crafts on your side.

Aphrodite gasps and looks up.

The camera pans to Hephaestus standing before the porch.

Close-up on Aphrodite, her face reflecting shock and incredulous joy.

APHRODITE:

Heph?

HEPHAESTUS:

Or should I say--*former* god of arts and crafts.

He smiles warmly. Aphrodite gets up; a slow-motion shot as Aphrodite rushes toward him and throws her arms around him.

HEPHAESTUS (softly):

I've lost you before. I don't want to lose you again. I want us live to out the rest of our mortal lives together.

APHRODITE (moved):

Oh, Heph--

HEPHAESTUS:

I gave my powers to Athena. Once I realized what you did for me, I could do no less.

APHRODITE (sighs):

That's what I was afraid of.

HEPHAESTUS:

I won't lie to you. This mortal thing scares me to death, and I'm gonna need your help getting through it.

APHRODITE (smiling):

And I'll need yours. (tearful) We can do it. Together.

HEPHAESTUS:

You're not going to miss it? Being a god?

APHRODITE (makes a face):

Nah. Godhood--it's so one hundred years ago.

They both laugh. He leans down and kisses her, gently touching her hair.

The camera pans over to Xena and Ares retiring unobtrusively from the scene, and follows them as they walk away from the house. In the background, Aphrodite and Hephaestus can be seen locked in a passionate embrace.

XENA:

So. Looks like Aphrodite and Hephaestus are getting a happy ending after all.

In the background, we can see Hephaestus picking up Aphrodite in his arms and carrying her inside the house. Her arm is around his neck.

ARES (glances rather sheepishly at Xena):

What about--us?

Xena looks at him silently. They stop in the shadow of a large oak tree and turn to face each other.

ARES:

Xena--I know I did some--pretty bad things over the years, when I was trying to get you back. I promised myself that if we could ever be together, I would never hurt you in any way. (pauses, uneasily) Well--so much for that, huh.

Xena looks at him, her expression turning anguished and tender.



XENA (gently):

Ares, I--

ARES (interrupts):

Xena--she was not another woman. She was another you.

XENA (nods, pained):

I know.

ARES:

Except--she wasn't. And I hated her for that.

XENA (quietly):

Don't tell me you felt nothing for her.

ARES:

Whatever I felt--it was because I saw you in her.

XENA (a little bitter):

And it didn't give you just a bit of a thrill to see that this other me achieved everything you once thought I would?

Ares looks at her thoughtfully and sighs.

ARES (quietly):

Maybe at first. I saw what it did to her. (after a brief pause) Xena--she had the whole world in the palm of her hand. But there was one thing she never had.

XENA:

What's that?

Ares comes closer to her, looking into her eyes. Then he leans forward and kisses her. After a few moments he breaks the kiss and draws back.



ARES:

I love you, Xena.

Xena looks at him; her expression reflects some uncertainty, then melts into a warm smile. She clasps the back of his neck and draws him into a loving, passionate kiss.

CROSS-FADE TO

A medium shot of the same oak tree, some time later. Hephaestus is hammering at something; Aphrodite is coming toward him, carrying a pitcher in her hands.

APHRODITE:

How's that swing coming?

Hephaestus looks up at her. We see that he's building what looks like a wooden swing.

HEPHAESTUS:

Good. (He takes the pitcher from her hands and drinks, then smiles at her and wipes his mouth) Thanks. Should be ready to go up tomorrow. (points up to a branch) Then we can sit here together and enjoy the scenery.

They stand together, looking out.



APHRODITE:

We've got to invite Cupie with the wife and kid. (sighs) It's gonna be majorly weird seeing him as a mortal. And without the wings (shakes her head) ...what a trip.

Hephaestus smiles and puts an arm around her shoulder. The camera pans out to show the view from where they are--a green field laced with wildflowers. From a distance, we see Darion flying a kite, Gabrielle running with him.

CUT TO

The kite flopping down on the ground.

DARION (off-camera):

That was *great!*

The camera pulls back to show Gabrielle standing next to Darion, smiling. Xena and Ares (dressed as in the previous scene, she in her leather tunic and he without his vest) are sitting in the grass; his arm is around her shoulders.

A large, beautiful butterfly is weaving through the air. Darion follows it with his eyes.

DARION (gasps a little):

Wow, look at that... It's amazing.

The butterfly weaves close to Xena, who reaches up and catches it in her palms, then stands up. Darion comes closer, fascinated. Xena opens her palms carefully; a close-up of the butterfly slowly flapping its wings.

The camera pulls back to show Xena, Gabrielle, and Darion looking at the butterfly.

GABRIELLE:

Beautiful, isn't it? You know what it's called?

Darion shakes his head no.

GABRIELLE:

The monarch butterfly.

Xena darts her a quick look.

DARION:

You mean, like--it's the most important of all butterflies?

XENA (smiles):

Nah, it just wants the other butterflies to think it is.



With a small flourish, she releases the butterfly and it flies up and away as Xena, Gabrielle and Darion watch.

DARION (to Gabrielle):

Come on, let's fly the kite one more time. You hold the string and I'll run.

Gabrielle smiles and shakes her head. Darion runs off with the kite while she follows. Xena stands watching them; Ares gets to his feet, stands next to her and puts a hand on her shoulder. Xena turns to him and smiles.

XENA (in a low, almost sultry voice):

Wanna go back to the house?

ARES (with a small grin):

Sure.

They turn and start walking.

APHRODITE (off-camera):

Hey!

The camera pans to Aphrodite walking toward them.

ARES:

Hey, sis.

Aphrodite stops, waiting for them to catch up with her, then turns and starts walking next to them, holding Ares' arm.

APHRODITE (beaming):
Guys? I'm here to help.

They look startled.

ARES (warily):
Help with what?

APHRODITE:
D'uh! I *am* the love goddess--okay, *ex-love* goddess, but I'm still the expert on the whole love thing. Sooo, I took a peek at Gabby's new scroll about what happened on your little trip--

Xena and Ares look utterly appalled.

ARES:
Sis!

The camera pans around to show them from the back as they continue walking.

APHRODITE:
And I'm guessing, you two could *totally* use some relationship counseling. Am I right, or am I--

The camera starts to zoom out, the voices beginning to fade.

XENA (interrupts, disgusted):
Oh--no, no--

APHRODITE:
So, who better than the--

From a distance (a long shot of the field, the yard and the farmhouse), we see Ares free his arm from Aphrodite's grasp as he and Xena speed up.

ARES:
Cut it out, Sis!

APHRODITE (almost running as she tries to keep up with them):
Come *on!* It's a cinch. You're having issues, and I--

Their voices can now be heard very faintly.

XENA (sarcastic):
I can handle my own issues, thank you very much.

APHRODITE:
Oh--you are so in denial, Warrior Babe!

XENA:
Am not!

APHRODITE:

Listen--

Xena and Ares continue walking toward the house, with Aphrodite in pursuit, as we:

FADE OUT

THE END

[Out of concern for Aphrodite's fragile emotional state, only one Hephaestus actor was used in the production of this motion picture.]