

SHIPPER SEASON TEN



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Logline

Xena, Gabrielle and Ares go to Ephesus, the center of the Artemis cult, to bring down the goddess once and for all. The stakes are higher than ever as a new Elijan leader unites the followers of Eli and the Olympian gods in an ultimate battle.

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TEASER

FADE IN

Black screen. Xena's painful wails are heard.

FADE TO

[FLASHBACKS]

From *God Fearing Child*:

Xena gives birth to Eve in the forest as Zeus approaches with a lightning bolt in his hand. Gabrielle delivers the baby.

GABRIELLE (voice over):

...and so, the child was born in a time of death.

Hercules stabs Zeus with the Rib of Cronos. Zeus lies dead at Hercules' feet.

GABRIELLE (voice over):

Fearing the prophecy, the Olympians unleashed their wrath on us.

CUT TO

From *Eternal Bonds*:

The three temple armies attacking Xena and Gabrielle in a field while Eve is secured in a sling hanging in a tree.

CUT TO

From *Amphipolis Under Siege*:

The warriors attacking Amphipolis. Athena readies to kill Xena's child but Ares appears and fights back.

CUT TO

From *Looking Death In the Eye*:

Xena and Gabrielle in a horse-drawn wagon riding fast along a cliff overlooking the sea. Athena, Hades and Hephaestus shoot fireballs toward the wagon.

GABRIELLE (voice over):

We thought that by drinking Death's tears, we could fake our deaths and escape from the gods' endless pursuit.

CUT TO

Xena drinks the tears and "dies" in Ares' arms.

CUT TO

GABRIELLE (voice over):

But we didn't foresee that Ares would bury us in a tomb of ice...

Ares kisses Xena's seemingly lifeless body in her ice coffin.

GABRIELLE (voice over):

...or that we would wake up twenty-five years later to find that Eve had grown up to be a ruthless warrior for Rome...

CUT TO

From *Livia*:

Livia leads a parade of conquered people behind her into the streets of Rome.

CUT TO

From *Eve*:

Livia chops off the head of a village man, and looks up at her bloody blade.

GABRIELLE (voice over):

...and that the Twilight prophecy would become a forgotten whisper.

CUT TO

From *Eve*:

Xena is lying on the temple floor beneath Livia who is holding Xena's chakram to her throat. A bright white light shines down on her face and Livia looks up, amazed.

GABRIELLE (voice over):

A miracle from the God of Love turned Eve's heart to goodness, and she was chosen as Eli's Messenger.

CUT TO

From *Motherhood*:

Eve is baptized in the water.

GABRIELLE (voice over):

To protect her daughter, Xena was given the power to kill gods...

The gods face off with Xena on the beach, and she kills Poseidon when a fireball from one of the gods that is deflected off her chakram and into him.

GABRIELLE (voice over):
...and the showdown began.

CUT TO

Xena fights the gods in the tavern. Hades aims a fireball at a cringing, wounded Eve; Xena breathes fire on him and sets him ablaze.

CUT TO

Xena fighting Athena on Olympus.

GABRIELLE (voice over):
Ares gave up everything to save Xena's life...

CUT TO

Ares healing Eve and Gabrielle, giving up his immortality.

GABRIELLE (voice over):
...and Xena prevailed.

Xena stabs a stunned Athena in the stomach.

GABRIELLE (voice over):
But it wasn't over. When we learned that Michael had used Xena and Eve to destroy the Olympians and increase his own power, we journeyed into the underworld to save the gods.

CUT TO

From *A Very Narrow Bridge*:

Xena, Ares, Gabrielle and Eve retrieving the spheres that imprison the gods in Hell.

CUT TO

Athena rises from a shattered sphere. She hugs Ares.

GABRIELLE (voice over):
We didn't know that the real Twilight was only just beginning.

CUT TO

From *Twilight Eve*:

Eve sits up, gasping, as she wakes from a dream.

Artemis tries to shoot a fireball but fails.

Demeter fades from existence.

GABRIELLE (voice over):

The gods would lose their powers and fade as their worship declined. Ares was again torn between Xena and his family--while Artemis was determined to preserve her power even if she had to take it from the other gods.

CUT TO

From *Showdown*:

Artemis is in front of Ares' temple, with her hand around Darion's throat.

GABRIELLE (voice over):

Ares made the final choice to become mortal again.

Apollo and Artemis drain Ares' powers.

GABRIELLE (voice over):

Apollo was killed--but Artemis has grown more and more powerful ever since, claiming worshipers by force and fear. Yesterday, we defeated a warlord to whom she had given Ares' powers so he could do her bidding.

CUT TO

From *The Power and the Glory*:

Ares kills Brygus and then destroys the ring that holds his powers.

GABRIELLE (voice-over):

But I know we have not seen the last of her...

[END OF FLASHBACKS]

FLASH TO

Night, under a full moon.



Xena's ululating war cry is heard.

CUT TO

A sword slashes across the screen. Pull back to show Xena fighting in the dark interior of a temple, the moonlight shining down over her from a window high above. She is fighting several warrior women all at once, dodging one strike from a warrior on one side only to turn and parry a blow from a warrior behind her. The chakram is in one hand, the sword in the other. The warriors are in silver, black and blue.

Xena slices one of the warriors across her side with her sword and she falls, having little time to block the blow and dying almost instantly. Xena pulls her bloody sword from the fallen warrior and attacks the other warriors as they come at her from all sides, swinging left and right.



Xena's fierce and violent, her rage and hatred building as her fighting becomes more precise and more deadly accurate. She has no intention of leaving anyone alive.

She stabs one of the warriors in the chest with the sword in one hand, and then slices the chakram across the neck of another warrior. Both of them die.

She attacks the final warrior who charges at her, screaming, and after a few swings--and Xena dodging the blow from the warrior woman's sword that passes just over Xena's head as she ducks--Xena stabs the warrior woman in the side. She cries out and goes down.

Breathing hard, Xena looks up, the dead warriors around her.



Ahead of her, Artemis sits on the throne of her temple, her eyes dark and menacing. Their eyes lock. Xena snarls and takes her chakram and screams, hurling it toward Artemis. Artemis sits still as the chakram flies toward her neck--but just before it reaches its target, Artemis disappears.

In the same instant, Artemis appears behind Xena with a sword and swings it. Sensing someone behind her, Xena whirls around, meeting Artemis' sword with her own. They begin to spar. The buzz of the chakram is heard in the background as it ricochets around the temple.

Artemis throws all her weight toward Xena and is able to push her back. Xena does not lose her footing but she's momentarily stunned. The sound of the chakram grows louder. Xena knocks Artemis back, somersaults over her head and kicks her in the back, knocking her down.

Xena turns to Artemis as the chakram flies back toward her. The camera zooms in on her for a medium close-up as she catches the chakram.



FLASH TO

Xena jerks awake from her bedroll, breathing hard, sweat on her forehead. She sits up and closes her eyes to regain herself after the nightmare. She's in a campsite in the forest (the same one from the end of *The Power and the Glory II*), just after sunrise.

Sighing, she lies back down staring up at the trees, and then rolls over. Ares is not beside her the way he had been the night before. His bedroll is gone. Frowning, she looks around and sees that Gabrielle is gone, too, as well as her bedroll.

CUT TO



Gabrielle is sitting on a log amongst some trees. She is writing in a scroll, pausing a few moments to think and then resuming.

Footsteps are heard behind her.

CUT TO

The point of view of the person coming up, seeing Gabrielle from the back as she continues to write.

CUT TO

The shadow of the person falls across Gabrielle's shoulders.

GABRIELLE (still looking down at the scroll):
Good morning, Xena.

Pull back to show Xena standing behind her, still barefoot and only wearing her leather shift and no armor (but holding her chakram).

XENA (smiles):
You knew it was me.

GABRIELLE (turns back to look at Xena, also smiling a little):
Of course.

XENA:
You're not usually a morning person.

GABRIELLE (shrugs, looking down at her scroll):
Couldn't sleep.

XENA (follows Gabrielle's gaze):
What are you writing?

GABRIELLE (looks down at the scroll in her lap):
It's about the Twilight. (Xena walks around until she's facing Gabrielle) I've never really written it

down, all the way through. After all we've seen, and done... (trails off, hesitant) I wanted to make sure it was remembered in case... (she looks down)

Xena frowns slightly, noticing Gabrielle's hesitation. She sits down beside Gabrielle and puts her hand over Gabrielle's in a comforting gesture. After a moment, Gabrielle squeezes Xena's fingers and they hold there, in silence.

She hears the whinny of a horse and looks up. Ares walks up between some trees, leading his horse and stops.



GABRIELLE (to Xena):
How do you think it will end?

Xena looks across Gabrielle toward Ares. He's lifted the front leg of his horse, inspecting the shoe.

XENA (thoughtful):
The way we least expect it.

Gabrielle watches her thoughtfully in a moment of silence. Xena gives her another squeeze to the shoulder and stands, walking toward Ares.

CUT TO

Ares lets go of Quirinus' foot and pats the horse's neck. Xena comes up.

XENA (smiles):
Going somewhere?

Ares looks back at her.

XENA (stepping up to him, teasing):
You know, one of these days, people will be looking to *you* for help just as much as they do to Gabrielle and me.

Ares chuckles a little, then grows serious, stepping up to her.

ARES:
We're leaving for Ephesus.

Xena glances over, seeing Klio and Argo already saddled and ready for travel, food packed for a meal on the road. She looks back at him.



ARES (continues):

We've stopped Brygus, now it's Artemis' turn. She's become more powerful because of the powers she took from me even if she doesn't have them anymore. It's my job to stop her. (pauses, then speaks softly) Maybe...you should stay behind. I--

Xena puts her fingers to his lips to silence him, the hand displaying the stone ring.

XENA (determined but gentle):

Hey. We're in this *together*. (playful yet serious) Now that you have me--

She removes her fingers from his lips and lowers her hand to his chest, resting it over his heart.



XENA:

--you're stuck with me.

He can't help smiling. She smiles, too.

DISSOLVE TO



A ship sailing over the water.

DISSOLVE TO

Shoreline. The ship pulls into a small port near a cliff. On the bow of the ship, Darion stands by the railing still looking out to sea and Gabrielle walks up behind him. Xena and Ares can be seen standing in the background. Darion looks up.

The morning sky is a deep color of reds and oranges, the color faintly reflecting down into the water.

DARION:

A red sky, Gabrielle. (looking her in the eye, serious) It's a sailor's warning. (pause) A storm is coming.

GABRIELLE (touches his shoulder gently):

It'll be okay, Darion.

She pauses for a moment, and then sees part of a golden temple glowing in the light of the sun on the top of the cliff in front of them. Xena and Ares walk up beside her and look in the same direction.

Then several warrior women are seen running around the side of the cliff, chasing a few simple villagers. The warriors catch up to them and attack as the people try to get away.

Xena's eyes widen. She glances at Gabrielle briefly who nods and then goes into action. Even as the ship is pulling into the port and the anchor is being released, Xena takes a few steps back and then takes a running leap off the bow of the ship, somersaulting several times in the air before landing in the wet sand. She draws her sword as she charges.

From the ship, Gabrielle watches. It begins to rain.

GABRIELLE (distant, holding Darion closer):

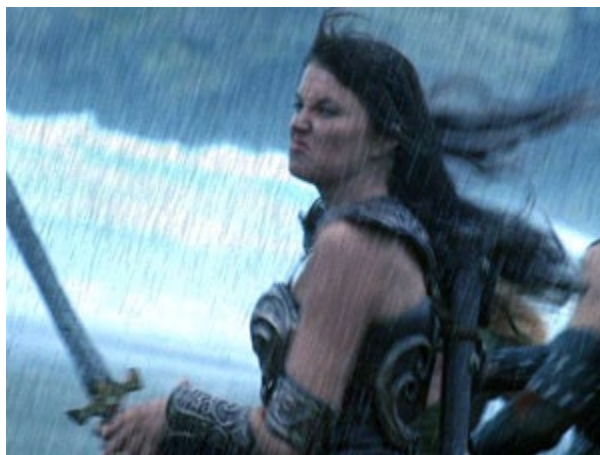
Everything will be all right.

FADE OUT

ACT ONE

FADE IN

It's pouring rain now.



Xena lets out her battle cry as she attacks a strong, fierce warrior woman. She flips over the woman's head and lands across from her. The warrior woman is in silver armor with blue accents and a very distinct half moon and arrow carved into the metal of the breastplate. They also wear headbands with a pendent of the same moon/arrow emblem that hangs down over the bridge of their noses.

WOMAN WARRIOR (sneers):
You defy Artemis?

XENA (snarls back):
Every day.

Pull back to show the fight is taking place on the shoreline, the view of a large, gold and marble temple standing on a cliff behind them. There are already many dead or unconscious warrior women lying around them.

ON-SCREEN TITLE: Ephesus.

Xena's feet shuffle on the wet sand as she and the warrior woman circle one another. Ares jumps into view as he pushes another female warrior and knocks her down nearly at Xena's feet. Ares gives her a swift kick in the back and she rolls across the sand. Her head hits a piece of wood and she is knocked out.

Pan back to show four Elijans huddled behind an outcrop of rocks on the shore. Darion is with them, holding Samuel in his arms and shielding his face from the rain. They watch Xena, Gabrielle and Ares fight.

Xena stabs the warrior woman she'd been fighting and as she dies, Xena steps back. Gabrielle comes running up, breathing hard from the fighting. They look up and see three other warriors sitting on horseback in front of them. With them, there is a man on a horse of his own. He's dressed in robes similar to that of Artemis' worshipers. He wears a small feathered headband.

XENA (her sword extended, ready for more):
Had enough?

The warrior women in front of the others, clearly the leader, hisses at Xena and then turns her horse around, riding off. The other two warriors follow. The man on horseback lingers a bit, looking uncertain, and then follows. Xena, Gabrielle and Ares watch until they have disappeared around the cliff.

The Elijans come out of hiding, as do Darion and Samuel. Gabrielle turns to them. Just then, a warrior at Gabrielle's feet stirs, grabbing her sword and tries to stab Gabrielle in the leg. Gabrielle notices her intentions and quickly bends down, pushing her sai into the woman's chest. The warrior dies.



Gabrielle looks down at the dead body and then at the blade of the sai. The blood covering it slowly washes off in the rain as if it had never been there. She is very troubled.

Pan around to show Xena's troubled expression that matches Gabrielle's.

Suddenly, a flash of green light illuminates the scene. Everyone turns to see Artemis standing on top of the outcrop of rocks that the Elijans had been hiding behind before. Her posture is commanding and much scarier than ever before, her eyes glowing slightly with green.



ARTEMIS:
This is *my* city.

She holds out her hands and the bodies of two people dressed in robes appear, her hands held tightly around their necks. They are dead. She drops them carelessly to the ground, their bodies rolling across the sand, their robes tattered and stained with blood.

ARTEMIS (in a low, deep, eerie voice that almost echoes):
Leave now...unless you wish to join them.

In a flash, she is gone. Gabrielle comes up and holds a frightened Darion close, while Xena, Ares and the Elijans stand, frozen. The Elijans walk toward the bodies of the people Artemis had brought and when they get closer, they gasp. Xena, Ares and Gabrielle look as well. The dead are the two leaders of the Elijans, Felix and Petronia from *Judgment Calls*, *Ashes To Ashes* and *Take Two*.

Gabrielle brings a hand to her mouth in shock; Xena looks on sorrowfully.

The Elijans begin to pray over their bodies, kneeling down and bowing their heads. Some of them are crying. Gabrielle looks around, seeing all the dead warriors around her and the rain coming down around them.



GABRIELLE (solemn):
The storm *has* come.

DISSOLVE TO

The shoreline. Some time later. The rain has nearly stopped. The four Elijans are carrying Felix and Petronia into the city in a ceremonial procession. Other Elijans have gathered around the four carrying the dead bodies of their leaders, their heads are bowed in a show of respect. Gabrielle and Darion are watching them from beside a building. Gabrielle holds Samuel in her arms.

As the Elijans walk past, Xena comes forward toward Gabrielle, putting a hand on her shoulder.

XENA:
The ceremony will start soon.

GABRIELLE (nods, sadly, turning her head as the Elijans disappear inside a building):
They were strong. I'm sure they stood by their cause until the very end. (pause) They were good people.

XENA (nods, following her gaze):

They were.

DISSOLVE TO

A small, fenced-in yard behind one of the buildings in Ephesus. There are many gravestones. The Elijans are gathered around two fresh mounds of dirt under a large tree. A simple wooden gravestone with Elijan markings carved into them sit behind each mound of dirt.

Xena and Gabrielle are standing outside of the Elijan circle, black cloaks covering their clothes in a show of respect and mourning.

ELIJAN PRIEST (holding a staff with a banner hanging from it that displays the Elijan fish emblem):

In life, Felix and Petronia were good, noble people. In death, they will live on in God's grace. We commit their bodies to the ground, and allow their souls to soar. May we never forget their deeds in life as we honor them in Heaven.

The Elijans bow their heads, praying silently.

Pan back to show Gabrielle and Xena bowing their heads, as well.

DISSOLVE TO

After the funeral service. Xena and Gabrielle are standing outside of the graveyard as the Elijans slowly begin to walk out, some lingering longer than others. Gabrielle has her hands on the posts of the wooden fence surrounding the graveyard, looking quietly at the graves of Felix and Petronia. Freshly cut flowers have now been placed around the gravestones, offering a bit of color in such a bleak scene.

An Elijan man steps up to Xena and Gabrielle, followed by three other Elijans, two men and one woman.

ELIJAN MAN:

Thank you for what you did earlier, saving us from Artemis' warriors. We didn't get the chance to say it before.

GABRIELLE (nods):

You're welcome.

XENA:

Why were they after you?

The Elijan man looks down, somewhat ashamed. One of the other Elijans steps up.

ELIJAN MAN #2:

We had been caught--trying to break our friends out of the jail. We surely would have been executed if not for you.

GABRIELLE:

Why are your friends in jail?

ELIJAN WOMAN:

We're told it's because they committed crimes against the goddess--desecrated a shrine, beat up a guard. (with fervor) All lies! No Elijan would do such things! We know they're feeding us these lies to hide the truth.

GABRIELLE:

Truth?

ELIJAN WOMAN:

That they were taken because of their faith. (vehemently) Persecution, that's what it is!

The Elijan Priest who had lead the ceremony for Felix and Petronia walks up, still holding the banner. He's an older man and looks wise and noble.

ELIJAN PRIEST (placing a gentle hand on the woman's shoulder):

Calm yourself, Nela.

Nela sighs and nods. The Elijan Priest turns to Xena and Gabrielle.

ELIJAN PRIEST:

These are hard times we live in. We have been able to live in relative peace with the worshipers of Artemis but sometimes, relations become strained.

NELA (getting angry again):

Artemis rules this city and everyone in it. Well, (looks at the group of Elijans) *almost* everyone. She's converted nearly the entire town to *her* way of thinking. They bow at her feet, make sacrifices to her daily. (gestures to the group of Elijans) We are the only ones here who don't.

The Elijan Priest tries to calm Nela again.

GABRIELLE (shocked):

Did she kill all the others?

ELIJAN MAN (shakes head):

No. (pause, close up on his face) Many of them have joined her. (Gabrielle looks at Xena, concerned) They would rather change their faith than die for a "useless cause". Their words, not ours. The rest...lie dead in that graveyard. (gestures forward)

GABRIELLE (sad):

I'm sorry.

ELIJAN MAN (looking at Xena):

That man who was with Artemis' warriors on the beach-- (Xena nods slowly, knowing who the Elijan is talking about because she'd seen him) --that's Kyros. He was one of the most devoted, pure followers I have ever seen. He was an orphan in his young life who looked up to Felix and Petronia as if they were his birth family. In the end, he lost all faith and hope in Eli because he feared Artemis' power. Now...he does *her* bidding.

Gabrielle lowers her head.

ELIJAN MAN #2:

Every day I pray for those who have lost their way, that they might one day see the light.

ELIJAN PRIEST (to Xena and Gabrielle):

We're lucky to have warriors like you here with us.

A young Elijan boy walks up, looking at Xena and Gabrielle with rapt adoration.

YOUNG ELIJAN (to the Priest):

What if they are the ones foretold by Thanos? (to Xena) She's a strong warrior. Surely, she's been sent by Eli himself.

XENA:

I wasn't sent by Eli. I just fight--wherever it's needed.

The Elijan Priest smiles, laying a hand on the boy's shoulder.

ELIJAN PRIEST:

Now, now, Cole. (to Xena) I'm sorry about that. He can be quite passionate.

GABRIELLE:

Who is Thanos?

ELIJAN PRIEST:

He was the oldest and wisest Elijan in this city. He died four days ago. On his deathbed, he foretold that a warrior who is called the Messenger of Eli would come to lead us against Artemis with an army sent by God. At first, we found it strange that a warrior could be Eli's Messenger, since his teachings condemned all violence--but perhaps in these terrible times, this is what Eli and his God would want for our protection.

Zoom in on Xena's shocked expression.



XENA:

The Messenger?

DISSOLVE TO

A forest clearing. It's cloudy but the sun shines through the clouds.



An army of about 70 or so is camped amongst the tall trees, tents set up. There are many men and women in armor. Many of them are dressed differently from one another: some wear black armor with silver and metal studs in the leather, some are women in silver with bows and arrows, and silver headdresses with beads dangling from them, some are in black armor with red accents with a lightning bolt carved into the breastplate, and still others wear black armor with silver and blue accents, a peacock feather etched into the metal.

Pan across the campsite and up a small hill where Eve, wearing a red-leather Amazon outfit and headband, is leaning against a large poplar tree, sleeping. Close in on her face as she seems to be twitching restlessly.

FLASH TO

Inside Eve's dream.

Brief, rapid flashes appear on screen:

- * Eve's birth and Zeus' death;
- * the light shining on Eve's face just as she prepares to kill her mother;
- * Xena hugging Gabrielle and Eve after Ares has revived them;
- * the gods emerging from the spheres in which they were trapped in Hell;
- * Eve fighting back against Artemis with the Amazons at her side;
- * Eli's face in a portal of swirling clouds in the bright blue sky, saying something inaudible, his face gentle.

FLASH TO

Still within the dream, close up on Eve's face as she is standing on the dark streets of Rome. Destruction is all around her. The sky is a dark black, only the glow from the fires in the distance providing light; large plumes of smoke rise into the air. Eve's expression is of sorrow. Pull back to show her standing in the outfit we saw her in during the future in *The Dark Ages*. Bodies lie dead all around her, mutilated and burning. A tear falls from her eye as she scans the scene.

A short distance away, her eyes fix on a very familiar looking object--the chakram. She runs forward, looking at it. It's cracked in half, jagged, not split along its normal breaking point. She picks it up and as she does, something catches her eye. She gasps and drops the chakram, the camera tracks downward as it slowly falls and clatters to the ground with a resonating echo.

Pull back to show what she is looking at.

Xena and Ares are lying facing each other amongst the rubble of a collapsed building. Their bodies are very bloody, their leather torn, their eyes closed. Ares' arm is extended out, and so is Xena's, their fingers are nearly touching as if they were reaching for each other as they died.



Eve stands, shell shocked, as the tears begin streaming down her cheeks. She brings a hand to her face and cries.

FLASH TO

Eve jolts upright, waking from the nightmare. She breathes deep. The nightmare has bled into reality and her eyes have tears in them.

Pan back to show Virgil walking into view, carrying a bowl with some porridge in it. He stops, seeing Eve's distressed look, the tears in her eyes, her hand on her head as she looks down. He walks up, kneeling down in front of her. She hasn't noticed him yet.

VIRGIL (frowns):
Another dream?

EVE (nods and wipes her eyes):
I haven't been getting much sleep lately because of these nightmares. I thought taking a quick nap would help. But... (sighs)

Virgil sets the bowl of porridge on the ground in front of her and reaches out, running his hand along her face and through her hair, gently. She looks back at him.



VIRGIL:

How much longer are you going to let this torment you?

Eve, suddenly defensive, tenses up and moves back. He moves his hand away.

EVE:

I didn't *choose* to have these dreams, Virgil. I didn't *choose* to be in the middle of all this from the moment I was born--or even *before* I was born. I just have to deal with it.

VIRGIL (edgy):

What do you expect to do once we get to Ephesus? Fight and kill Artemis yourself?

EVE:

If that's what it takes.

VIRGIL:

And what if *she* kills *you*?

Eve is silent, then stands up, and Virgil does, as well.



EVE:

You don't-- (her voice breaks a little) you don't know...what it was like in the future. The desolation. The hopelessness. Ephesus is where Artemis was most powerful. It was where Gabrielle had written about her final battle, and where she died. Whatever happens there will set that future in motion. (pause, with determination) I've seen it. And I can't-- (her voice breaks briefly at the memories) --I can't let it come true if there's anything I can do about it.

Eve sighs, looks down and turns her back to Virgil.

EVE (softly):

If you don't want to come with me...I understand.

Virgil watches her silently for a moment, then speaks.

VIRGIL:

I'm not going back.

Eve doesn't look back at him. There is a long pause before a hand rests on her shoulder from behind.

VIRGIL:

I'm sorry. (she looks at him) I'm here for you, as long as you want me.

EVE (nods):

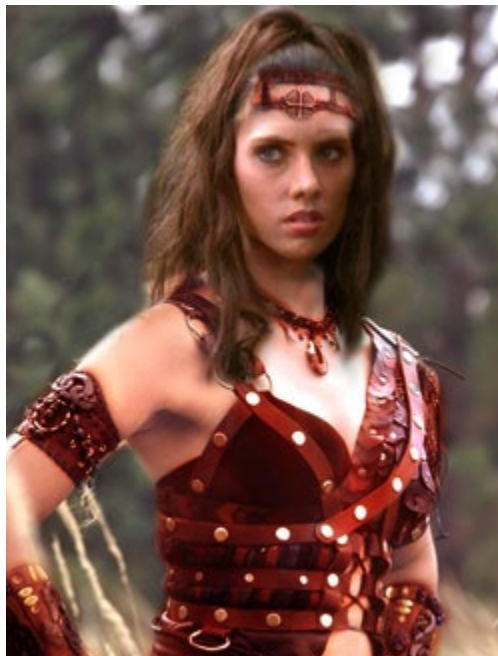
Thank you.

Virgil walks back to the bowl, picks it up off the ground and then steps in front of Eve, handing it to her.

VIRGIL (gently):

You should eat.

Eve nods, taking the bowl from him and smiling just a little. Then she turns to look sideways, down the small hill toward the campsite below--and the armies gathered there.



EVE:

There's going to be a big battle when we reach Ephesus. Zeus, Hera, Athena and Poseidon all joining their most skilled fighters together for one cause: to fight against Artemis... (shakes head) I never thought I'd be fighting *with* them...but it's my duty to stop her.

MAN (off-camera):

Mine, too.

Eve and Virgil turn to see a man with long, slightly curly black hair, wearing a black cloak and armor underneath, coming up to them. It's Evander. Eve greets him with a nod; it's obvious that they have met before, in *this* timeline.

EVANDER:

We're in this for a common cause. (steps closer to Eve and smiles as Virgil watches) I'm just glad to have the daughter of the Legendary Xena (his voice drops slightly) by my side.

Eve nods. Pan around to show Virgil looking somewhat wary.

CUT TO

Xena and Gabrielle are walking through the streets of Ephesus.

GABRIELLE:

Do you really think Eve is calling herself The Messenger again?

XENA (shakes head):

She gave that up a long time ago.



GABRIELLE:

Maybe with the Twilight she has found renewed faith in the cause she was born for?

Xena gives her a thoughtful look.

The two of them come to the base of the small hill leading up to the temple doors, female guards posted on either side of the temple with spears and bows and a quiver of arrows at their backs. Flags depicting a crescent moon pierced by an arrow line the marble walkway leading to the top, about every seven feet or so.

Xena and Gabrielle stop walking, looking up at the temple.

GABRIELLE:

I'm worried about what Artemis will do, Xena. (Xena turns sharply toward her) She didn't exactly give us a friendly greeting when we arrived. And now, after we destroyed her plans for Brygus and turned some of her worshipers away from her... There's no telling what she is capable of.

Xena looks thoughtful, then puts on a cheerful front.

XENA:

Well, if she can dish it out (grins crookedly) we'll see if she can take it.

GABRIELLE (nods thoughtfully, then looks up at the temple):

I think she's changed.

XENA (frowns):

How?

GABRIELLE:

She's colder, harder...more ruthless.



XENA (scoffs):

Right. So unlike the warm and cuddly Artemis we all know and love.

GABRIELLE (shakes her head with a rueful smile, then turns serious):

That's just it, though. She's worse than before. It's not me I'm worried about...

XENA (after a brief pause):

Darion and Samuel are safe--Ares is watching them. (touches Gabrielle's shoulder) Don't worry.

GABRIELLE:

You know, I wonder if everything that has happened has driven Artemis crazy. Losing her brother, being rejected by her family... (sheepishly) Maybe *I'm* crazy too--but...in some small way, I feel sorry for her.

XENA:

You're right. (beat) You're crazy.

GABRIELLE (chuckles and sighs, then changes the subject):

You know what's crazy? Coming here without a plan. This is the one time we should have had a plan first. Anything could happen.

Suddenly, there is a loud noise--a bang of metal followed by shouts--and the camera pans to show the doors of the temple flying open. A man runs out, dressed in robes of blue, black and silver, the kind worn by people in high positions in the Artemis cult. He stumbles a bit as several female warriors of Artemis chase him down; running down the hill, he trips and falls, rolling the rest of the way down and landing hard in the dirt at the base. Artemis' warriors catch up with him and start kicking him; one of them draws a sword.

Xena charges the woman with the sword and kicks the sword out of her hand, then kicks her in the gut as the warrior doubles over in pain. Gabrielle pushes another one away, takes the blunt end of the sai to her head and knocks her out cold. Xena faces the last two warriors. Splitting her chakram in two and holding one half in each hand, she attacks, slicing this way and that, forcing the warriors to back away from the man. While Xena finishes with the two remaining warriors in the background, Gabrielle kneels down next to the man. His head is bleeding and he seems dizzy and disoriented.

GABRIELLE:

You'll be all right.

MAN:

I--

He passes out.

Gabrielle looks up; the fighting has stopped. Xena comes around, standing across from Gabrielle and looking down at the man.

XENA (realizing):

This is Kyros, the Elijan traitor.

Gabrielle looks back at the man, surprised.

GABRIELLE (to Xena):

Let's get him out of here. Then we'll find out what happened.

Xena nods and picks up Kyros' feet while Gabrielle lifts him up from behind his shoulders. They carry him away. In the background, the warriors of Artemis lie unconscious at the base of the temple hill.

CUT TO

Eve is in the forest, kneeling down in front of a stream with several waterskins, filling each one. In the silence of the forest, she hears murmuring and humming and turns to look in the direction of the sound.

CUT TO

A small grove beside the stream. A dozen or so Elijans are gathered in a circle, holding hands and praying. A metal Elijan fish statue sits in the center of the circle. Eve walks toward them but stops a distance away so as not to disturb them.

ELIJAN WOMAN (her eyes closed, praying):

Eli, give us strength and guidance, for we cannot do this on our own. Hard times are ahead but since you have sent your Messenger to watch over us, protect us and guide us, we have no fear.

Pan to Eve, a shocked expression on her face. She steps forward and a twig breaks underneath her foot. The crack breaks the concentration of the Elijans and they open their eyes, looking back in her direction. The Elijan woman that had been speaking before notices Eve and smiles, standing.

ELIJAN WOMAN:

Did you wish to join in our prayers? (she notices the sword at Eve's back, clearly realizing that she is a warrior) Eli can save anyone from their sins if that is what you seek.



EVE (shakes head):

No, I just-- I'm sorry to have disturbed you. (pause) You said the Messenger is leading you. I'm--

ELIJAIN WOMAN:

Oh yes. We can take you to him.

EVE (surprised):

Him?

CUT TO

Back at the camp. Evander is standing beside his horse. The camp has nearly been dismantled, and the army is packed up and almost ready to head out.

Evander sees Eve walking toward him, the group of Elijans with her. They come up to Evander and nod.

ELIJAN WOMAN (holding her hand out toward Evander):

The Messenger of Eli.

Zoom in on Eve, her expression of shock and confusion.

EVE:

You?

Pan to a close-up of Evander's face as he nods with pride and conviction.



EVANDER:

Yes.

FADE OUT

ACT TWO

FADE IN

Eve and Evander are standing alone on the hill.

EVE:

The Messenger of Eli? Evander, what are you doing?

EVANDER (chuckling):

Well, personally, I'd prefer a title with a little more...pizazz. But this one will do.

Eve remains silent, a troubled look on her face.

EVANDER (off her silence):

What is it? You want your old job back?



EVE (shaking her head):

No. (thinking for a moment, sighs) It's just...Eli's message was about peace and love. And you are preaching that to the people, but you are using a sword and promoting violence to do it.

EVANDER:

But you see what the Elijans don't realize is that the world is shaped by warriors. (nods) Your mother can attest to that and so can my... (he trails off) I'm telling them what they want to hear--that love will save the day--but you and I both know that sometimes you have to fight. Eli preached that love is the only weapon we need against the gods, but without people like us the Elijans would have been slaughtered a long time ago like the sheep that they are.

EVE (disturbed):

But you don't believe in Eli's message...

EVANDER:

Sometimes fate calls upon us to play a certain role that may not be who we really are. You of all people should know that--Roman Commander, Messenger of Peace, Amazon Queen...

Eve shakes her head and begins to walk away.

EVANDER (grabbing her arm):
Eve, wait.

She stops but doesn't turn.

EVANDER:

I'm sorry. (puts a hand on her shoulder, from behind) When we reach Ephesus, we are going to wage a war against Artemis and we need as many behind us as we can get. The Elijans are so strong in their faith that they are willing to risk their lives in this cause--and so are Artemis' followers. (Eve turns to look at him; he speaks softly) When it's all over, when the world is finally free of the gods' tyranny, and Artemis joins the fallen Pantheon--then I'll give up the Messenger title once and for all. But right now we need these people, and (he reaches out to touch her face but she turns away) we need *you*.

Eve looks at him, uncertain.

CUT TO

Virgil standing at the base of the hill, looking up at Eve and Evander talking. He frowns slightly.

DISSOLVE TO

Eve mounts her horse. The rest of the army has begun the march. Virgil rides up to Eve and Eve looks at him. Then Virgil glances ahead, to see Evander riding past them and to the head of the armies. The Elijans can be seen walking beside a wagon of supplies.

VIRGIL:

So he's Ares' son, the one you saw in the future? (Eve nods) And now, here, he's going to lead us and we're going to follow.

EVE (nods, still unsure):

I think he has what it takes to rally the people together, get them to fight. (pause) And the Elijans--they believe in him.

VIRGIL:

Because he's calling himself the Messenger. Even though it's a lie.

EVE :

Who's to say that he *wasn't* called by Eli? (pause) I don't know much about him--but he's trying to do what's right . I want to give him that chance.

VIRGIL:

I hope he knows what he's doing. He could lead us all right to our deaths.

Eve gives him a sharp, uncertain look--the same thought has already crossed her mind.

CUT TO

A room in Ephesus. Kyros, the Elijan traitor, slowly regains consciousness, opening his eyes and looking around. Gabrielle is dabbing his forehead with a wet cloth, cleaning the bleeding cut. Xena is standing behind her.

KYROS:

You--helped me.

Gabrielle nods.

GABRIELLE:

We know who you are. (pause) Why were Artemis' warriors after you?

KYROS (sits up):

Because they don't like it when you leave.

XENA (stepping up, understanding):

You don't serve Artemis anymore.

KYROS (vehemently):

I can't. I've already betrayed my friends, my faith, and my God for her. (his voice breaks) I have to atone for those sins. (looks down) I just hope Felix and Petronia will be able to forgive me in Heaven, for I know I will not meet them there.

[FLASHBACK]

Felix and Petronia, their hands bound behind their backs, are shoved down into the steps leading up to the altar in Artemis' temple, their knees hitting hard against the marble floor. Artemis and Maera, Artemis' head warrior, the one we saw in The Dark Ages--a tall, powerful woman in an Amazon-like leather outfit, a sword at her side and a quiver of arrows at her back--stand over them on the steps. Two female warriors stand behind them.

MAERA (sarcastic):

So. Where's this *god* of yours? He doesn't seem to be helping.

PETRONIA (strong and determined):

You can kill us, but Eli's faith will *never* die. It will only--

ARTEMIS (interrupts with a sneer):

Grow stronger. (scoffs) It's such an old tune. (pause) Well, I *could* kill you myself, but I don't think Eli's sheep deserve the honor.

She motions to the warriors behind Petronia and Felix. We see the warriors draw their swords. The camera pans to show Kyros standing nearby. He winces, closing his eyes.

DISSOLVE TO

A puddle of blood trickling down the stone steps. Pull back to show Felix and Petronia lying dead at Artemis' feet.

Artemis looks to the side where Kyros is standing. He can't take her eyes off the dead bodies of the Elijan leaders.

ARTEMIS (to Kyros):

Well. Aren't you glad you joined the winning side?

Kyros flinches and looks at her silently.

ARTEMIS (menacingly):

Aren't you?

KYROS (reluctantly):

Yes, my goddess.

He bows his head.

[END OF FLASHBACK]

Kyros raises his head, tears glittering in his eyes. Xena and Gabrielle exchange a thoughtful look.



XENA (softly):

You've got another chance. Use it well.

KYROS (surprised but also grateful):

Thank you.

CUT TO

The temple. Faint chanting and drums can be heard from inside.

CUT TO

Women in outfits of semi-transparent dark blue and silver cloth are dancing ritualistically around a raging fire in the center of the temple, chanting, while a woman at the back of the temple beats

rhythmically on a large drum. The air is murky with smoke from the fire and incense candles that burn from candleholders in the walls.

The High Priestess walks out toward the dancers. She is a tall, slender woman with brown hair and gray eyes, wearing a feathered headdress, a dark blue robe trimmed with silver, and a silver medallion around her neck depicting an arrow piercing a crescent moon.

Pan up to show a small balcony that looks down over the center of the temple where the altar is and the ritual is taking place. Artemis and Maera stand side by side, looking down.

ARTEMIS (gently, breathing in deeply):
I'm so close, Maera, I can *feel* it.

MAERA:
To what, my Goddess?



ARTEMIS (opening her eyes):
Power. *Absolute* power.

The drumming and dancers stop, and everyone turns to the High Priestess and bows.

HIGH PRIESTESS (raises her arms):
We are gathered here today to honor our goddess, to show her our faith. And there is nothing that pleases her more than devotion of mind, body...and soul.

The High Priestess steps aside. From a room at the back of the temple behind her, two priestesses in dark blue robes with silver trim, veils covering their faces, bring out a young man in a white robe. He seems somewhat fearful but is obviously trying to compose himself as he walks willingly toward the center of the temple where a stone slab lies in front of the fire. He looks up at the High Priestess who nods at him and then he turns to the guards on either side of him. He lies down on the slab and one of the priestesses places a white blindfold over his eyes and the other priestess pulls out a jagged, sapphire-inlaid dagger and hands it to the High Priestess.

CUT TO

Artemis looking down.

ARTEMIS:
Ephesus is already in my grasp. Rome is next...and then, all of the known world is mine.

CUT TO

HIGH PRIESTESS (raising the dagger):

With this willing virgin sacrifice, we ensure her power for evermore.

She brings the dagger down, slicing into the young man's chest. He gasps, his robe soaking with blood around the wound; then within moments, he goes limp, dead.

The dancing and chanting begins again. As this goes on, the camera pulls back on Artemis.

ARTEMIS:

It is my *destiny*, Maera. Uranus, creator of the universe, was killed by his son, Cronus. Cronus and his siblings ruled until his son Zeus overthrew him and brought forth Olympian rule. Now, the time has come for Zeus and the other Olympians to make room for the new ruler of the world. And since I have no children... (zoom in as a shadow of regret crosses her face, before her expression changes to one of cold glee) the cycle *ends* with me. My power will be last for eternity. (pauses and looks down at the dancers) Who can stop me now? My mortal brother, his girlfriend and her friends?

MAERA (cautiously):

My goddess...from what I've heard of Xena, it is not wise to underestimate her.

ARTEMIS (coldly):

Believe me, Maera, I learned that the hard way. I am ready for her.

The chanting grows louder and more intense.

Pan down to the High Priestess, then zoom in as closes her eyes and tilts her head toward the ceiling.

HIGH PRIESTESS (whispers):

For you, Artemis.

Quick pan to Artemis. She closes her eyes as well, her body glowing slightly with a faint, green light as she feeds off the energy of her worshipers.

CUT TO

Long shot of a large army traveling along a road.

DISSOLVE TO

Eve, Evander, and Virgil riding at the head of the armies, a forest behind them and a shoreline in the distance. Zoom in for a medium close-up as Eve looks over at Evander.

EVE (smiles slightly):

I'm impressed you were able to bring together these different people to fight for a single cause. (Evander looks at her) Not many could do that.

EVANDER (smiles, taking the compliment):

It took some coaxing to get the Elijans and the warriors of the Olympian gods to work side by side. There's no love lost between them, as you know. But you know what they say--the enemy of my enemy and all that. Right now, the followers of the other Olympians hate Artemis even more, with Artemis bent on increasing her power at their expense. Just last week, a temple to Athena was

attacked by Artemis' forces seeking to claim the temple in the name of their goddess and convert Athena's worshipers to their ways. Nearly everyone was killed. (pause, looking ahead) The gods know what's at stake. That's why Zeus and Hera asked me to take up this cause.

EVE (shocked):
Zeus and Hera!

EVANDER (shrugs):

They are my family, too. (looks at Eve, almost a little sheepishly) I don't know how much your mother has told you, but I've never been a fan of the gods. I've persecuted their worshipers--even those of the Goddess of Love.

Eve gives him a troubled look, then exchanges a quick glance with Virgil.



EVANDER (continues):

After I found out who my father was, I hated him at first... (he pauses and continues in a lower voice) and sometimes, I've hated myself because of the blood in my veins. (looks up at Eve) I could have gone on hating them forever. But I've come to realize the gods are just like us--both good and bad. I will fight with them if it is right.

Evander rides forward, leaving Eve and Virgil behind. Eve watches him silently, her expression reflecting respect. Virgil gives her a curious look, then looks ahead at Evander.

DISSOLVE TO

Xena, Gabrielle and a few Elijans (including the priest from before) are inside a building surrounding a table, talking strategy.

ELIJAN MAN #1 (to Xena):

So you have come here to bring Artemis down.

XENA:

We've seen what havoc she can wreak. It's time we show her that she *can't* do whatever she wants for her own gain.

ELIJAN MAN #2:

I don't know how wise that is. If we challenge her...who knows the wrath she will unleash.



GABRIELLE:

Would you rather live in fear for the rest of your lives, always afraid that you could do something to anger her?

ELIJAN PRIEST:

So what exactly do you propose we do?

Xena stands, thinking for a moment. Then she glances sideways, to a small window. A portion of the temple glowing in the sun can be seen outside.

XENA (turns back to the Elijans):

The temple is her most valuable possession. Take it, and then she'll know we mean business.

ELIJAN PRIEST:

Capture it?



XENA:

No. (close in on her face) Raze it to the ground.

The Elijans murmur amongst themselves.

GABRIELLE (to Xena):

And her worshipers? What will happen to them? (Xena is silent) I think we owe it to the Elijans, and to the worshipers of Artemis, to find a peaceful way first before we slash and burn.

ELIJAN MAN #2:

Gabrielle is right.

GABRIELLE (to Xena, getting an idea):

Maybe we can talk to them, get them to realize what Artemis is really like--just like we did in that village we were in before we came here. (looks to the Elijans) Who holds the authority around here?

ELIJAN PRIEST:

That would be Rhodopis. She's Artemis' most loyal servant--the women of her family have been priestesses of Artemis for many generations.

GABRIELLE (to Xena):

Then that's who we should talk to.

ELIJAN MAN #2:

You really think she will listen to you?

GABRIELLE (exchanges a look with Xena and smiles):

We can be very persuasive.

CUT TO

A large mansion, its marble sides gleaming in the sun.

CUT TO

Inside the palace. Two female guards are escorting Xena and Gabrielle down a long hallway. Its walls are covered with frescoes depicting Artemis. One depicts her with a bow and an arrow in a forest, hunting a great stag. Another has her standing on a hill, silhouetted in profile against the large full moon behind her. A third shows her sitting on a wooden throne in the forest, animals surrounding her, archers behind her and people in front of her, bowing their heads in prayer to her.

GABRIELLE (to Xena, under her breath):

I guess she really is Artemis' biggest fan.

Xena scoffs; the two guards give them dirty looks.

CUT TO

Xena and Gabrielle stand in the middle of a large circular room with marble floors and more wall paintings of Artemis. A tall woman in an elegant dark blue dress, with silver bracelets on her bare arms, walks out and stops in front of them, looking them over. We recognize her as the high priestess from the temple scene.

RHODOPIS:

You're the two who attacked my guards outside the city this morning.

XENA :

You mean, the thugs who were attacking followers of Eli? Yeah, that was us.

RHODOPIS :

Let me guess. Xena, the Warrior Princess.

XENA (grimly):

The one and only.

RHODOPIS:

You had no right to help those Elijans.

XENA:

No, of course not. We should have just let innocent people be slaughtered.

RHODOPIS:

They were hardly innocent! They had tried to break their friends out of jail. And they were not going to be killed, just sentenced to spend a day in the stocks.

Xena and Gabrielle exchange a surprised look.

RHODOPIS (continues):

We're not butchers here, you know. We believe in fair and just punishment.



XENA (sarcastic):

And yet you worship Artemis.

Rhodopis shoots her a sharp look. Gabrielle steps forward.

GABRIELLE:

And what did their friends do to wind up in jail?

RHODOPIS:

A few days ago, they entered one of the shrines in the city and desecrated it--smashed the vases and statues, ripped the scrolls, wrote insults to the Goddess on the walls. They also beat up a novice priestess who tried to stop them. She's got some nasty bruises to show for it.

Xena and Gabrielle exchange uncertain looks.

RHODOPIS (continues):

I know what you're thinking, but we don't punish Elijans without cause. (pause) I know that in

some places, overzealous worshipers of the Goddess have mistreated people of other faiths. I do not let that happen here.

XENA :

That's not how the Elijans feel.

RHODOPIS:

There has been conflict between the followers of Eli and the worshipers of Artemis, it's true. More of Artemis' people arrive here every day. Now that the Goddess graces us with her presence far more often than she ever has before, her followers' fervor has grown tenfold. This has caused--tensions with the Elijans. But believe me, I am not a tyrant out for their blood. All I want is to keep the peace.



GABRIELLE (angrily):

Is that why Felix and Petronia were killed? Don't tell me *they* attacked one of your shrines!

Rhodopis is silent for a moment; she looks slightly troubled, clasping her hands in front of her. Finally, she speaks.

RHODOPIS (reluctantly):

That was Artemis' own decision. Petronia and Felix refused to pledge that they and their followers would give up all efforts to convert worshipers of the Goddess to their own faith. I would have preferred to continue with peaceful persuasion before--harsher measures were taken. But the Goddess chose otherwise; it was her will.

Rhodopis turns away from them and walks toward a great statue of Artemis in a niche in the wall. She contemplates it thoughtfully.

GABRIELLE (surprised):

You disagree with your goddess.

RHODOPIS (turns back to face Xena and Gabrielle):

We are not blind in our worship. We know Artemis can be--extreme in her vengeance when she feels slighted. But a goddess does not have to be perfect to command reverence. She is flawed, just as we mortals are: sometimes petty and cruel, sometimes loving and generous. It makes her more like us.

Xena and Gabrielle watch her in amazement. Rhodopis comes back toward them.

RHODOPIS:

The people of Ephesus have worshiped Artemis for hundreds of years. We know her. We respect her for everything she is. (looks pointedly at Xena) Just as many people respect you, Xena. (Off Xena's shocked stare) You have many faults, don't you? You have done terrible things. Yet many people look up to you--and you can do good. Then why won't you allow that the same may be true of Artemis?

XENA (glares):

I'll tell you why not, you--

GABRIELLE (grabs her arm):

Xena? I think we should leave.

Xena scowls at her. Pan to Rhodopis, who looks at her calmly, obviously satisfied that her words have had an effect.

CUT TO

Close up of Xena's angry face.

XENA:

I can't believe she had the nerve to compare *me* to *Artemis*.

Pull back to show Xena standing inside a room, Ares standing behind her. He puts his hands on her shoulders in a calming gesture.



ARES (grins):

Don't worry about it. Only a fool would compare you to anyone else.

GABRIELLE (off-camera):

She's not a fool, though. (The camera pulls back to show her and several Elijans, as well as Darion who is holding Samuel) She's not like anyone we've faced in this war against Artemis. She believes fully in her goddess--and yet she knows Artemis for exactly who she is. These people are not dupes or new converts. Worship of Artemis has been their way of life for generations. I really don't think persuasion will work here.

XENA:

Then we do it my way. Destroy the temple.

ELIJAN MAN #1:

But how?

KYROS (off-camera):

Maybe I can help.

Everyone turns to see Kyros standing in the doorway. He comes closer. The Elijans give him nasty looks.

ELIJAN WOMAN:

You're not welcome here, *traitor*.

ELIJAN MAN #2:

Leave!

As the other Elijans raise their voices in protest, Xena steps up in front of them.

XENA (firmly):

Quiet! (the voices begin to fade and everyone turns to Xena; she looks at Kyros) He wants to make up for his mistakes. You should give him that chance.

ELIJAN WOMAN:

You call betrayal a mistake?

GABRIELLE:

We need all the help we can get, don't we? (to Kyros) Go on.

KYROS:

Well...if you want to destroy the temple, then I have something to show you.

DISSOLVE TO

A small, dimly lit cave. Xena, Gabrielle, Ares and Kyros enter. The interior is damp. Kyros holds a torch and leads the way. When the entrance is out of view, Kyros stops and the others do, too. There is the sound of something bubbling. Kyros waves the torch forward to illuminate the space in front of them, and they find a rocky basin filled with bubbling oil, heated from deep in the ground.



XENA:

Greek Fire.

KYROS:

There's enough here to destroy the temple and then some. Hide it inside and set the place on fire. There'll be nothing left .

GABRIELLE (unsure):

And what if the fire spreads to the city?

XENA :

We'll make sure it doesn't.

GABRIELLE:

What about the people inside the temple?

KYROS:

We can do it at night. There will be only one priestess inside and four guards.

Gabrielle looks troubled.

XENA (puts a hand on Gabrielle's shoulder):

Gabrielle, if we can, I promise we will subdue them and get them out. But if we can't--it's still our only option.

After a moment's hesitation, Gabrielle puts her hand over Xena's and nods silently.

Xena looks from Gabrielle to Ares to Kyros.

XENA:

Let's get to work.

DISSOLVE TO

The same cave, later. Kyros and Gabrielle are using buckets to scoop up oil and pour it into a barrel. There are several empty barrels around the pit of oil. Pan back further back to show Xena and Ares lifting another barrel into a cart that already has two barrels in it.

GABRIELLE:

How do we get these inside the temple?

KYROS:

Easy. We claim we're bringing in sacramental wine for the service. I know the symbol used on the barrels.

XENA:

Sounds like a plan.

There is a flash of green light and a "whooshing" sound. Pan to Kyros, who looks terrified, beads of sweat rolling down his face. Pull back to show Artemis appearing.

ARTEMIS (sneers):

Unfortunately for you, I have other plans.

Xena reaches for her chakram but does not throw it yet, obviously waiting for a moment to distract Artemis.

Artemis turns to Kyros and shakes her head.

ARTEMIS:

You've gone and disappointed me, Kyros. (sighs) Just like a man. (pause) I thought I had your loyalty.

KYROS (determined but clearly terrified):

You never did.

ARTEMIS (sarcastically):

Pity.

In an instant, she moves toward him and grabs him by the neck, holding him so that his feet are nearly off the ground. He struggles against her tight grip, coughing and gasping.

ARTEMIS (yelling at him, her eyes glowing green with anger):

Did you think you could defy me and get away with it?! That you could make plans to take me down behind my back?! You fool! I *own* this city!

Kyros starts to wheeze, choking.

XENA (through clenched teeth):

Not for long.

ARTEMIS (chuckles):

You never admit defeat, do you? I gave you a chance to leave. (looks at Gabrielle and Ares) All of you. You chose to ignore it. (shrugs casually) So, it all ends here. (she gives Ares a mocking stare) You've made your bed with her, brother. Now you'll lie in it...forever.

Artemis laughs and vanishes in a flash with a now-unconscious Kyros. From the green flare that accompanies her disappearance, a streak of fire shoots out toward the oil pit.

Xena's eyes widen.



XENA (shouts):
Everyone out, NOW!

The fire begins to burn hotter and brighter. In slow motion, Xena, Gabrielle and Ares race toward the entrance when an explosion erupts behind them, sending a huge plume of fire and smoke their way.



FLASH TO

Eve stands barefoot on the beach, the waves crashing against her ankles. To her side, the army camp has been set up along the shore. She looks down at the waves, then at the temple of Ephesus. It's evening; the sun is low.

EVANDER (off-camera):
Enjoying the scenery?

Eve turns to see Evander who walks toward her. He gives her a small smile. Eve sighs and then looks out to sea.

EVANDER:
You're having doubts, aren't you?

EVE:
You mean, about destroying the city? Of course I am. (turns to look at him) I want to stop Artemis as much as you do but...

EVANDER:
...your heart won't allow it. (nods) I understand. (he touches her shoulder) We both know her power is in the people she controls. We eliminate them, we have a good shot at eliminating her. The Elijans--we'll get them out. But the worshipers of Artemis...

EVE:
...are doomed because of the faith they chose.

EVANDER:
You know what's at stake, Eve. Preventing that future you saw from coming true. It has to end here.

Eve nods uncertainly. Pull back to show the two of them standing on the shore.

CUT TO

Outside the cave where the explosion took place. Rocks are scattered everywhere. Xena, Gabrielle and Ares are lying face down in the sand at the edge of the cave, all three of them unconscious.

Close in on Xena's face as she begins to stir, opening her eyes slowly. She sits up, holding her head and wincing. She has a gash above her eye. She turns to look at Gabrielle and Ares, then gently shakes them both. They stir and sit up. With a smile of relief, Xena pulls them both into a hug.

ARES (with fake outrage):

Hey! I don't do group hugs.



XENA (chuckles as she lets go):

Almost thought my nine lives were finally up. Are you two all right?

Gabrielle nods, noticing some scrapes on her arm. Ares nods as well, a few bruises on his chest and then reaches out and touches Xena's face, wiping the blood away from her cheek.

ARES:

Are *you*?

Xena nods, touching his hand.

XENA (smiles):

I think I've still got a few lives left.

She gets to her feet, and Ares and Gabrielle do as well, dusting themselves off. They look back toward the cave--the opening is much larger now but it's covered in black soot. Then Xena's eyes glance sideways as she sees something lying at the cave's entrance. She stares sadly.

XENA:

Kyros.

Pan over to show Kyros lying face up in the sand, his neck twisted in a clearly unnatural way, his eyes blank and staring ahead.

GABRIELLE (sadly):

At least he had that good deed before he died.

Xena nods.

GABRIELLE (to Xena):

I have to make sure Darion and Samuel are all right. After what Artemis did--

XENA (urgently):

Go.

Gabrielle runs off.

CUT TO

The sun is setting. Eve mounts her horse and rides off toward Ephesus.

CUT TO

The shoreline. Eve rides along it and then slows when she hears singing and sees a plume of black smoke rising in the distance. She rides forward, turns a corner along a small cliff and soon sees Xena and Ares (their backs to Eve) standing in front of a small fire where a body clearly lies on top of a small pile of driftwood. Xena is singing her burial song. There are a few Elijans with them as well.

Eve jolts as if she had been hit as a memory comes back to her.

[FLASHBACKS]

From *The Dark Ages*:

XENA (a pained look on her face):

Gabrielle has been dead for almost seven years.

Eve stares at her in shock.

XENA (continues):

Artemis killed her. Soon after we returned from Jerusalem.

[END OF FLASHBACKS]

Close up of Eve's face as her eyes well with tears.



EVE:

I'm too late...

FADE OUT

ACT THREE

FADE IN

Close up of Eve's face as Xena sings the last note of the burial song and all goes silent. The Elijans bow their heads and then begin to disperse. As they leave, Eve stands still, watching them from a distance, then begins to walk up.

CUT TO

Xena is standing beside the fire, Ares at her side. Pan down to show Ares slowly slip his hand into hers and they stand there, silent, holding hands.

EVE (off-camera):

Mother.

Xena and Ares turn to see Eve walking up, her horse behind her. Xena is surprised to see her daughter and before she has a chance to say anything, Eve wraps her arms around her, hugging her tightly.

EVE (softly):

I'm sorry.

Ares raises an eyebrow. Xena, startled, wraps an arm around Eve to comfort her.

XENA (gently):

Sorry about what, sweetheart?

EVE (looks up at Xena, tears welling in her eyes):

That I didn't get here in time. That Gabrielle-- (chokes up)

Xena pulls back from the embrace and wipes a tear from Eve's eye with her thumb.

XENA:

That Gabrielle what? What are you talking about?

GABRIELLE (off-camera):

Xena!

Startled, Eve looks over Xena's shoulder to see Gabrielle standing there, with Samuel in her arms and Darion standing beside her. Eve's face brightens suddenly.

GABRIELLE (comes closer):

Eve! You're here. (to Xena) Sorry I'm late. I--

Before she can finish, Eve sweeps toward her and hugs her tightly.

EVE:

You're alive.

Across Eve's shoulder, Gabrielle gives Xena a puzzled look. Xena frowns slightly and shrugs.

GABRIELLE (with a somewhat nervous smile):

I hope so.

Eve moves back.

EVE:

I'm so happy to see you. (turns back to Xena) *Both* of you. (turning to Gabrielle again) And this must be Samuel. He's beautiful.

GABRIELLE (surprised):

How did you--

EVE:

I'll explain. (gravely) I have something to tell you.

DISSOLVE TO

Sunset. A dark stone building with columns stands atop a cliff. It looks somewhat run down and seems to be an abandoned temple.

There is a sudden flash of light from inside, an explosion and the sound of something heavy crashing to the ground.

CUT TO

Inside the building. There is a pile of rocks on the floor that seems to be a shattered statue, a broken-off arm lying amidst the rubble. The pedestal is still standing with the legs cut off at the knee.

From off-screen, a green lightning bolt shoots toward the remainder of the statue and strikes it, causing it to explode into pieces and crumble to the ground.

Pan back to show Artemis standing a few feet away, her arm extended.

ARTEMIS (snarls):

They think they can stop me, do they?

Enraged, she whips around and shoots out another bolt from both hands, this time hitting a statue of Ares holding a sword--it's obviously an old temple of his--and making it crumble.

Artemis slowly lowers her hands.



ARTEMIS:

You won't get in my way again, Ares. You and your girlfriend may have escaped with a few scratches, but the next time you cross my path you won't be so lucky. (She pauses, a sudden vulnerable look coming into her eyes) You've already taken my brother away from me...(She looks down, as if struggling to suppress emotion, then looks up, her face hardening again) But you won't take anything else. (She holds up her hand and lets a green ball of energy forms in her palm) You won't take *this*. I *will* stay a god, no matter how many have to die.

WOMAN'S VOICE (soft and gentle):

You were never like this, my child.

Artemis whips around to see a beautiful woman, her blond hair pulled back behind her head, her flowing blue garments shining. She is transparent--a ghost.

Artemis' face drops for a moment, her eyes soft and vulnerable again.

ARTEMIS:

Mother?

LETO:

I've missed you, Artemis.

ARTEMIS:

You've been gone--a long time.

LETO (nods ruefully):

I was one of the first to go; I never had that many worshipers. I haven't come around

often...because I know it would hurt you. (she walks forward, reaching out as if to touch Artemis' cheek) But now that your brother is gone, you need me.

Leto's hand passes right through Artemis' cheek. Artemis watches guardedly, then pulls back.

ARTEMIS (suddenly harsh):

No. (She holds up her hand again, letting the power surge between her fingers) I need *this*.



LETO (saddened):

Look at what's happened to you in your obsession with survival. You are killing innocent people, forcing them to worship you by terror and trickery, stealing temples and followers from your fellow gods...(shakes head, disappointed) You aren't the daughter I raised.

ARTEMIS (hard):

The daughter you raised? You raised me to be strong. And I *am* being strong because I don't want to end up like you.

LETO (sadly):

Then you have made your choice. I hope it's worth it.

With that, she fades away. Artemis stares at the spot where she had stood.

ARTEMIS (in a low voice, to herself):

It *is* worth it. I am unstoppable. (the camera zooms in on her face as her eyes begin to glow green) Unstoppable. Unstoppable...The future is mine.

DISSOLVE TO

Medium close-up on Eve as she stands on the beach, having obviously finished telling her story to Xena and the others. The sun has set, traces of crimson glow on the horizon. In the background, the funeral pyre can be seen, burning low.

EVE (intense):

I'm telling you, that future was real! And I *must* stop it.

The camera pans over the others. Xena, Ares and Gabrielle look grave; Darion is clinging fearfully to Gabrielle, his arms around her. She is stroking his hair absently, her other arm busy holding Samuel. Finally Xena steps toward Eve.

XENA:

Oh, Eve. I'm sorry you had to go through all that.

She hugs Eve and strokes her hair as if comforting a child.

EVE (pulls back, with determination):

No, I'm glad I did. Because now I can warn you. (urgently) You have to leave Ephesus, *now*. (Her eyes slide over Ares and Darion, finally fixing on Gabrielle) *All* of you.

GABRIELLE:

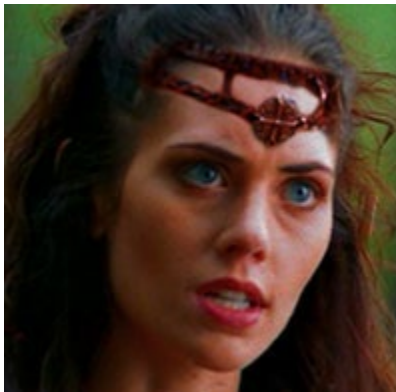
We can't let Artemis win.

EVE :

And I can't let *you* die. (pause) I started all of this, it's my job to finish it.

XENA:

Started--



EVE:

It was my birth that set the Twilight in motion. That's why Artemis is fighting for her life. (pauses, looking at Gabrielle) You wrote in your scrolls that when I was little, the Fates told you that, because of me, a storm without end lies on your path. That storm has never ended, Gabrielle. (pause) What they said about finding salvation in the essence of death...maybe *I'm* the one who must die. (resolved) If my death can end Artemis' reign of destruction and fulfil my purpose, then I accept that.

Xena grabs Eve's shoulders .

XENA:

I don't. I'm you're *mother*, I'm not going to let you sacrifice yourself.

GABRIELLE (gently, stands up):

What you saw in that future was not set in stone. It *can* change.

EVE:

I know, but not without changing the path along the way. To do that, I have to get you out of here. I'll handle it.

XENA:

By yourself? Eve-- (pause) --when we heard about the Messenger of Eli, I didn't think that I'd find you using that title again but--

EVE (shakes head):

It's not me. It's-- (she pauses a moment) It's Evander.

Close up of Xena and Gabrielle's surprised faces, and then slow zoom in on Ares who looks even more shocked.

ARES (quietly):

My son?

Xena looks at Eve.

EVE:

Evander has an army camped nearby, made up of the still-loyal temple warriors of the other gods. He's leading them, and the Elijans are calling him the Messenger of Eli--all for the purpose of bringing Artemis down.

Close in on Xena and Gabrielle's thoughtful, troubled faces. Pan around to show Ares looking down, unreadable.

DISSOLVE TO

A small room in the inn. Gabrielle is standing at the window, looking out. Samuel is fast asleep in a basket beside the bed. In the distance, the half moon can be seen hovering above Artemis' temple.

XENA (off-camera):

Can't sleep?

Gabrielle doesn't turn as Xena walks up, appearing in the moonlight behind Gabrielle.

XENA:

Me neither.

There is a brief pause. Both of them look out the window.

XENA:

Gabrielle...I think you should take Eve's advice. Leave Ephesus. (she turns toward Gabrielle) Now, I know what you're going to--

GABRIELLE (turns abruptly toward her):

You're right. (nods) I've been thinking the same thing. (looks out the window again, sighs) I have Samuel to worry about. And Darion. (pause) Even before we heard what Eve said...

Gabrielle trails off. There is a tense, silent moment.

GABRIELLE:

You should have seen how scared Darion was when he saw my cuts and bruises, and when I had

to tell him what happened in that cave. (looking down) And he was so terrified when Eve told her story of the future... The more I feel Darion's fear, the more I realize... (trails off)

XENA (gently):
What?

Gabrielle turns around to look Xena in the eye.



GABRIELLE:

That I came here for one reason, and that was to prove to myself that I could. That nothing has changed. (quietly) But it has. I can't let this become another Jerusalem. (looks down) Or worse.

Xena reaches out and pulls Gabrielle close, letting her head rest on Xena's shoulder. They hold still for a moment, then pull apart.

GABRIELLE:

It's time I started acting like a mother. That's what I am now. (after a pause) And maybe...

Gabrielle trails off, looking down for a long moment. Xena puts her hands on Gabrielle's shoulders.

XENA:

What?

GABRIELLE (looks up):

After this is over...maybe it's time I chose a different path.

Xena looks at her, startled.

XENA:

What do you mean?

GABRIELLE:

I was there with you when you were raising Eve. So much violence. I just...maybe I should step away from that for a while--go back to Potidaea where my children can be safe.



XENA (frowns, unable to hide her sadness):
If--you think that's best.

GABRIELLE:

I haven't quite made up my mind yet. (sighs) I just don't know if I can balance being a warrior and a mother the way you did.

XENA (voice breaking a little):
I'm not sure I managed it so well.

Xena puts her arm around Gabrielle and they hug again; Xena kisses the top of Gabrielle's head.

XENA:

We'll talk about this later. Right now, you should leave the city. The rest of us can handle Artemis.

CUT TO

Another room in the inn. Xena walks in and closes the door behind her.

ARES (off-camera):

What took you so long?

Xena looks up to see Ares lounging comfortably on the bed, his vest, leather pants and sword lying neatly next to a chair across from the bed. He's wearing loose cloth pants like those from *Old Ares Had A Farm*.

Xena smiles a little and removes her armor, then her leather shift until she's clothed only in the tan cloth garment underneath. She walks up to the bed and he sits up as she sits down on the edge of the bed.

XENA:

Just having a talk with Gabrielle.

ARES:

And we all know she can go on for hours. You're lucky you got out when you did or I'd be spending the night alone.

Xena chuckles and hits him lightly on the shoulder, playfully. Then her expression turns serious.

XENA:

She's thinking about leaving.

ARES:

Leaving Ephesus? Good idea.

Xena holds for a moment, then looks at him. She sighs and scoots back until she's lying on the bed, propped up against the feather pillows behind her head, pulling the covers up around her a bit. Ares lies back next to her.



XENA:

She's...thinking of taking a break from life on the road for a while. I don't know for how long.
(pause) And if she does...things will be...different.

Ares thinks about this for a moment, then reaches over and takes her hand and squeezes it. Xena gives him a small smile.

XENA:

At least I'll still have you.

ARES (grins):

Sure. Just don't expect me to chronicle your deeds in scrolls.

XENA (smiles):

No scrolls.

ARES:

Or to give motivational speeches about how it's better to talk than to fight.

XENA:

No motivational speeches.

She leans on his shoulder and he drapes his arm across her stomach.

ARES:

Good. Then it's a deal.

DISSOLVE TO

Later that night. Gabrielle is in her room. Montage of her standing by the cradle that holds Samuel, rocking it gently as the boy sleeps, walking around the room, looking out the window, packing some things into a sack.

DISSOLVE TO

Gabrielle puts the sack down next to Samuel's cradle. There is a faint knock on the door and a small voice from the hallway.

DARION (off-camera, sleepily):
Gabrielle?

Gabrielle walks to the door, opens in and sees Darion.

GABRIELLE:
What is it?

DARION:
I want to leave.

Gabrielle frowns and walks into the room, Darion following, and closes the door. She sits down on his bed and Darion comes up to her.

DARION:
I don't want to be here when Artemis shows up. Please, can we just go? (Gabrielle frowns more) I want to be strong, like you and Xena but I'm afraid. (he looks down) I'm afraid of *her*.

Darion sits next to Gabrielle and she holds him close. The uncertainty is in her eyes.



GABRIELLE (softly):
I am too.

DARION:
I wish we hadn't come here.

A tear forms in Gabrielle's eye and she wipes it away.

GABRIELLE (whispers):

I know. (she sniffs and then looks at Darion) Don't worry. We're leaving in the morning. Xena and I already talked. It's for the best.

Somewhat relieved, Darion leans on her shoulder. There is silence for a long moment. Then, Darion moves back from her and looks up. His eyes are wet with tears but he does not let them come.

DARION:

Are we ever going to see Haimon again?

Taken aback by the change in subject, Gabrielle sits back, surprised.

GABRIELLE (tender):

I hope so, Darion. I don't know.

DARION (looks down):

We could use his help now. I...miss him.

GABRIELLE (hugs Darion):

I miss him, too.

Pull back to show the two of them, sitting together on the bed in the dim light.

CUT TO

A rich section of the city. There are tall buildings with lavish gardens and statues. A few fruit vendors are carrying their goods to the stands along the agora, readying themselves for the first customers of the day. The light of dawn has just begun to glow on the horizon.

The flapping of black fabric appears across the screen. Pull back to show a rider wearing a black cloak mounted on a black horse appear at the end of the street, looking very ominous. There is a lit torch in his hand. After a moment's pause, he rides forward, beginning to set fire to the vendor stands along the agora. The few people that are awake run in fear. Jars of oil break and it isn't long before the place begins to erupt in flames.

The camera pans to a small statue of Artemis on the side of the street. The black rider charges towards it and then knocks it down with his sword. The statue falls over and the head breaks off.

CUT TO

Further down the street, the black rider gallops toward a building and tosses the torch inside. Flames can be seen going up.

CUT TO

A long shot of the street with several buildings now on fire. People are running out, screaming for help.

The rider watches from a distance, then turns around, his horse rearing, his cape flapping around him, and rides away as quickly as he had come.

CUT TO

The hallway in the inn. A baby's cry is heard.

CUT TO

Gabrielle is pacing around the room, rocking Samuel in her arms, patting him on the back and humming to try and calm her upset son who won't stop crying. Darion is in the room with her, packing up some things into a small pack of his own. Gabrielle's larger pack sits beside the door.

GABRIELLE:

Shhhh. Come on, sweetheart, you woke me up three times last night. (Samuel cries more) I know, I know. Your problems are just as important as mine. (still rocking him gently and he has begun to quiet down a little) Shhh. There, there...

As Samuel finally begins to close his eyes, Gabrielle gently lies him down in his crib, covering the blanket around him and stepping back, sighing.

GABRIELLE (to Darion):

Let me get a little more rest and then we'll have breakfast and head out.

Darion nods.

She walks toward the bed and sits down on the edge.

Suddenly she notices something outside the window. She stands up and sees a plume of smoke rising from a section of the city. Her eyes widen.

CUT TO

Inside another room. Xena and Ares are lying together in bed, Xena lying on her side with Ares behind her, his arm draped over her.

The sound of furious knocking is heard outside the door. Xena opens her eyes.

GABRIELLE (muffled, from behind the door):

Xena!

Xena sits up; Ares has woken up behind her.

The door opens and Gabrielle rushes in. Xena stands (she is still in her tan undergarment).

XENA (worried):

What is it?

Behind her, Ares is on the other side of the bed, grabbing his vest.

GABRIELLE:

Fire.

Zoom in on Xena's concerned face.

CUT TO

People are gathered around in the rich marketplace cleaning up the damage. The smoke rises from the ruins; the fire is now extinguished. There are piles of broken wood and clay pots; exquisite vases in bright colors and patterns shattered amongst the rest of the charred rubble. A vendor's stand has been tipped over, all of the produce scattered about, most of it scorched by the flames. The ground is soaked with the water used to put out the fire, and many of the people cleaning up the mess are covered in soot, their once-beautiful rich garments torn and singed. Many people are still in their night clothes, having been woken from sleep. The tall houses surrounding the marketplace are mostly no worse for wear—the fire must have been put out before it reached most people's homes.

Xena, Gabrielle and Ares walk onto the scene.

Gabrielle stops at the spot where Artemis' statue stood, now toppled over and lying on the ground in pieces: the head smashed in two, an arm broken off at the elbow, the stone chipped and cracked in many places.

GABRIELLE:

I take it whoever did this isn't too fond of Artemis.

ELIJAN (walking up):

This is where the rich and powerful of Ephesus live. Priestesses and priests, city leaders...all favorites of Artemis. (looking around at the destruction) Not so grand now, are they?

CUT TO

Evander's camp outside of Ephesus. Eve is bending over a barrel, filling her waterskin. Virgil walks up to her.

VIRGIL:

Morning.

Eve straightens up and puts the cap on the waterskin, then turns to him.

EVE:

Morning.

Virgil goes to say something but then notices Eve is looking over his shoulder. He turns to see several cloaked riders coming toward the camp. The leader slows down and dismounts, then takes off his cloak. It's Evander.

He comes forward and stops when he sees Eve looking at him.

EVANDER:

You're up early.

EVE:

So are you. (nods toward the riders behind him) Where were you?

EVANDER:

Just... (thinking of the words) ...sending Artemis' followers a message. (grins) It's what the Messenger does, right?

Eve gives him a wary look. Glancing up, she sees wisps of smoke rising in the distance.

CUT TO

The marketplace, where the cleanup is still going on. Xena nudges a burnt piece of wood from a broken wagon with her foot, then turns to Gabrielle and the Elijans behind her. Ares is standing a distance away, looking around.

XENA:

This was no random attack. Artemis' worshipers were the target.

ELIJAN:

Well, don't expect much sympathy from me. (off her suspicious look) What, you think the Elijans had a hand in this? (scoffs) We don't go burning down people's homes! (shakes head) Besides, why would you defend them?

XENA:

I don't condone unprovoked attack.

ELIJAN WOMAN (walking up):

Unprovoked? They've been provoking *us* for weeks! (looking around at the rubble) Whoever did it, as far as I'm concerned, they deserved what they got.

GABRIELLE (surprised by the bitterness in the Elijan woman's voice; steps up):

And what if you were attacked, and they thought the same of you? (the woman is silent) Hate only breeds more hate. As someone who follows Eli's teachings, I thought you would understand that.

Some of the Elijans look at each other, pondering Gabrielle's words. A younger Elijan girl, probably about 15, steps forward.

YOUNG ELIJAN:

Gabrielle is right. Eli teaches us to love our enemies; is this how we honor his memory?

One of the older Elijans nods and walks up, laying a hand on the young Elijan girl's shoulder. Then he walks over to and helps a vendor raise a toppled-over fruit stand. A few other Elijans join him in helping clear the rubble. Gabrielle smiles at Xena, obviously pleased; they join in as well.

Pan around to show Eve and Virgil riding in . They pull their horses to a stop.

EVE (surprised):

This is his message?

Xena whips around hearing Eve's voice. She looks up at her daughter who dismounts; Virgil follows.

Xena eyes Eve silently, seeing the shame in her eyes.

EVE:

I'm sorry, Mother. I had no idea this is what Evander meant.

Close up of Xena's shocked but not entirely surprised, expression.

DISSOLVE TO

The army camp. Evander is standing outside of his tent. He sees Eve and Virgil riding toward the camp, then notices Gabrielle, Xena and Ares riding behind them.

CUT TO

Inside Evander's tent. Evander walks in, followed by Eve, Virgil, Gabrielle, Ares and Xena.

EVE (upset):

You attacked the city.

EVANDER (turns around, sighs, off Eve's look):

Isn't that what we agreed on?

EVE:

We agreed to attack when the time is right--and after the weakest and most helpless have been moved to safety!

GABRIELLE (steps up):

You were going to attack the city? You never told us that.

EVE (somewhat guilty but also determined):

It's what has to be done.

Xena watches Eve uncertainly.

XENA:

To prevent the future from coming true.

EVE (nods):

Yes. That's why the armies of the gods are with us. We will wage war on Artemis and we will win. Her following and her temple will be destroyed.

GABRIELLE:

Is that the only way?

Eve hesitates for a moment, thinking, then nods, determined.

EVE:

I know of no other options, Gabrielle. Believe me, this hurts me as much as it does you. It has even made me wonder if that little part of Livia is still left inside me...but yes, this time destruction is the only way we can win. We'll save as many as we can, but everyone else... (trails off)

Xena glances at Gabrielle, conflicted. Pan back to show Ares standing thoughtfully and quietly.

EVE (to Evander):

But if you want to work together, you don't go off on your own and do something like this without telling me.

Evander sighs and finally nods.

EVANDER:

We will focus on attacking the temple.

Xena, Gabrielle, Eve, Evander and Ares stand in silence for a moment.

GABRIELLE (to Xena):

That oil would have come in handy. I'm sorry Kyros had to die for nothing.

EVANDER:

Oil?

GABRIELLE:

There was oil in a cave in the side of the cliff we planned on bringing into the temple and setting it on fire. Artemis found out--had the place destroyed, and nearly killed us.

EVANDER (thinks for a moment):

Show me this cave.

Xena and Gabrielle give him a curious look.

DISSOLVE TO

Outside, by the seashore, Xena, Gabrielle, Ares, Virgil, and Eve are standing outside the caves opening. After a moment, Evander emerges from inside, grinning a little.

EVANDER:

It's as I had heard--there's a tunnel at the back of the cave that leads inside the temple. The explosion must have unsealed it.

EVE:

How did you know?

EVANDER:

I've been studying Artemis for many months, the better to defeat her. Long ago, when the temple was first erected, one of her followers, a deeply devoted and deeply deranged man, tried to have it destroyed so he could earn her favor, and eternal glory, by building an even better one. He dug a tunnel which he was going to use to smuggle Greek fire into the temple and blow it up. He was captured and executed for the attempt, and the entrance to the tunnel sealed. When you mentioned a cave...

XENA:

So now we have a way to access the temple. (Evander nods) Then we should prepare to fight. We were told that tomorrow, there's a special service where all of Artemis' followers gather in the temple. Maybe...we can use that to our advantage.

EVANDER:

I'll have the armies ready.

XENA:

Good. (turns to Eve, gently) You're sure about this?

EVE (firm):

Yes.

XENA:

Then it's done. (looks at Ares, Evander, Eve and Gabrielle).

Everyone nods in agreement, Gabrielle and Eve more uncertain than the others.

GABRIELLE:

I wish we could do this without killing. Artemis, not her followers, is the problem. If we could turn them away from her...even for just a few hours while we strike...it could weaken her enough to defeat her for good.

XENA:

If only it were that simple, Gabrielle.

Xena turns and walks out of the tent. Ares follows, as do Gabrielle and then Evander. Pan back to show Eve standing in the tent, alone, with a thoughtful look on her face.

CUT TO

Eve and Virgil are walking through the streets of Ephesus, watching people go about their daily lives. She seems lost in thought. As they get closer to the temple, Eve stops and looks up at it.

VIRGIL (gently):

What are you thinking?

EVE:

It's amazing the lengths people will go to to please their god. It doesn't even matter if it's an Olympian or an Elijan. (looks at Virgil) Is it really worth it to believe in something so much that it takes over your life? (Virgil listens to her silently; Eve looks back at the temple) I was like that once when the God of Eli purified my soul. I owed him everything for saving me from who I used to be. And yet I never really felt like I was truly who I should be until I left his path and found a new one. I do not love him any less--but my life is my own. Then I look at these people and wonder if I'm missing out on what's really important in life...or if they are. (looks at Virgil) Does that make any sense?

Virgil takes her hands.

VIRGIL:

It makes perfect sense.

He leans forward and kisses her. Their kiss is brief but tender and intense.

When they pull back, Virgil offers her a wineskin and she takes a drink.

VIRGIL:

Ready for the battle?

EVE:

I hope so.

VIRGIL (slightly doubtful):

You trust Evander?

EVE:

He's determined to win this as much as any of us. And he has special powers; we'd be foolish to reject his help.

VIRGIL:

He's not a god.

EVE:

No--but he can move things with his mind, or shatter them by sending out surges of some--force that he commands. I'm not even sure what kind of other powers he may have. (suddenly, her look changes as if an idea has struck her.)

VIRGIL:

What is it?

EVE (looks at him):

Just an idea.

Virgil watches her curiously, then pan back to Eve who looks up at the temple towering above them.

CUT TO

The courtyard of the inn. Gabrielle is standing next to her horse, with Samuel in a sling on her shoulder. Darion stands by her side. They are facing Xena, with Ares standing behind her slouching against a wall.

XENA:

Stay safe.

GABRIELLE:

You too.

Xena holds Gabrielle's eyes for a long, tender moment. Then, she moves forward and they hug.

GABRIELLE:

I'll see you very soon, okay?

XENA:

Yeah.

They pull back from the hug.

XENA:

Where will you go?

GABRIELLE:

Somewhere outside the city--not too far. I'll know where to look for you.

EVE (softly):

I'm glad you're going, Gabrielle.

Gabrielle nods.

GABRIELLE:

Take care of yourself...and of your mother.

They hug quickly; then, Gabrielle looks at Ares.

ARES (stands up straight):

I told you, I don't do hugs.

While they speak, Darion can be seen in the background hugging Xena, then Eve.

GABRIELLE (grins a little):

I know you don't. But I *am* counting on you to be there for Xena while I can't.

ARES (grins back):

Aw, I'm touched.

Gabrielle chuckles.

CUT TO

Gabrielle rides out of the courtyard, Darion behind her on the horse.

DISSOLVE TO

Eve walks along the beach toward the army camp.

CUT TO

Eve steps inside of Evander's tent. He's pouring himself some wine when she enters. He turns around.

EVE:

I need to speak with you.

Evander gives her a curious look.

DISSOLVE TO

Evening. It is still light but the pale moon can already be seen in the sky. Ares, shirtless, is standing by the window, looking out at the moon.

From behind, Xena comes up to him. She has her armor and gauntlets off and is wearing only her leather tunic.

XENA (puts her hand on his shoulder):

I guess it's just you and me and an army. Just the way you like it.

ARES (distractedly):

Yeah.

He continues to look out the window.

XENA:

What's wrong?

Ares sighs and turns to her. He takes her hand and looks at the ring on her finger.



ARES:

I think I gave it up too soon.

XENA (understanding):

The powers...?

ARES (nods):

I had it all and I just let it go.

XENA (can't hide the disappointment in her voice):

I thought you'd left all that behind you...

ARES (firm):

It's not that. But right now...you'd be safer with a god on your side, wouldn't you?

XENA (somewhat defensive):

I don't need a god to save me.

ARES (nods):

I know. But those powers would come in handy against Artemis, don't you think?

XENA:

You were a god when she and Apollo trapped you in that tomb.

ARES:

I was tricked.



XENA:

Ares... (she puts her hands on his shoulders) If you still had that stone, Artemis would be after it and it would make you more of a target. And if she got it, she could give it to some other henchman of hers. Do you know why I've always destroyed the ambrosia on earth whenever I found it? Because people aren't meant to have that kind of power. It could always fall into the hands of someone who could use it for ill, not good. (pause) It was the *right* thing to do.

ARES (after a brief pause):

If you say so.

XENA:

I *know* so.

They continue to look at each other. There is a knock on the door.

EVE (outside):

Mother?

Xena and Ares flinch slightly and turn toward the door.

XENA:

Come in!

Eve pushes the door open.

EVE:

I know how to do it.

XENA (frowns):

Do what?

EVE:

Destroy Artemis without killing her worshipers.

A tense silence, which Ares finally breaks with a wisecrack.

ARES:

There she goes, spoiling all the fun.

XENA (gives him an impatient look; then, to Eve):

Go ahead, tell us.

DISSOLVE TO

Outside the city, a cliff by a small, sparse forest. Gabrielle and Darion are making a fire. Samuel is asleep, wrapped in a blanket. Klio is tethered to a tree nearby.

DARION:

Gabrielle?

GABRIELLE:

What?

DARION (quietly):

Are a lot of people going to die?

GABRIELLE (close-up on her face; she looks very troubled):

I don't know, sweetheart. I hope not.

CROSS-FADE TO

It's turning dark. Gabrielle and Darion sitting by the fire, her arm around his shoulders.

CROSS-FADE TO

Gabrielle is sitting by the fire, hugging her knees, a cloak wrapped around her shoulders; Darion is now asleep in his bedroll. Gabrielle is looking up at the moon.



GABRIELLE (whispers to herself):

The calm before the storm...

FADE OUT

ACT FOUR

FADE IN

Daybreak. The first pink light of dawn is seen on the horizon. A long shot of the sleeping city.

DISSOLVE TO

The beach near Evander's camp. A large crowd of Elijans--the ones from Ephesus as well as the ones that traveled here with Evander. Evander stands facing them, on a rock he is using as a platform.

EVANDER (speaking with fervor and power):

I know our faith teaches that fighting isn't the way. And if our plan works, none of you will have to fight today. But if you must--if it is our only chance to stop Artemis' deadly cult here and now, and end our persecution once and for all--then I have to ask for your full commitment to this cause.

The Elijans listen intently.



EVANDER:

Are you with me?

The Elijans hesitate a moment and then begin to pump their fists in the air and cheer. The sound rises around him and Evander holds his head high, proud.

EVANDER:

Then let me tell you about your part in the plan.

Pan over the Elijans' faces as they listen raptly.

DISSOLVE TO

Xena, Ares, Eve and Virgil are sitting in a tent having breakfast. Evander comes in.

EVANDER:

Well, the Elijans will do their part. They'll also fight if they have to.

EVE (shakes her head):
It isn't their way.

EVANDER:

If things go as planned, they *won't* have to. But if it's the only choice--then don't you think it's worth it?

Eve frowns and nods slowly.

XENA:

It's daybreak. Artemis' worshipers should be heading to the temple just about now.

EVANDER:

Then we have to go. (to Eve) Are you ready?

EVE (rises):

As ready as I'll ever be.

CUT TO

Worshipers of Artemis congregating on the square in front of the temple.

Pan around and then up and over the temple, through a window to the inside where daylight is now streaming in. A great golden statue of Artemis towers over everything.

The camera pans over the floor. Near the back of the temple, one of the large marble tiles begins to vibrate, then is lifted up in the air and comes to rest on the floor. Evander rises out of the opening, climbs out on the floor and looks around. The temple is empty. He beckons to someone who is still down in the passage. Elijans start to climb out and then hide behind the vases and statues.

Evander walks toward the doors and stands behind a vase.

The doors open and worshipers start coming in.

Zoom in on Evander's face, an intense stare in his eyes.

DISSOLVE TO

The empty square in front of the temple. Xena, Ares, Virgil and Eve are standing beside a statue of Artemis by the temple steps, watching. The temple doors are open.

After a moment Evander walks out of the temple, followed by Artemis' worshipers. The people seem slightly dazed as they walk after him. The camera zooms in and pans over the crowd of worshipers. We see that some of the Elijans have mixed with them.

CUT TO

Xena, Ares, Eve and Virgil watching.

ARES (grins):

Like a charm.

VIRGIL (frowns):

Frightening, isn't it. To see that someone can control people's minds this way, even if it's for good.

XENA (turns to Ares, warily):

And you never knew your son had this kind of power.

ARES:

Even I didn't have it when I was a god.

EVE:

He didn't know he had it, either.

VIRGIL (looks to Eve):

How did *you* know?

Eve looks at Virgil but has trouble looking him in the eye.

EVE:

A hunch. I asked him to try it on me...and it worked.

[FLASHBACKS]

Eve and Evander are staring at each other for a long moment, Evander looks like he's concentrating. After a moment Eve's face twitches as if she was coming out of a daze. Suddenly, she smiles at Evander and comes closer. She clasps the back of his head, pulls his head toward her and kisses him passionately. He pulls her close for a moment, then pulls back and runs a hand in front of her face. Eve's face goes blank, then she flinches and stares at Evander--flustered, then angry.

EVE:

That was a dirty trick.

EVANDER (grins):

You asked.

EVE (indignantly):

Not for *this*!

EVANDER (shrugs):

Well, at least we know it works, don't we?

Eve glares at him.

[END OF FLASHBACKS]

Eve averts her eyes and then looks in the direction of the group of people being led by Evander into the square.

EVE:

For everyone's sake, let's hope it works on them, too.

She turns to Xena, Ares and Virgil.

EVE:

Good luck.

Xena nods, putting a hand on her shoulder.

XENA:

Good luck to you, too.

Eve shares a brief, tender look with Virgil. He nods and then she walks toward Evander and the people as Xena, Ares and Virgil head in the other direction.

CUT TO

Xena and Ares are coming up the temple steps, followed by Virgil and the warriors of the gods.

Ares looks up toward the temple, looking hesitant for a moment.

ARES:

Xena--whatever happens in there...

He trails off. Xena turns to look at him, a tender and uncertain look in her eyes.

XENA (in a hushed voice):

Be careful.

She takes his hand and squeezes it firmly in a moment of reassurance. Then, letting go of his hand, she draws her sword; Ares does the same. They glance at each other and then follow the army up the steps.

CUT TO

Xena, Virgil and Ares enter the temple and look around. The warriors can be seen behind them.

Pan to the golden statue of Artemis. The camera slowly zooms in on its face. The eyes have begun to glow green.

Pan to Xena.

XENA (whispers):

She's here.

Suddenly, a flame bursts to life from the altar in front of the statue. Everyone except Xena and Ares falls back. Ares narrows his eyes and grips his sword tighter.

The flame shoots up high toward the ceiling, then erupts in a blinding flash of green. Some of the warriors cry out from the shock; everyone shields their eyes. When the glow dims, Artemis is standing on the altar steps in front of the fire, her gold outfit reflecting the light.

ARTEMIS:

So. This is where you die.

XENA (points her sword toward her):

No, Artemis. This is where your reign ends.

ARTEMIS (mockingly):

You think this army is going to stop me?



XENA (darkly):

You lose this temple...you lose your worshippers...and then it's over. It's that simple.

ARTEMIS:

Is it?

Artemis extends her hand and launches a large fireball toward the group. They scatter out of the way; some of the gods' warriors deflect the fireball with their shields and it hits the back wall, creating a small indentation in the smooth marble.

ARTEMIS (lowers her hand smugly):

Nothing is ever simple when you're up against a god. (looks at Xena, then shifts her eyes to Ares, glaring) You should know that better than *anyone*.

Close-up of Xena's determined face.

FLASH TO

The city square. The people are gathered around Eve and Evander standing on a platform, listening intently to Eve speak. Evander stands silently by her side, his hand on the hilt of his sword in a posture very reminiscent of Ares.

EVE:

You have all been deceived. Artemis--is nothing that she says she is. She kills for pleasure, for power, and for herself. You are only in her good graces as long as it serves her purposes. Otherwise, she would toss you out like everyone else if she didn't need you.

The Elijans in the crowd speak up, backing her.

Close-up on a middle-aged Elijan woman.

ELIJAN WOMAN:

She's right!

Quick pan to a young Elijan man in another part of the crowd.

ELIJAN MAN:

Artemis is evil!

VOICES (off-camera);

-- Down with Artemis!

-- Artemis lies!

Murmurs erupt in the crowd, growing louder.

Pan to Eve.

EVE:

Artemis is death! Reject her and live!

The camera pans over the crowd. We see Rhodopis, listening raptly.

Pan back to Eve. Evander steps closer to her as the crowd's angry murmurs turn to shouts.

EVANDER:

It's working.

EVE (her face impassive):

It is.

CUT TO

Inside the temple. Xena, Ares, Virgil, and the warriors are facing off against Artemis who stares at them. She raises her hand and a fireball appears in her palm.

There are three flashes of light on the side of the temple: one gold, one green, one blue. Artemis turns toward the flashes, startled; so do Xena and the others. We see Athena, Zeus, and Hera materialize.



ATHENA:

You're right, Artemis. Nothing is ever simple when you're up against the gods...especially when the gods are your own *family*.

ARTEMIS (curls her lip in a snarl):

You're here to *defend* them? (Zeus, Athena and Hera stand still and silent) Fools! Don't you know they will destroy us?

ATHENA:

No. (she looks slightly regretful for a moment but then her face hardens, determined) *You'll* destroy us. You've already begun--stealing our worshipers and temples to make *yourself* more powerful.

ARTEMIS:

I'm preserving our way of life.



ATHENA (shakes head):

No. You're preserving *yours*.

Artemis shakes her head.

ARTEMIS:

You want a fight? You've got it. (raises her voice in a deafening, shrill shout) *Maera!*

The back doors of the temple are thrown open on both sides and Artemis' warriors stream out; they are led by Maera, now dressed in silver armor and helmet.

ARTEMIS (points to Xena, Ares, Virgil and the Olympians' warriors):

Kill them!

MAERA (to the other warriors of Artemis):

Attack!!

Overhead shot of the temple interior as the two groups of warriors clash.

Pan down for a quick succession of close-up shots of Artemis' warriors battling the warriors of the other gods, of Virgil and then Ares fighting the temple warriors. Then zoom in on Xena who is fighting one of Artemis' warriors, a woman nearly her match in height and strength wielding a large, jagged-edged sword. Xena dodges her swings, ducking under her and flipping over her, then plunging her sword into the warrior's chest.

Pan to Artemis watching, still standing in front of the altar. She frowns as the fight unfolds and she sees some of her warriors fall, then snaps her eyes to where Xena and Ares are fighting back to back. Her eyes begin to glow a faint green.

ARTEMIS:

It looks like I'll have to get involved myself.

A bow and arrow materialize in her hands.

CUT TO

Athena, Zeus and Hera looking at the fight.

ZEUS (looks at Athena):

You know what you have to do. For all of us.

HERA:

We all decided. This is our only option.

Close-up on Athena's thoughtful, troubled face.

CUT TO

The city square. Eve is still speaking.



EVE:

Artemis has killed innocent people and destroyed villages to gain worshipers. If we let her continue, she will end up enslaving all of Greece and beyond, and all that awaits humankind is a bleak and terrible future. But you have the power to stop her. Not warriors but people like you. It is your faith that has made her strong. Reject her, and she is defeated.

A great cry goes up from the crowd. Someone runs up to the statue of Artemis and throws a rock at it. Others follow suit as cries of "Down with Artemis!" and "Death to Artemis!" are heard.

Close-up on Rhodopis, her face contorted in rage.

RHODOPIS:

Lies! Lies! I have spent my life serving a lie!

She pulls off the necklace with Artemis' symbol, throws it on the ground and stomps on it.

Pull back to show Eve and Evander watching silently. Eve looks somewhat uneasy.

EVE (to Evander):

I think we've done all we can here. (pause) How long will it hold?

EVANDER:

For as long as I want it to. I'll take it off when it's all over.

EVE:

Then let's help the others.

EVANDER:

I have no powers left to use in the battle--but I can still fight with this. (places his hand on the hilt of his sword)

Eve and Evander run up the temple steps. Pan down to show Artemis' followers dispersing.

CUT TO



Xena runs a warrior through with her sword.

Pull back behind her to see Eve and Evander entering the temple.

Pan to show Eve looking around at the fighting; she sees Xena and Ares across the room, then sees Virgil fending off several of Artemis' warriors.

Eve charges forward, doing a spectacular flip over some other warriors and landing in the middle of the fight. She sounds a Livia-like war cry as she lands near Virgil and pushes the warriors back, knocking two down and stabbing a third. Evander watches her, clearly impressed.

Pan to Xena as she looks up, hearing the recognizable war cry, and sees Eve bringing down a warrior.

Pan to Eve and Virgil.

VIRGIL (smiles):

Thanks for the help.

Xena comes running toward them.

XENA:

Eve!

EVE (breathing hard):

Mother. I'm all right. (anticipating her mother's question) It's done. The people of Ephesus have turned against Artemis.

XENA:

So it worked.

EVE (nods, looking somewhat troubled):

Perfectly.

Pan around to show Evander stab a warrior in the gut and throw her aside as another one comes at him. He snarls and parries the blow from his attacker. He slices the sword across the warrior's side and the warrior falls to the ground, dead.

CUT TO

A close-up of a bow being drawn back, a golden arrow lying across it.

CUT TO

Evander fighting another warrior.

CUT TO



Artemis holding the bow, a look of focused rage on her face.

CUT TO

Evander fighting.

CUT TO

The arrow being released. A shot of the arrow flying toward Evander, from the "arrow's POV."

Before the arrow can get close, a fireball shoots from off camera, intercepting the arrow and hitting it, causing it to disintegrate before it reaches Evander. Pull back to show Athena lowering her hand.

CUT TO

Ares, who has seen what happened. He and Athena exchange a quiet look, then he nods his thanks and she returns the nod.

Artemis snarls and disappears, reappearing in front of Eve who has just downed another one of her warriors. Eve looks up, startled--but just as Artemis raises her hand, Athena appears in front of her to block her way.

ARTEMIS:

So. You really have taken their side.



ATHENA:

It's over, Artemis. (Athena pulls the Dagger of Helios from her belt) If nothing else can stop you...

Pan to Artemis, whose eyes are filled with rage and disbelief; then for a close-up of Athena's face.

ATHENA (continues):

...then so be it.



Snarling, Artemis throws a fireball that sends Athena flying backwards toward the other side of the temple. She crashes into the wall. The Dagger of Helios skids across the floor. Before Athena can move to retrieve it, Artemis launches another fireball and a battle between gods begins.

As Athena and Artemis shoot fireballs at each other...

CUT TO

In the city. The people have gone on a wild rampage, running down the streets, knocking over statues of Artemis. Some people go into their homes and come out with trinkets, statuettes and scrolls, throwing them to the ground and stomping on them or setting them on fire. Others cheer. Cries of "Death to Artemis!" are heard.

CUT TO

The temple. The fighting still rages.

Pan to Xena and Ares, standing next to each other, looking in the direction of Artemis and Athena.

ARES:

The Dagger of Helios... (looks at Xena) I didn't think Athena would go this far.

XENA:

I'm going to get it.

She races toward where the dagger lies on the floor.

ARES (shouts):

Be careful!

CUT TO

Evander fighting two of Artemis' warriors. Maera is coming up behind him, her sword drawn.

CUT TO

Ares, who sees this and looks anxious. He starts making his way toward Evander.

CUT TO

Evander, who has just dispatched the warrior he was fighting. He spins around just as Maera swings her sword. He doesn't have time to block her and her blade slices his hand.

They begin to spar. After a few swings, Maera gains the advantage and kicks Evander down. The sword falls from his hand and he seems dazed by the fall. Maera leaps forward, straddling him, and is about to bring down her sword.

Close-up on Maera's face as her eyes suddenly open wide. She looks shocked, blood trickling from her mouth. Pull back to show a sword embedded in her chest.

Maera staggers and falls backwards, dead.

As Evander scrambles to his feet, he sees Ares standing nearby, breathing hard. After a moment Ares goes over to yank his sword out of Maera's body, then stands up.

Evander examines the cut on his arm, then looks up at Ares and chuckles.

EVANDER:

Looking out for me?

Ares hesitates a moment, then nods, grinning a little and trying to sound nonchalant.

ARES:

Better late than never, huh?

Evander holds out his other hand toward Ares. Ares looks at it and then the two of them clamp forearms in a moment of camaraderie.

CUT TO

Athena and Artemis still fighting across the room. Their fireballs have done considerable damage to the walls and the columns surrounding them; we see large scorching holes, debris and rocks lying on the floor all around them. Artemis manages to knock Athena down on her back; in the next moment, she turns to see Xena diving for the dagger of Helios.



Snarling, Artemis makes a dive for the dagger. She throws Xena off with a kick, then picks up the dagger herself. She charges Athena, who is just rising to her feet--but just then, another fireball hits Artemis square in the chest and she herself is knocked down.

Pan to Hera, her face cold, lowering her hand.

Artemis gets up, still holding the dagger.

ARTEMIS:

I have the dagger, Athena.

ATHENA:

Not much longer.

A lightning bolt hits the dagger in Artemis' hand and shatters it completely. It falls to the ground in a shower of dust as Artemis winces and grabs her hand.

Across from them, Zeus lowers his hand.

Athena, Hera and Zeus all flash away, then reappear directly in front of Artemis, who looks shocked. All three of them raise their hands, determined, pointing toward Artemis and shooting a bolt of fire toward her--in a shot reminiscent of Athena, Hades and Hephaestus shooting at Xena's cart in *Looking Death In the Eye*.

Close-up on Artemis. Her eyes go wide as she is hit with the surge and flies back, screaming.

She is thrown across the room into a large column with such force that it causes the column to fall over. The column hits another column and a chain reaction begins. The temple is now truly falling apart.

The warriors of Artemis and those of the other gods begin to scatter as pieces of the ceiling fall, crushing some people and blocking the path to escape.

EVE:

This way!

She and Virgil guide the warriors to the doors.

CUT TO

Ares, who looks around for Xena. She comes running toward him.

XENA:

Come on. We have to go!

ARES (to Evander):

You all right?

EVANDER:

Yeah.

The three of them run toward the doors of the temple.

CUT TO

Artemis getting up. She seems weakened and unsteady on her feet. There is a bleeding cut on her arm.

ATHENA:

You're losing it, Artemis.

ARTEMIS:

What?!



ATHENA (calmly, points to her arm):
Your godhood.

Artemis looks at the cut. She gasps in anger and disbelief.

ATHENA:

Your followers are dwindling. You're becoming more like a mortal with each moment. You can't escape this.

Snarling, Artemis tries to send a green fireball toward Athena--but it is small and weak. Athena easily catches it in her hand as it disintegrates.

ATHENA:

I told you you're losing your touch.

With a roar, Artemis gathers her strength to send a firebolt toward Athena but Athena dodges it and it hits a still-standing column.

CUT TO

The followers of Artemis are still rampaging through the streets; it's utter chaos. Some people are seen destroying a shrine.

CUT TO



As Xena, Ares and Evander head toward the entrance, a column begins to collapse in front of them. Ares pushes Evander forward and Xena jumps out of the way as the column falls between her and Ares.

XENA:

Ares!!

The dust is thick and the roof of the temple has now given way, large rocks falling to the floor. The great statue of Artemis is swaying and won't be standing for much longer. Xena looks around for Ares but cannot see him.

Eve runs up to Xena and grabs her arm.

EVE:

We have to go.

Xena yanks her hand away.

XENA:

Not until I know Ares is safe.

EVE:

Mother! You have to save yourself!

As debris continues to fall, the temple has nearly collapsed completely. The statue starts to topple forward. There is still no sign of Ares. Eve pulls on Xena's arm again.

EVE:

Come on!!

The statue is falling. Xena and Eve leap out of the way.

The statue comes crashing down and the entrance to the temple collapses, causing a huge explosion of dust and debris.

CUT TO

Outside. Xena and Eve are running out of the collapsing temple.

Pan to Evander, who stands on the steps, looking worried. His eyes meet Xena's and she shakes her head, her face frozen in silent dismay.

CUT TO

Inside the temple, the place has collapsed entirely. The head of the large golden statue lies apart from the rest of the body. Broken vases and piles of rocks are everywhere.

Pan to Artemis, who is trapped under the rubble, unable to move. Her head is bleeding.

Athena comes up to her.

ATHENA:

It didn't have to come to this. If you had only worked *with* us instead of against us...

ARTEMIS (groans):

I did what I had to do.

ATHENA:

And it was all in vain.

ARTEMIS:

No. This is how it had to be.

Athena shakes her head, disappointed, and disappears in a shower of gold.

Artemis tries to get out from under the rubble but cannot.

CUT TO

As the dust settles, Xena is walking around the collapsed part of the temple, searching for any sign of Ares.

Eve watches Xena, her face anguished. As she walks toward her mother, a metallic gleam in the rubble catches her eye. She walks toward it and moves a few rocks to expose the blade of a sword. She moves back the rocks and pulls out Ares' sword.

EVE:

Mother.

Xena whirls around at the sound of Eve's voice.

Eve stands up, holding Ares' sword.

Pan to Xena as her face falls.

CUT TO

Inside the temple, Artemis is still trapped and struggling. Exhausted, she goes still.

The ghosts of Leto and Apollo fade into view.

APOLLO:

Athena was right, sis. It didn't have to end this way.

ARTEMIS:

What else could I have done?!

LETO:

Let the Twilight takes its natural course. Instead, you made it happen faster.

Artemis' eyes begin to well with tears.

ARTEMIS:

Get away from me.

But they only get closer, and behind them Artemis now sees the ghosts of Dionysus, Demeter, Hermes and other lesser gods.

ARTEMIS (shouts):

Get away!

LETO:

Even if we leave, it won't help you. Soon, you will become one of us.

APOLLO (hollow):

Just another dead god.

ARTEMIS (throws her head back and screams):

Nooooooooooooo!!!!

DISSOLVE TO

A nearby tavern. Eve, Virgil and Evander are seated around a table. The tavern is nearly deserted.

Xena is sitting away from the others in a chair by the wall, cleaning her sword aimlessly. Ares' sword lies at her feet.

EVANDER:

In a couple of hours, they should all go back to normal.

VIRGIL:

Will they remember what happened?

EVE (glances uneasily at Evander):

I think they will. (She pauses, thoughtful) I'm still not sure it was right to do this. Take away their free will...

VIRGIL (puts his hand over hers):

It was the only way to defeat Artemis. Better than killing them.

Eve gives him a brief look and nods, still uncertain.

EVE:

Well, Artemis is defeated. I suppose everything *has* turned out for the best... (she glances over at Xena) Well, not quite everything...

Eve watches her mother.



EVE (speaking to the others):

I was so concerned about saving Gabrielle...it never occurred to me that someone else could be taken in her place. (sadly) Maybe there's only so much you can do to make the future better...

Evander lowers his eyes, a touch of sadness on his face.

After a brief pause, Eve stands up and walks toward Xena. She puts a hand on Xena's shoulder, squeezing it gently.

EVE (sincerely):
I'm so sorry, Mother.

Xena does not react to Eve for a long moment. Finally, she lowers her sword and looks up into Eve's eyes. She looks very vulnerable. Eve kneels down and hugs her. Xena stiffens for a moment, then she buries her face in her daughter's shoulder.

EVE (whispers):
I'm sorry... I know how much he meant to you.

Xena pulls back and squeezes her shoulder, tears glittering in her eyes. Then she slides her sword into the scabbard, picks up Ares' sword, stands and walks off. Eve watches her go, sadly.

CUT TO

Xena comes out of the tavern and leans against the wall, Ares' sword gripped tightly in her hands. She closes her eyes for a few moments. Then she turns her head to see a clear view of the hill with the temple's ruins. Suddenly, her look turns to determination and she walks toward the temple with a purposeful stride.

CUT TO

Xena walks up to the fallen remains of the once majestic temple. She scans the scene, looking around. There are some people nearby, going through the rubble and taking valuable objects: gold and silver goblets and daggers, coins and jewelry.

She walks around toward the side of the temple. There are some fallen columns propped up against each other as if to create an entryway and some rocks piled underneath. She stands in front of the columns, looking at the rubble, her eyes searching and somewhat hopeful.

Cautiously, she dives into the space underneath the columns and looks around. There is nothing there.

Xena crawls out and sits in the rubble. Her expression turns to sorrow as if the tough exterior has cracked once more.



She lowers her eyes to Ares' sword in her hands. Slowly, she runs her fingers along the hilt. She blinks, and a tear rolls down her face and falls onto the blade. There is a long moment of silence.

Footsteps are heard behind her, crunching in the rubble, but she doesn't notice.

VOICE (off-camera):

Crying for me? Never thought I'd see the day.

Xena jumps to her feet and turns around abruptly.

Ares stands a short distance away beside a still-standing piece of a column, smiling a little. He begins to walk toward her. He is definitely somewhat worse for the wear, limping a little, with cuts and bruises on his arms and blood on his face.



Xena stands still as he walks toward her, then in an impulsive movement, she drops Ares' sword and enfolds him in her arms. He wraps his arms around her tightly, running a hand through her hair. Xena closes her eyes with a choked sob.

After a long moment, she pulls back from him and they look into each other's eyes. Ares wipes a tear from her cheek with his thumb.

ARES:

Sometimes...hugs are just right.

Xena laughs through tears.

XENA:

I thought--

ARES (grins):

Guess you're not the only mortal with nine lives.

They embrace again.

ARES:

We did it, Xena. We beat her.

XENA (pulls back):
Is she dead?

ARES (shakes his head):
I don't know. But even if she's alive, she's so weakened that--

XENA:
No. We cannot leave until we know she's finished for good.

There is a flash of gold light behind her. She and Ares turn around quickly to find Athena standing there.

ATHENA (looking at the fallen temple, distant):
It took decades to build that temple. And just a few hours to turn it to rubble. It's always easier to destroy than to create. (looks at Xena) Ironic, isn't it?

XENA (shrugs, gazing at the temple briefly as well):
That's life for you.

Athena nods.

ATHENA (after a pause):
Artemis is gone.

XENA:
So she's a ghost.

ATHENA:
As we all will be...eventually.

They share a long look, then Athena looks at Ares.

ARES:
Thanks, sis.

Xena looks from Athena to Ares and back, suddenly realizing.

XENA (to Athena):
You helped him out of the temple.

ATHENA (wistfully):
We're family.

XENA (with genuine feeling):
Thank you.

Athena gives a small nod. The golden light flares around her and she disappears. Xena stands still, thoughtful. Then she takes Ares' hand. He smiles at her.

CUT TO

Evander's camp. The armies are on the move.

Pan to Ares, Xena, Eve, Virgil and Evander standing beside Evander's tent.

EVANDER:

Well, my work here is done. I should be headed back to Pelius.

EVE:

And your army?

EVANDER:

It's served its purpose. The gods will call their warriors back. (Gives Eve a long look) It was a pleasure fighting at your side. (After a moment, to Xena) Yours too.

There is an awkward silence. Finally, Evander looks at Ares.

EVANDER (quietly):

Dad. I--I'm glad you're all right.

ARES (slaps his shoulder, obviously disguising his emotion):

You've made me proud, kid.

As Evander nods to the others and walks away, Ares watches him leave, a small smile on his face.

CUT TO

Gabrielle's campfire by the cliff. She is eating bread and cheese. Samuel is sitting in her lap, tugging playfully at her cloak.

Pan to Darion climbing down from the cliff.

DARION (shouts):

The temple is gone.

GABRIELLE (looks up):

Are you sure?

DARION (jumps down on the ground):

Yeah. There's nothing left. (cocky) It's not something I'd miss, would I?

GABRIELLE (quietly):

Then we've won.

Darion gives her a nervous look.

DARION:

Gabrielle... (pauses) Do you think they're all right?

GABRIELLE:

I'm sure they are. (reassuring, though there is worry in her own face) You know Xena. Come on, let's put out this fire and go back to find them.

She gets up, holding Samuel. Darion starts packing.

The sounds of horses neighing and rattling metal is heard. Gabrielle looks up. Half a dozen Roman warriors ride around the cliff, coming toward them. Darion looks nervous. Gabrielle puts a comforting hand on his shoulder.

A Roman officer, a well-groomed man who is obviously the head of the group, halts and signals to the others to stop. He looks at Gabrielle and the boys, sizing them up.

ROMAN OFFICER (politely):

Sorry for the intrusion, ma'am. We saw the smoke and thought it might be a man we're looking for, camping out here.

GABRIELLE (laughs, hiding her anxiety):

Well, unless it's *this* man... (points to Darion) or this one... (holds up Samuel) he's not here.

ROMAN OFFICER:

I can see that.

He dismounts and comes toward her.

GABRIELLE:

Then what do you want?

ROMAN OFFICER:

Maybe you've seen our fugitive. We've been told he's been spotted in these parts.

He comes closer and takes a pouch from his belt. He opens it, pulls out a small rolled-up piece of parchment and hands it to Gabrielle.

Gabrielle unrolls it as the Roman Officer speaks.

ROMAN OFFICER:

A Greek by the name of Haimon. (Just then, Gabrielle sees a sketch of Haimon's face) About my height, slender build, dark hair--

Pan to Darion, who looks frightened.

GABRIELLE:

No, I haven't seen him. (looks at the officer and hands the parchment back) What did he do?

ROMAN OFFICER (taking the parchment, rolling it up and putting it back in the pouch):

It's just Roman business. (nods to her) Sorry to have bothered you; we'll be on our way.

The officer goes back to his horse and mounts. Gabrielle and Darion watch him silently.

ROMAN OFFICER:

If you do see him--be careful. He's a desperate man; been on the run for months now. Desperate men are dangerous.

GABRIELLE:

Thank you, I will keep that in mind.

The officer turns and rides off, the other Romans following him.

Gabrielle looks after them until they disappear. The camera begins to zoom in on her and Darion.

GABRIELLE (softly):

Haimon...

DARION (fervently):

We have to help him.



GABRIELLE (close-up on her face):

I know.

FADE OUT

THE END

[The future was changed, but not damaged, during the production of this motion picture.]