THE SHIPPER SEASONS
XENA WARRIOR PRINCESS VIRTUAL SEASON SEVEN

Production #XWP155/SS21
Episode #7.21

Story By: Aurora
Written By: Aurora
Edited By: Amber and LadyKate
Collage By: Aurora
Images Gathered By: Aurora

Logline
When Xena, Gabrielle and Eve go to the aid of a town under siege by a warlord, the adventure may not be everything it seems.

Airdate
May 29, 2002

TEASER

FADE IN

It is night. Wide shot of the old, abandoned house in the forest where Xena and Ares made love for the first time during the storm.

CUT TO

Ares is standing in the bedroom, looking around. He seems thoughtful and uncertain. Slowly, he runs his hand along the bedpost.

[FLASHBACK]

Xena and Ares, their arms around each other, kissing, lowering themselves down onto the bed. They soon break the kiss and Ares looks at Xena who is looking away from him, confusion and uncertainly in her eyes. He starts to get up, but she tightens the grip on his back and pulls him down into a kiss.

CUT TO

Xena and Ares lying in bed together as the sun shines through the window. Ares is looking at Xena who is still sleeping. He looks content and happy.

[END OF FLASHBACK]

Ares walks up to the window where Xena had been standing and sighs, looking outside.

[FLASHBACK]

XENA:
You *have* changed.

ARES (speaks solemnly and almost sadly):
I'm still the God of War.

XENA:
That's what you do...but maybe it's not what you are. (off his puzzled look) At least, that's not all

you are. (she pauses slightly) You have been human, Ares. I think that human part of you is still inside you.

He closes the space in between them as he approaches her. Xena doesn't move as she looks straight into his eyes. Their lips meet in a tender kiss and they deepen it. Xena puts her arms around his neck, and almost simultaneously, Ares puts his arms around her waist drawing her body closer to his.

[END OF FLASHBACK]

Ares leans on the windowsill and looks out. An owl hoots quietly in the dark, accompanied by crickets. The stars are very bright and the moon is full. He seems troubled.

There is a golden flash off camera. Ares doesn't move a muscle. The camera pans over to Aphrodite walking up to him.

APHRODITE (cheerfully):
Hey, Bro. Found yourself a new vacation spot?

Ares glances at his sister, then continues to look out the window. Aphrodite catches his blank expression and becomes serious.

APHRODITE:
Something's bothering you.

Ares looks at Aphrodite, shakes his head and backs away from the window.

ARES:
Nope.

APHRODITE:
Yeah, like I'm gonna believe that one.

Aphrodite follows Ares, who is now standing next to the bed.

APHRODITE:
What are you so bummed about, Ar? Hmm? I don't get it. You and the Warrior Babe are finally getting along... (giggles) ...so to speak. You should be happy. (Ares gives her a questioning look; Aphrodite rolls her eyes) Well what do you expect? I'm the Goddess of Love. It's my job. Of course I know what's going on. All I can say is, not a moment too soon. I'm all for taking your time on foreplay, but forty years is ridiculous.

ARES:
Well, if you know what's going on, then you also know that (his voice softens) she's not okay with it.

APHRODITE:
Xena? Not okay? Suuure. Ar--I love you, Bro, but you can be so clueless sometimes.

ARES:
Don't you have anything better to do than insult me?

APHRODITE (pretends to think):
Uh, let's see...no? (off his exasperated look) Hey, I'm getting to the point.

ARES:
Oh, there's a *point*.

APHRODITE:
Look, she was with you because she wanted to be. Has she ever done anything she didn't want to? Come on, you know Xena always had a soft spot for you, even when she was kicking your ass.

ARES:
She's still worried about... (looks down) ...being with me.

APHRODITE (with the look of someone who has just had a brilliant insight):
Oh, I get it! It bothers *her*, and it bothers *you* that it bothers *her*. (she frowns a little, as if trying to make sense of what she just said, then nods to herself)

ARES (shoots Aphrodite a slightly irritated look):
Did you want something?

APHRODITE:
I just thought you might want to talk to someone. You know, express your feelings and all that.

ARES (snorts):
Talk?

APHRODITE (shrugs):
Well, it beats zapping things with silly fireballs.

ARES:
It *does*? (joking) Careful, Sis, or one of those fireballs might be coming your way. (he forms a fireball in his palm and tosses it from hand to hand before letting it dissolve)

APHRODITE:
You wouldn't. You know I care about you, Bro. And maybe I'm not the only one.

She smirks, then disappears. Ares chuckles quietly.

ARES:
Nice try... (to himself) But maybe she's right. (pause) They say there's a first time for everything.

CUT TO

Xena and Gabrielle are camped out under the stars, at the edge of a forest. They are sitting around a campfire. Gabrielle is writing in a scroll and across from her Xena is sitting near the fire, staring into the flames in deep thought.

Eve walks up from behind the trees, carrying a basket filled with berries.

EVE (walking up to Xena and Gabrielle):
Here comes dessert.

Gabrielle looks up from her scroll.

GABRIELLE:
Dessert? Too bad it's our whole dinner tonight. I still can't believe that we couldn't catch a single fish. (chuckles) Well, at least it's not rabbit. I think I've had my fill of that for a year or two.

EVE (sits down next to her):
I'm sure the rabbits will be happy to hear that.

XENA (smiles at her):
I think we can survive for a night on a vegetarian meal.

GABRIELLE:
I'll hold you to that.

Eve, meanwhile, has shaken the berries out of the basket and started dividing them into three portions. Xena, Gabrielle and Eve start to eat.

GABRIELLE:
You know, it's really nice to have a few days without much going on. That fight against the Persians took it out of me more than I thought.

XENA:
A few days of peace and quiet...the fate of the world not resting in our hands...what a radical idea.

Eve finishes her food and stands up.

EVE:
Speaking of peace and quiet, I think I'm going to go to sleep. (smiles) 'Night, Mother. 'Night, Gabrielle.

XENA:
'Night, Eve.

Eve walks over to the side of the camp and crawls into her bedroll, falling fast asleep in moments. Xena watches her daughter for a moment, then picks up a cloth that is sitting next to her, lifts the chakram from her side, and begins polishing it. She does so for a few moments then puts the cloth down and begins to slowly spin the chakram in her hand, staring at it almost transfixed, the image of the fire flickering in its shiny metal surface. She is a million miles away.

[FLASHBACK]

Ares approaching Xena who is standing in the old, abandoned house in front of a window. Their lips meet, their arms wrap around each other and they melt into a passionate kiss, lowering themselves down onto the bed behind them.

CUT TO

Xena waking up in the morning and turning her head to see Ares looking at her with tenderness in his eyes.

CUT TO

Xena and Ares are lying down on the ground near a brook in the daylight, their arms around each other, locked in a passionate kiss.

[END OF FLASHBACK]

GABRIELLE:
Xena?

Xena jolts, her trance broken.

XENA:
What?

GABRIELLE:
That's the third time I said your name.

Xena looks over at Gabrielle who is looking back at her. She looks a little uncertain and Gabrielle catches this expression on her face.

GABRIELLE:
What's wrong?

Xena doesn't answer but instead looks back down at the chakram, sighs and lays it next to her on the ground. Gabrielle watches this.

XENA (unconvincing):
Nothing... I'm fine.

GABRIELLE (putting down her scroll and quill next to her and looks at Xena deeply, undeterred):
It's bothering you again, isn't it? (softly) The thing with Ares?

XENA (looks up, softly):
Yeah.

Gabrielle stands up and walks up to Xena who looks at her.

GABRIELLE (sitting down next to Xena):
You wanna talk about it? It'll make you feel better.

XENA (shakes head):
I don't think I'd know what to say.

GABRIELLE (reproachfully):
After everything we've been through together, you still can't talk to me.

XENA:
Gabrielle, that's not what I meant. I just--this isn't a good time.

GABRIELLE:
Are you sure? It'll help if you let it out--it always does.

XENA:
Maybe not always. (glances over at the sleeping Eve) I think Eve had the right idea. We'd better get some sleep. You never know what's going to happen tomorrow.

Xena stands and walks over to her bedroll, lying down in it. Gabrielle sighs and then does the same.

Just as Gabrielle closes her eyes, the sound of screaming echoes through the forest. Xena, Gabrielle, and Eve's eyes fly open. They sit up and look at each other.

GABRIELLE:
It couldn't even wait until tomorrow.

She stands up, grabbing her sais. Xena rises too and picks up the sword and the chakram.

EVE:
It?

GABRIELLE:
Whatever was going to happen.

EVE (gets up):
So much for peace and quiet.

GABRIELLE:
That's usually my line.

XENA:
Let's go.

CUT TO

Several warriors are pummeling and kicking a young man in ragged clothes. He struggles to his feet only to be knocked down again. The warriors laugh. Xena gives her ululating battle cry and the warriors stop and turn around to find Xena, Gabrielle and Eve running toward them from the forest. Xena and Gabrielle charge the warriors and knock them down one by one while Eve kneels over the injured man, whose face is bruised and bloodied.

EVE:
Are you all right?

MAN (breathes heavily):
I've been better. But I'll live.

The warriors having been taken care of, Xena and Gabrielle approach.

XENA:
What'd you do to make them so mad?

MAN:
I volunteered to leave and find help for my town, Coronea. No one else was brave enough to risk getting caught. I had to go.

GABRIELLE:
Why?

MAN:
Coronea has been under siege by Nicodemus the Warlord for nearly a month now. (Xena's face changes slightly at the mention of Nicodemus) Already, people are dying from hunger and disease. I was trying to leave in the hope that there would be someone who could help break the siege. Nicodemus' men went after me. (Nods toward the unconscious warriors)

GABRIELLE:
Well, you've found that someone.

MAN (shocked):
You three, go up against Nicodemus and his army? Do you know who you're dealing with?

XENA:
I've dealt with tougher men than him.

EVE (defensive):
They did save your life.

MAN (looks at Xena and Gabrielle, slightly embarrassed):
I can't thank you enough. (still doubtful) Well...I'm sure the townsfolk will appreciate any help they can get.

XENA:
That's more like it.

Some of the unconscious warriors begin to stir. Xena sees this and then looks at Gabrielle and Eve.

XENA:
We'd better get going before naptime is over.

Xena whistles and Argo, followed by Gabrielle and Eve's horses, comes galloping up. The three of them mount.

MAN:
I'll show you the way. It's a couple of hours' walk from here.

He starts to walk but Gabrielle trots up to him, extending her hand.

GABRIELLE (smiles):
We'll get there faster this way. Climb on.

The man accepts Gabrielle's hand and she pulls him up behind her. Xena and Eve guide their horses up to Gabrielle's.

GABRIELLE (looking behind her at the man):
By the way, my name is Gabrielle.

MAN:
Lander. (looks over at Xena) Your friend doesn't look like anyone I've ever seen before.

EVE (cutting in):
That's because she's Xena...and I'm Eve.

LANDER (in awe):
Xena? *The* Xena? (he stares at Xena who looks back, raising an eyebrow) Wow, you were right. You *will* be able to handle Nicodemus.

XENA (shakes her head):
It never changes.

GABRIELLE:
And it never stops.

XENA:
I appreciate your faith in me, Lander. But before you start savoring my victory, I should at least take a look at the enemy. Show the way.

Lander nods and Gabrielle starts her horse off in a trot. Xena and Eve follow as Lander points the way as we:

FADE OUT

ACT ONE

FADE IN

Xena, Gabrielle, Eve, and Lander approach the town walls of Coronea and dismount.

LANDER (whispers):
We need to be quiet. There are guards everywhere.

EVE:
Then how did you escape in the first place?

LANDER:
I'll show you.

Lander walks up to the wall, followed by Eve, Gabrielle and Xena. He comes to a part in the wall that is covered with branches and foliage, moves the branches aside, and removes a stone from the wall to reveal a secret entrance. Lander gestures to the three women to follow him in and they do.

CUT TO

Xena, Gabrielle, Eve and Lander stand in the doorway of a tavern where about a dozen people are sitting around a table.

MAN #1 (finishing a meal):
I never knew fried rat could taste so good.

The camera pans over to Gabrielle and Eve as they wince.

MAN #2:
Don't forget to ask for the recipe.

MAN #3:
I wonder what happens when we run out of rats...

MAN #1:
Well, we've sent Lander. Hopefully, he'll find someone and bring them back to help.

WOMAN #1:
You didn't send Lander. He went willingly because none of us were brave enough to leave. But we don't even know if he made it out alive.

MAN #2:
We can't give up hope, you know.

WOMAN #1:
Why do we always wait for someone else to bail us out while we sit around and wait?

MAN #2:
That's all we *can* do. Sit around and wait.

LANDER (off screen):
Not any longer.

Everyone in the room turns to see Lander, Xena, Gabrielle, and Eve standing in the doorway. Their faces become animated.

WOMAN #1:
Lander! You actually found someone.

LANDER:
Oh, not just someone. (gesturing to Xena) This is Xena, the Warrior Princess. And this is Gabrielle the Battling Bard, and...Eve. (he jerks his head at them in turn)

MAN #1:
Xena? Well, we're sure to be saved now.

XENA:
Oh, it's all up to me?

MAN #2:
Isn't that why you're here?

GABRIELLE:
Yes, but you have to do something, too--we can't help you unless you're willing to help yourselves.

XENA:
Just give us the details and we'll see what we can do.

MAN #1:
We're under siege by the Warlord Nicodemus. He wants us to accept him as the ruler of this town and pay tribute to his army. We don't want to submit to his rule, but Nicodemus has cut off our food supplies from the countryside, and we're running out of food, fast. If this siege goes on for another couple of weeks, half this town will starve to death. (points to his plate) We're already dining on filet of rat.

XENA:
All right, we're on it.

WOMAN #1:
Thank you so much.

Xena looks at Gabrielle and Eve.

XENA:
Let's go. We've got work to do.

Xena, Gabrielle and Eve leave the building.

CUT TO

It's night. Xena walks into a room and puts her sword and chakram down on the bed. She seems a little troubled and she blinks.

[FLASHBACK]

From "Amphipolis Under Siege":

ATHENA:
The armies of Athena lay siege to this town.

CUT TO

Clip of a battle.

CUT TO

XENA (to Athena):
Warriors like us make our own fate. I have a proposal for you: a fair fight--no tricks--no godlike powers--and if I win, you spare Eve and leave these people in peace.

ATHENA:
Tempting, but--no.

CUT TO

XENA (in the temple):
Ares--

ARES:
Hmm?

XENA:
I believe we discussed a deal.

ARES:
Deal--deal, deal, deal, deal--I don't know. Did we?

XENA:
Cut the crap. I'm ready to bargain. You fight beside me and we can defeat Athena.

CUT TO

Ares and Xena on the couch in the temple, kissing passionately.

CUT TO

After the battle.

ARES:
Why do you continue to deny us? We had a deal. When we were fighting side by side, it was like we were one. Back there in the temple--can you tell me you didn't feel anything?

XENA:
I felt nothing.

[END OF FLASHBACK]

Xena opens her eyes and sighs. She looks around the room and then tenses for a moment. She turns to find Ares standing in the doorway. She looks away from him. Ares walks up to her.

ARES:
What? Not even a hello?

He brushes his fingers through her hair and she turns to look at him.

XENA:
Why are you here?

ARES:
Do you still have to ask?

She looks away for a moment.

ARES:
Worried about this town?

XENA:
It's not just this town. (softly) Ares, last time I was in a town under siege...

ARES (grimly):
Yes?

XENA:
You were there...asking me for things that you had no right to ask.

ARES:
As I remember it, you were the one who came to me.

XENA:
But you left me no choice. Ares, the gods were going to kill my child, and you were using my desperation to get me where you wanted me.

There is a slight pause. Ares looks at her almost guiltily, then switches to his usual bravado.

ARES:
I thought we had put the past behind us.

XENA:
The past may be behind us, but it's never over, Ares. (she looks into Ares' eyes) I may be able to forgive the things you've done...but I'll never forget them.

ARES (looks down):
Neither will I.

XENA:
And now that... (breaks off) I don't know when or where those memories will come back to haunt me. Being with you makes me think about them even more.

Xena and Ares look into each other's eyes.

[FLASHBACK]

From "Ties That Bind":

ARES:
This is your army, Xena. I had it created--for you. And it feels good, doesn't it? Leading an army into battle for the glory of Ares.

XENA:
Give up on me, Ares. I'm never coming back.

ARES:
I know what's in your heart. There's a reason why I play the part of Atrius so well.

CUT TO

From "Intimate Stranger":

Xena, in Callisto's body in Tartarus, looks up in shock.

CUT TO

From "The Furies":

Ares and Xena on the cliff.

ARES:
Feed your mother to the worms.

CUT TO

From "Eve":

ARES:
Damn it, Xena, I am not asking you, I am telling you! You give me what I want, or I will bring all of Olympus on your daughter's head!

[END OF FLASHBACKS]

Xena steps away from Ares and walks over to the bed where her sword and chakram are. Ares turns, watching her for a moment.

ARES:
Xena. (walks up to her) I was...who I was. For thousands of years, I knew that when I wanted something, all I had to do was go for it. Anyone who stood in my way had to be broken, or crushed, or trapped. That's what War is about. When I wanted you (he puts his hands on her shoulders), it was different from all the other times I had wanted something...and I had no idea how to handle that. So I tried to do things my way--because I didn't know any better.

XENA (bitterly):
And that's supposed to make it all right?

ARES:
No. (he pauses and turns her around, staring into her eyes) I'm sorry, Xena. (she looks at him in amazement) Sorry about--everything.

XENA (nods gravely):
I know you are.

ARES (gives her a somewhat surprised look):
If there's anything I can do to make those memories hurt less, I'll do it. I don't want you to hurt...because of me. (he lifts a hand to touch her face) You know why? Because you've changed me...and I love you for it. (pause) I didn't ask for this--these feelings--but I wouldn't give them up...for anything.

Music fades in: "Piece of My Heart"

Ares moves his hand across her cheek and she lifts her hand to meet his, closing her eyes.

ARES (singing):
How could this happen, I don't understand
Falling in love was just not in my plan
But I want you to know

Xena opens her eyes.

ARES (singing):
You just got a piece of my heart

He squeezes Xena's hand.

ARES (singing):
I've been through the changes
I've walked through the pain
I told myself I would never do this again
But I want you to know
You just got a piece of my heart

He wraps his arm around Xena's waist. Drawing her closer, he leans down and kisses her lightly.

ARES (singing):
'Cause love has been a stranger
Love has been cruel
Lovin' made me feel like the world's one and only fool
And I promised myself I would never trust my heart again

Xena smiles, he smiles back.

XENA (singing):
I protected my feelings
I fought to be free
I can't believe I would let this happen to me
But I want you to know
You just got a piece of my heart

Xena disengages herself from him and walks up to the bed. She stands, her back facing him, then turns to look at him.

XENA (singing):
Tell me where did you come from
Tell me who sent you here

ARES (singing):
Whatever the reason, girl, God made the message clear
'Cause nobody else can make me feel the way that you do

Xena slowly walks up to him.

XENA (singing):
I just gotta say
That the struggle is over
My story's true, I finally realize
I want to spend my life with you
'Cause you are the one that changed the way I feel
And I swear I know this time it's real

Ares begins to rub her arm; she closes her eyes briefly, almost shivering at his touch.

XENA (singing):
Never in my lifetime, in my wildest dreams
Could I ever, ever imagine the love that you brought to me

ARES (singing):
You are the one that changed the way I feel

Xena runs a hand along his face and through his hair, Ares doing the same to her.

XENA (singing):
How could this happen, I don't understand

ARES (singing):
Falling in love was just not in my plan
But I want you to know
You just got a piece of my heart

They join hands, their fingers intertwining. Xena looks at their hands, Ares following her gaze.

XENA (singing):
But I want you to know
You just got a piece of my heart

She looks at him and then they lean closer together, their eyes staring deeply at each other.

XENA and ARES (whispering):
Just got a piece of my heart

The music fades. They both lean forward and capture each other's lips in a passionate kiss.

CUT TO

Gabrielle is walking toward Xena's room and stops at the door, looks in and sees Xena and Ares kissing and then breaking apart. Gabrielle stands, watching.

CUT TO

ARES:
So...what now?

XENA:
I don't know.

They stare at each other for a moment, then she steps back away from him and sits down on the bed, sighing. Ares stands back for a moment then slowly walks up to her. She looks up and sees him extending his hand, a small object in his palm.

XENA (curious):
What's this?

Ares lifts it up so she can see. It is a small silver medallion, with a picture engraved into it--a picture of her chakram with the symbol of Ares overlapping it.

ARES:
I wanted to give this to you a long time ago...before you left.

Xena takes it and looks at it--it's polished and shiny.

ARES:
Back then, I wanted it to be a token of the bond between the God of War and his Warrior Queen. Now, it's just--a token of love. Do you still want it?

XENA:
Yes.

She looks up at him. Ares leans over and places a tender kiss on her cheek.

XENA:
Ares--I have something to tell you, too.

ARES:
What?

XENA (smiles a little):
You know, in that other town under siege...when I told you that I felt nothing...I lied.

ARES (grins):
I know you did.

He's gone in a flash. Xena stares at the spot where he was for a moment, then looks back at the medallion in her hand. The camera pans over to the doorway to where Gabrielle is standing. Slowly, she walks into the room.

GABRIELLE:
Xena.

Xena looks up, a little startled, to see Gabrielle walking toward her. Gabrielle glances at the object in Xena's hand.

GABRIELLE (tentatively):
What's that?

Xena quickly closes her hand, concealing it.

XENA:
It's nothing.

GABRIELLE:
Uh-huh. Listen, Xena--

XENA:
Gabrielle, look. Whatever's on your mind, I can't talk about it at the moment.

Xena stands up and grabs her chakram and sword from the bed. While doing so, the medallion falls to the ground, but she doesn't notice it--she's too distracted.

XENA (now all business):
Gabrielle, you stay here. I'm getting out of this--I'll go to see if I can talk to Nicodemus. I'll be back by morning.

GABRIELLE:
You've met him before.

XENA:
Yes, a long time ago. (suddenly, there is a puzzled look on her face) Gabrielle, this is strange. I knew Nicodemus before we went to sleep for twenty-five years. If this is the same Nicodemus, he would be about seventy years old by now.

GABRIELLE:
Maybe it's his son.

XENA (shrugs):
Could be. Anyway, that's not important. I'll see if I can get him to lift the siege without a full-scale war.

Xena turns to exit the room.

GABRIELLE:
Good luck.

Xena nods and then exits.

CUT TO

Xena creeps through the dark toward the secret exit, past the guards watching on the wall. She slips through quietly, finds Argo and mounts, galloping off. The camera moves back to show Gabrielle watching from the window.

She sighs and then looks around the room, seeing the medallion lying on the ground. Gabrielle picks it up and looks at it, rubbing her fingers over it. She looks thoughtfully at it, turning it over to show the engraving.

GABRIELLE (to herself):
Why, Xena? Why can't you just talk to me?

There is a flash of golden light and Aphrodite appears in front of Gabrielle, sitting on the bed.

GABRIELLE (smiles):
Aphrodite! Good to see you.

APHRODITE (smiles brightly):
Hello, little one. Something bothering you?

GABRIELLE (nods):
Yeah...

APHRODITE:
Let me take a wild guess. Xena and Ares?

GABRIELLE (sighs):
I don't understand why she won't talk to me about it. She's my best friend; we've been through so much; she should be able to talk to me about anything.

APHRODITE:
Hey, join the club. I'm having the same problem with my big bro.

GABRIELLE:
Isn't it easier to confide in someone?

APHRODITE:
Duh! That's what I keep telling Ar. Well, you know how they are. (giggles) Or at least you know how Xena is. Take everything about her that drives you crazy and multiply it by, oh, three...and you get my bro. Maybe they will talk about it, eventually.

GABRIELLE:
I hope so.

Aphrodite looks around the room, Gabrielle is rubbing the medallion between her fingers, thinking.

APHRODITE:
Is that all that's bothering you, honey? That Xena won't talk about it?

GABRIELLE:
Are you asking me if I think it's wrong for them to be together? (Aphrodite looks at her quizzically) The answer to that is, I don't know. Aphrodite, you know your brother has made a lot of trouble for Xena and me over the years. But--he's not the same as he was...and Xena thinks of him differently now. She may not tell me much, but I know her well enough to know it's affected her...a lot.

APHRODITE:
I can tell you one thing, Gabrielle. I used to think that when it came to my line of work, big bro was a lost cause. Oh, he had his little pets (she makes a face), but I never thought I'd see the Big Bad God of War, head over heels in love. Until Xena came along.

Gabrielle nods and sighs, then sets the medallion back on the bed and walks over to the window. Aphrodite looks at the medallion lying on the bed, then glances at Gabrielle, who is standing at the window looking out.

GABRIELLE:
So maybe he's right for her. But I know something about it is bothering Xena.

APHRODITE:
Yeah, whatever it is, my bro's bummed out about it too. What can I say--they have lots of issues from the past. (glances at Gabrielle) And maybe they're not the only ones... But hey, don't worry about them too much--they'll work it out eventually. Like I said, it's just the way they are. Sleep tight, Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE:
Good night.

Aphrodite blows her a kiss and disappears.

GABRIELLE (shakes her head):
The way they are...

CUT TO

Gabrielle walks into a room--her room--closing the door behind her. She unlaces her boots and places them at the foot of the bed, laying her sais next to them. Then strange sounds of creaking are heard in the room. Gabrielle notices this and quietly grabs her sais, holding them defensively.

GABRIELLE (stern):
Who's there?

Gabrielle looks around and in moments, a figure appears out of thin air. It is Joxer, looking just the same as when he died. Gabrielle's face softens and she drops her sais to the ground in shock.

GABRIELLE:
Joxer...

Gabrielle goes toward him as we:

FADE OUT

ACT TWO

FADE IN

Gabrielle reaches out to touch Joxer but he backs away.

JOXER:
No. I'm a ghost. You can't touch me.

GABRIELLE (almost crying):
I've missed you.

JOXER:
Me too.

GABRIELLE (suddenly gives him a suspicious look):
Joxer--last time you appeared to me after you died, you were trying to get me to kill Eve...

JOXER (shakes his head):
Gabby, Gabby, Gabby. Does that sound like something I would do? I held Eve in my arms when she was just a baby. No matter what she became or what she did...I could have never wished her harm.

GABRIELLE:
So that wasn't you?

JOXER:
Nope. Just the Furies messing with your head.

GABRIELLE:
Joxer...I'm so glad. I always wondered if you were mad at me because I forgave Eve.

JOXER:
Me? Naah. And you know...if I had been...I could never, you know, stay mad at you for very long.

GABRIELLE (smiles wistfully and then turns away, a little uncomfortable):
So why have you come back now?

JOXER:
This town was my home, Gabrielle--for many years. I bet you didn't know Virgil was born here. I came...because I can't let it be destroyed.

GABRIELLE:
Xena and I are on it, Joxer. Don't you worry. We'll deal with Nicodemus one way or another.

JOXER:
Hey, I'm glad you two are still on the job. You know, helping people, righting wrongs and all that. And with no help from Joxer the Mighty. (Joxer looks down, then back at Gabrielle) I have to go now. We're only allowed on the mortal plane for a little bit at a time.

Joxer starts to disappear.

GABRIELLE:
Wait, wait--wait! (but Joxer's already gone, and Gabrielle looks down and whispers tearfully) I'm sorry you had to die because of me.

CUT TO

Xena is galloping through the night toward a lighted camp ahead. She dismounts near the camp and walks up to the largest tent. Two guards stand outside of it. Quietly she creeps up behind them and slams their heads together, knocking them out. She smirks and then causally walks into the tent.

CUT TO

A tall armored man pacing inside, fiddling with a dagger in his hand.

XENA:
Nicodemus.

He quickly turns his head and sees Xena standing in front of him.

NICODEMUS:
Xena. How did you get--

XENA:
I have many skills, or have you forgotten?

NICODEMUS:
You just refreshed my memory.

XENA (gives him a puzzled frowns):
You don't look much older than the last time we met.

NICODEMUS:
Neither do you.

XENA:
I have a good reason.

NICODEMUS:
Well, I guess so do I. (sneers) So, what brings you here? I thought one meeting on the battlefield would be enough to satisfy you.

XENA:
I guess I'm not easily satisfied.

NICODEMUS:
So, what can I do for you?

XENA:
You could start by leaving Coronea alone.

NICODEMUS:
Ah, Coronea. I knew you had to be here for *something*.

XENA:
I want to make a deal. (Nicodemus raises his eyebrows) You lift the siege...

NICODEMUS:
And you?

XENA:
I leave you your army.

NICODEMUS:
That doesn't sound like a very fair bargain. You're pretty sure of yourself, aren't you?

XENA:
Nicodemus, I know you're not a very merciful man, but you're reasonable. Those people are not giving up. If they die of hunger, they'll be of no use to you at all. Are you going to install yourself as the ruler of a town full of dead bodies?

Nicodemus places the dagger on a table next to him and walks toward her, sternly.

NICODEMUS:
I don't think we're going to be making any deals, Xena, because you haven't got any bargaining chips. I'm just doing my duty. Ares will be able to reward me a lot better than you.

XENA (shocked):
Ares?

NICODEMUS:
Everything I do, I do in the name of Ares.

XENA (frowns, speaking as if to herself):
That sounds so familiar... (speaks up) I don't believe you.

NICODEMUS:
Believe whatever you want. Ares is behind me.

XENA:
Oh yeah? Well, you try to mess with Coronea and you'll find me right in front of you. I'll stop you one way or the other.

Xena turns away but is stopped short by Nicodemus' voice.

NICODEMUS:
Xena. If I ever see you again, I won't hesitate to kill you. (sneering) Just for old times' sake.

XENA (turns, her eyes steely):
Now, you know, that's *really* familiar. I've heard it a million times before--and you know what? It doesn't get any scarier after a while.

Xena turns and walks out of the tent.

CUT TO

The sun is just coming up. Xena is riding through the forest back to Coronea when she halts Argo suddenly. In front of her Ares appears.

XENA:
Ares--

ARES (quickly):
Xena, I have nothing to do with the siege of Coronea.

XENA (reluctantly):
I didn't think you did.

ARES:
Nicodemus is in my service, but I never sent him to attack this town. He was supposed to take his army to Delium.

XENA:
I heard something was going on there. Two towns fighting each other over a couple of scraps of land--we were planning on going there next.

ARES:
Yeah. So...it seems Nicodemus has disobeyed me.

XENA (smirks):
Maybe you're just not scary enough these days.

ARES:
Scary? You want me to be scary?

XENA (still smirking):
Let me get back to you on that.

ARES:
Well, I promise you, he'll pay.

Pause.

XENA:
I have to get back to the town.

She kicks Argo gently and she starts off but before she can go very far, Ares grabs the reins, stopping her horse. Xena looks at him, a little confused.

ARES:
Xena, you know, I could just zap the guy for insubordination.

XENA (thinks a moment):
Ares, I don't mind accepting your help when it's for the Greater Good. (he shudders theatrically at the words and she smiles) But you know, if I start relying on your godlike powers to bail me out all the time, I'll no longer be the person I want to be...or the kind of person you want to be with. I have to do this my way.

ARES (smiles fondly):
What a surprise.

Xena smiles and then urges Argo on, galloping off past Ares further through the forest.

CUT TO

Eve and Gabrielle are on a square by the town gates, in the middle of a crowd of villagers who are all talking at once.

WOMAN #1:
There is no way this siege will ever be lifted. (the crowd murmurs in agreement) We're going to die before we're free. There's no hope.

EVE:
There's always hope. If you believe there is, anything can happen.

Skeptical murmurs in the crowd.

WOMAN #2 (shakes head):
I don't see how you three will be able to stop Nicodemus. He's got a whole army out there.

GABRIELLE:
We've got Xena. And you've got--your love of freedom. Your love for your town.

MAN #1:
Maybe with Xena's help, this siege will be broken. And then what? Some other greedy warlord will pass this way and we'll be under attack again. It's either the warlords, or the Romans, or the Persians. Will there ever be a time when we, or our children, or our children's children, won't always have to live wondering what new calamity tomorrow will bring?

GABRIELLE:
Xena and I... (she pauses) ...and Eve...we have spent our whole lives trying to create a better world. A world in which people can live and work and raise their children in peace and freedom. I know it seems like a crazy dream now, but... (pausing, she looks around the room at everyone and then at Eve) ...we have to have faith.

EVE:
I know how you all feel--thinking there's no way you're going to survive this. But I promise, it will get better someday.

Music fades in: "Someday"

Eve looks at Gabrielle and then steps out in front of the entire crowd.

EVE (singing):
Someday
When we are wiser
When the world's older
When we have learned
I pray
Someday we may yet live
To live and let live

The townspeople look at each other, thinking.

EVE (singing):
Someday
Life will be fairer
Need will be rarer
And Greed will not pay
Godspeed
This bright millennium
On it's way
Let it come someday

Eve smiles at Gabrielle who smiles back.

GABRIELLE (singing):
Someday
Our fight will be won then
We'll stand in the sun then
That bright afternoon
'Till then
On days when the sun is gone
We'll hang on
And we'll wish upon the moon

A beat.

EVE (singing):
There are some days dark and bitter
Seems we haven't got a prayer

GABRIELLE (singing):
But a prayer for something better
Is the one thing we all share

Smiles begin to grow across the villager's faces.

EVE and GABRIELLE (singing):
Someday
When we are wiser
When the world's older
When we have learned
I pray
Someday we may yet live
To live, to live, to live and yet live

EVERYONE (singing):
Someday
Life will be fairer

Need will be rarer
Greed will not pay
God speed
This bright millennium
Let it come
And we'll wish upon the moon

GABRIELLE (singing):
One day
Some day

EVE (singing):
Soon

The music fades. Gabrielle puts a hand on Eve's shoulder and they both smile.

WOMAN #1:
We can't give up.

The crowd nods and murmurs in agreement. Suddenly, screams are heard coming from beyond the city walls.

VOICE (beyond the walls):
Kill the dogs!

Gabrielle and Eve look at each other; the townspeople look at them. Gabrielle draws her sais as we:

FADE OUT

ACT THREE

FADE IN

The camera zooms in on a man who is on a tall platform by the city walls, which serves as an observation post.

MAN ON THE PLATFORM:
It's Treius and two other men! They're going to kill them!

Gabrielle races up the ladder to the top of the platform. The camera pans over to the grounds by the town walls. Three men, their hands tied, are on their knees with three soldiers holding their swords over them.

SOLDIER #1:
That'll teach 'em how to try to escape from this stinking town!

Just as they swing their swords, Gabrielle throws her sais, killing two of the soldiers. The third looks up, frightened.

GABRIELLE:
Get me some rope! Eve! Come up here!

Somebody throws Eve a coiled role and she races up the ladder to the top of the platform. Meanwhile, underneath the walls, three more soldiers come running.

GABRIELLE:
Eve, I know you don't believe in fighting but I really need your help right now. (points to the three kneeling townsmen who look up with a mixture of terror and hope on their faces) *They* need your help. (as she speaks, she ties the rope to the top of one of the pillars supporting the platform) Follow me!

Gabrielle slides down the rope. Eve hesitates for a moment and then leaps over the wall, in a spectacular jump reminiscent of Xena herself. She lands on the ground in a fighting posture.

SOLDIER #2 (sneering):
Well, what d'you know. Someone in this town actually wants to fight.

The soldiers charge. Gabrielle and Eve fight back, striking out with their fists and with ferocious kicks. Gabrielle retrieves her sais from the bodies and uses them to fight the soldiers.

The three kneeling townsmen manage to get up, despite their hands being tied.

RESCUED MAN #1 (looks admiringly at Eve and Gabrielle as they fight):
They're *good*.

All the soldiers are now lying unconscious on the ground except for the last one, who continues to get up even after Gabrielle and Eve repeatedly kick him and he falls back. Finally, he runs off toward Nicodemus' camp, which is visible in the distance.

EVE:
Looks like we scared him off.

GABRIELLE:
For now...but he'll be back and he'll bring others with him. (raises her voice) Open the gates, quick!

The gates swing open; Gabrielle, Eve, and the three men who were about to be killed by Nicodemus' soldiers run quickly inside, and the gates shut behind them again. The crowd cheers and claps for Gabrielle and Eve.

RESCUED MAN #1:
Thank you so much. We would have died if it hadn't have been for you two. By the way, I'm Treius and these are my friends...

GABRIELLE:
What were you doing?

RESCUED MAN #2 (shamefaced):
We just lost hope that anything could be done to save the town...we didn't want to starve to death and so we decided to escape. They caught us right away.

GABRIELLE:
Lucky for you Eve and I were here.

Eve looks down, troubled. The crowd cheers again.

XENA (off-camera):
Did I miss the party?

TREIUS (gesturing to himself and the two others):
We would have been killed by Nicodemus' soldiers if these wonderful ladies hadn't come to the rescue.

GABRIELLE:
We took care of them, Eve and I.

XENA (looks at Eve with mixed emotions):
So you fought?

EVE (raises her eyes):
I had to, Mother. Innocent lives were at stake. I have the skills...not using them would have been like...letting someone starve even though I had the food to give them.

Xena nods thoughtfully, and then crosses her arms in mock pique.

XENA:
So you choose to pick a fight without me, huh?

GABRIELLE:
Hey, you can't be here for *every* fight. Don't be greedy.

They chuckle briefly.

GABRIELLE (to Xena):
So, how'd it go with Nicodemus?

XENA:
He's determined to stick around until the town surrenders. (smiles slyly) Maybe that can be arranged.

GABRIELLE (gives her a shocked look):
What do you mean?

XENA (to the crowd):
Come on over here and I'll tell you.

CUT TO

Gabrielle is walking along a street. The air in front of her suddenly starts to solidify. She stops, a hopeful look on her face. Joxer appears.

GABRIELLE:
Joxer! I was hoping to see you again...I didn't have a chance to tell you--I'm so sorry that you died because of me.

JOXER:
No, no--it wasn't your fault. And you know what? If I had to do it over again, I'd still do it. (pause) You know, Gabrielle--I loved you. I know you told me you didn't feel that way about me...

GABRIELLE (moved and a little guilty):
Joxer--

JOXER:
And then twenty-five years went by before I saw you again, and I still loved you even then--even though I had a wonderful family and a wonderful life. I wanted to do whatever I could for you. And now, I don't want you to blame yourself for my death.

GABRIELLE (quietly):
Thank you, Joxer. But I just can't stop thinking that I messed up...if I'd hadn't gotten caught then--

JOXER:
No. You did everything right. You always have.

GABRIELLE (shakes her head):
I didn't. I didn't treat you right, Joxer. It's not my fault that I didn't love you the way you loved me, but... (she smiles) ...I didn't have to be such a bitch to you.

JOXER (smiles back):
Don't worry about it. I loved you just the way you were.

GABRIELLE (looks at him with tears in her eyes):
I promise you, we'll free the people of this town. You can count on it.

JOXER:
I know. I could always count on you. (blows her a kiss) Bye, Gabby.

GABRIELLE (tearfully):
Bye, Joxer.

The camera pans over to Eve who looks out from behind a corner. Close-up on Eve's face, a look of anguish and guilt on her face.

The camera pans back to Gabrielle, who watches as Joxer vanishes, and then walks away in a different direction from where Eve is standing. As Gabrielle disappears behind a corner, there is a "whooshing" and Aphrodite appears at the spot where Gabrielle and Joxer stood. Suddenly Joxer materializes again.

APHRODITE:
How sweet. (sniffs) You loved her...you missed her for twenty-five years...you died for her, and you still care for her even now. That is so incredibly sweet.

JOXER:
Yeah? Well, why does it make me feel like a moron? I mean, you know, I wish I'd been able to let her know how I really felt years ago-- (chuckles) --before I turned into a prune. (points to his face, indicating the wrinkles; shakes his head) I am such a loser.

Music fades in: "I'm A Loser"

Aphrodite looks at him sadly, seeing his pain. Unseen, Eve watches him with tears in her eyes.

JOXER (singing):
I'm a loser
I'm a loser
And I'm not what I appear to be

A beat.

Of all the love I have won or have lost
There is one love I should never have crossed
She was a girl in a million, my friend
I should have known she would win in the end

Joxer looks at Aphrodite sadly.

JOXER (singing):
I'm a loser
And I lost someone who's near to me
I'm a loser
And I'm not what I appear to be

A beat.

Although I laugh and I act like a clown
Beneath this mask I am wearing a frown
My tears are falling like rain from the sky
Is it for her or myself that I cry?

A beat.

I'm a loser
And I lost someone who's near to me
I'm a loser
And I'm not what I appear to be

Aphrodite looks at Joxer and shakes her head. He looks sad.

What have I done to deserve such a fate?
I realize I have left it too late
And so it's true, pride comes before a fall
I'm telling you so that you won't lose all

A beat.

I'm a loser
And I lost someone who's near to me
I'm a loser
And I'm not what I appear to be

The music fades. Joxer sighs and looks down. Aphrodite walks up to him. Gabrielle steps behind the corner so that they wouldn't see her.

APHRODITE:
Aww...no, of course you're not a loser. You were a great friend to Gabrielle and Xena, you know. You had a good heart. Oh, you may have fallen down on your face a lot, but at least you *tried*, you know? That's more than you can say about most people. And you ended up with great kids. You have a lot of things to be proud of, okay?

JOXER (stunned):
Proud? Me?

APHRODITE:
Yeah. You see anyone else here? (laughs) You may not have been a great warrior, but you were a great guy.

Aphrodite beams at him and disappears. Gabrielle walks away hastily.

Joxer stares blankly for a moment then starts to disappear when he notices Eve. Eve flinches, frightened and guilty.

JOXER (unreadable expression and tone):
Hello, Eve.

FADE OUT

ACT FOUR

FADE IN

EVE:
Joxer, I don't expect you to believe me when I say this, but--

JOXER:
It's okay. I've been watching you for a long time, Eve, and you've done a lot of good. And you know what I've realized? The person you are now would have never killed me.

Eve's eyes are filled with tears and she shakes her head.

EVE:
That still doesn't make up for what I did.

JOXER:
No, it doesn't. But I forgive you anyway. You've punished yourself enough.

EVE (looks down):
Forgiveness won't make what I did go away.

JOXER:
Hate won't either.

Eve nods grimily, then looks at him.

EVE:
Virgil really misses you, even now...and so do Kara and Theon. You have beautiful children.

JOXER:
I know. (smiles slightly) You know, you were a beautiful baby too...I guess I could never forget that. I think Virgil is growing quite fond of you. (Eve blushes a little) And I can see why. I hope you have a good life, Eve. Look out for your mom...and for Gabby, okay?

Eve nods and Joxer fades away.

CUT TO

The city gates swinging open. Nicodemus rides in on a black steed, the rest of his army of about a hundred men following. The townsmen stand lined up along the square in front of the city gates. Gabrielle, with a cloak over her armor, and Eve are standing with the crowd.

NICODEMUS (grins; to his men):
So these dogs finally decided to come to their senses and give in. And Xena thought she could stop me!

CUT TO

Xena is in the room in the inn. She is putting the chakram on her hip and the sword at her back. Then she sees the medallion lying on the bed from the night before. She walks up to it and picks it up, rubbing it with her fingers and then she places it in her breastplate.

A hand comes from behind and runs through her hair. She turns to find Ares standing behind her, now rubbing his knuckles against her cheek.

ARES:
Keeping that in a safe place, are you?

XENA:
I guess you could say that.

ARES:
So...Nicodemus and his men are coming. For some reason, he thinks the town is surrendering to him.

XENA (grins):
Does he, now?

ARES:
I bet you have a nice surprise in store for him.

XENA:
Wait and see.

ARES (sighs):
I'm still going to have to think of some horrible way of punishing Nicodemus...when the time is right. You know, it's been a while since I've made anyone *really* cower in fear of me...I've kind of missed it.

Xena smiles indulgently.

CUT TO

The square, where Nicodemus postures in front of the cowering townspeople.

NICODEMUS:
Kneel, scum! You're looking at your new master!

The townspeople drop to their knees. So do Gabrielle and Eve, who exchange mischievous looks.

Xena's ululating battle cry rings through the square and she arrives in a series of spectacular flips.

NICODEMUS:
Xena. I told you I wouldn't hesitate to kill you if I saw you again.

XENA:
And I told you I'd stop you one way or another.

NICODEMUS:
Oh, then bring it on!

Xena throws her chakram. Nicodemus ducks but the chakram knocks out several of his soldiers before Xena catches it.

NICODEMUS (laughs):
You think that little toy is going to stop me?

Suddenly, the townspeople rise to their knees. They reveal knives, pots, pans, rocks and sticks which they've had hidden behind their backs or under their clothes. Nicodemus' soldiers are pelted with rocks. Several of them tumble off their horses, taken by surprise. The townspeople attack. Gabrielle throws off her cloak, revealing her sais, and leaps into the fray. Nicodemus' warriors are being knocked down everywhere. As the fight rages, Eve stands to the side, looking uncomfortable. Then she sees one of the soldiers about to strike down a townswoman who has fallen. Eve hesitates, then grabs a rock and throws it at the soldier, knocking the sword out of his hand. He looks up in shock and she smiles a little.

Under the surprise attack, the warriors turn around and run, while others are on the ground wounded or knocked unconscious. Xena stops and turns to Nicodemus, who is still mounted on his horse.

XENA:
I wonder why your men left so soon. Didn't enjoy the party?

The townspeople start to converge on him and then pelt him with rotten food.

TOWNSWOMAN #1 (throws a rotten apple):
These rotten scraps are all the food you left us. Maybe now you can taste it yourself!

Nicodemus tries to ward off the incoming missiles and tumbles off his horse. The townspeople laugh, pelting him with more food. There is a brilliant flash of blue light and Ares appears in the middle of the square, his hand on the hilt of his sword. The townspeople gasp.

XENA:
Well, look who decided to show up.

ARES:
Hey. Now that you've got the situation firmly in hand, mind if I have a little fun? It's not as if I'd be (with a look of mock horror) bailing you out or anything.

Nicodemus looks frightened.

NICODEMUS:
Ares, my lord, I beg you, have mercy.

A murmur of "Ares" goes up among the townspeople.

ARES (sneers):
Mercy? The God of War doesn't show mercy...*especially* not to those who choose to disobey my commands.

NICODEMUS (stammers):
P-p-p-p-please, m-m-my Lord...

ARES:
Run along. You're much too pathetic to kill.

He laughs gleefully. Xena, Gabrielle, Eve and the townsfolk join in. Nicodemus turns around, leaving his horse behind, and runs toward the still-open town gates.

XENA (to Ares):
And that's all the fun you were going to have?

ARES (shakes his head and grins slyly):
Oh no. You just watch.

Just as Nicodemus is running out through the gates, Ares raises his hand and shoots a lightning bolt, zapping him in the backside. Nicodemus yelps and grabs his backside, running faster. Ares shoots another bolt at him.

GABRIELLE (scrunches up her eyebrows):
I'm getting this weird sense of déjà vu...

ARES (grins):
It's good to be a god.

XENA (smirks):
You know, I can't believe you would even pick a guy like that to be in your service. Bad for your reputation.

ARES:
Oh, so you're worried about my reputation now, are you?

XENA (teasingly):
Not really. (suddenly, she grows serious) Thank you, Ares.

ARES (looks at her questioningly):
For what?

XENA:
For not siding with Nicodemus...and for letting me do things my way.

ARES:
Mm-hmm. (they look deeply into each other's eyes, oblivious to everyone else for a moment, then jolt out of their trance) Well, I've got...stuff to do. See you later, right?

XENA:
Right.

He disappears.

GABRIELLE (walks up to Xena):
Well, at least we know he won't be back here again.

XENA (gives her a puzzled look):
Who? Ares?

GABRIELLE (grins):
No, Nicodemus. What, do you have Ares on your mind or something?

Xena smiles sheepishly. Meanwhile, the villagers begin to cheer for their victory, chanting the names of Xena and Gabrielle.

TREIUS:
Hey, let's not forget Eve! My friends and I would have been dead if it hadn't been for her.

Eve looks embarrassed. Some of the townspeople pick up a chant of "Eve."

LANDER (walks up):
Thank you so much. We never would have been freed if it weren't for you.

XENA:
It's what we do. But remember, Lander, the people of your town freed themselves. I just (smiles) gave them some useful tips.

Lander nods and walks toward the crowd.

GABRIELLE:
So, Xena--is Ares still bothering you?

XENA (a dreamy smile still on her face):
What do you mean?

GABRIELLE:
I mean, does it still bother you that you're...with him?

XENA:
Gabrielle...

GABRIELLE:
Fine. If you don't want to talk about it...

Gabrielle turns.

XENA:
No, Gabrielle, wait! (Gabrielle looks back) The truth is...it's never going to be easy between Ares and me. But being with him is my choice, and I don't regret it.

Gabrielle smiles as she walks back to Xena. Eve joins them, and Xena puts an arm around both of them, smiling. They walk over to the crowd of townspeople who cheer them again.

LANDER (to the townspeople):
We're free. Can you believe it? We're free. All we had to do was believe--not just in Xena, but in ourselves.

Music fades in: "When You Believe"

The townspeople nod in agreement; Xena, Gabrielle, and Eve stand back watching them.

LANDER (singing):
Many nights we prayed
With no proof anyone could hear
In our hearts a hopeful song
We barely understood
Now we are not afraid
Although we know there's much to fear
We were moving mountains
Long before we knew we could

A beat.

There can be miracles
When you believe
Though hope is frail
It's hard to kill

A beat.

Who knows what miracles
You can achieve
When you believe
Somehow you will
You will when you believe

Treius walks up next to Lander. He looks at Lander briefly and then looks ahead.

TREIUS (singing):
In this time of fear
When prayer so often proves in vain
Hope seems like the summer birds
Too swiftly flown away

A beat.

Yet now I'm standing here
My heart so full I can't explain
Seeking faith and speaking words
I never thought I'd say

A beat.

There can be miracles
When you believe
Though hope is frail
It's hard to kill

A beat.

Who knows what miracles
You can achieve
When you believe
Somehow you will
You will when you believe

They and the rest of the villagers start to walk out of the village gates, smiles on their faces. Xena, Gabrielle and Eve smile too, following.

LANDER and TREIUS (singing):
They don't always happen when you ask
And it's easy to give in to your fears
But when you're blinded by your pain
You can't see the way to get through the rain

LANDER (singing):
Hold still

TREIUS (singing):
Reveal your voice

LANDER and TREIUS (singing):
Says hope is very near

ALL VILLAGERS (singing):
There can be miracles
When you believe
Though hope is frail
It's hard to kill

A beat.

Who knows what miracles
You can achieve
When you believe
Somehow you will
Now you will
You will when you believe

LANDER (singing):
You will when you

TREIUS (singing):
You will when you

Believe
You will when you

LANDER and TREIUS (singing):
Believe

The music fades and the townspeople walk on, Xena, Gabrielle, and Eve behind them.

DISSOLVE TO

The sound of birds chirping is heard. It is morning. The camera pans over the campsite. Xena, Gabrielle and Eve are asleep in their bedrolls. The camera moves in on them as the chirping gets louder and they all wake up at the same time. They sit up and look at each other, bewildered.

EVE:
Was that a dream?

XENA:
I guess so. (shakes her head) I had a dream that seemed so real...we were in a town called Coronea and there was this warlord named Nicodemus, whom I fought years ago...

GABRIELLE and EVE (in unison):
You had it too?

XENA (stunned):
What do you mean?

GABRIELLE:
Coronea, Nicodemus...we were there! There was a man who asked for our help, named...

XENA:
Lander?

EVE:
Yes!

GABRIELLE:
And then you got the townspeople to pretend to surrender and when Nicodemus' troops rode into the town, they--

EVE:
Attacked them with rocks?

XENA:
And pots and pans?

EVE and GABRIELLE:
Yeah!

XENA:
And then when Nicodemus was running away, Ares zapped him--

GABRIELLE (chuckles):
Right in the backside!

XENA (rubs her temples):
I guess we all had the same dream last night.

GABRIELLE:
How could that have...wait. What did we eat last night?

EVE:
Just the berries that I got in the forest.

Xena stands up and looks around, searching for any of the berries that were left. She finds one lying on the ground. She picks it up and inspects it, then throws it down and looks at Eve.

XENA:
Eve, you gave us Zazen Berries. Do you know what those are? They play tricks on the mind and cause hallucinations.

Eve looks at Xena and Gabrielle guiltily.

EVE:
Sorry. I thought they were something else.

XENA:
Well, at least we know who won't ever be gathering dinner for us again.

GABRIELLE:
Hey, I'm sure she can cook a little better than you. Besides, it was an interesting experience.

EVE (hesitantly):
There was a moment in my dream when I fought because it was--the right thing to do. I wonder what that means...

GABRIELLE:
Eve, you'll know when the time is right.

XENA:
Come on, let's get out of here.

Gabrielle and Eve stand up, and they all start to pack up camp. Xena walks over to Argo, straps her bedroll to the saddlebag and mounts. Eve and Gabrielle soon do the same and mount their own horses.

GABRIELLE (a little wistfully):
You know, it's funny...I saw Joxer's ghost in my dream (casts a slightly uncomfortable look at Eve) and I said things to him that I really wish I could say...I wish it had been real.

EVE (almost in a whisper):
I saw him too.

There is a brief uncomfortable silence.

GABRIELLE (trying to sound cheerful):
So where are we headed?

XENA:
To start with, I'd like to get some real food. (shoots a teasing glance at Eve) Preferably the kind that won't give us any more weird dreams. Come on, there's a village not far from here that has a good tavern.

GABRIELLE:
Good idea.

Just as Xena nudges Argo and is about to move forward, there is a flash of light and Ares appears in their path.

ARES:
Morning.

XENA:
Morning.

ARES (glances at Gabrielle and Eve, then turns to Xena):
Can I, uh, talk to you alone?

XENA:
What about?

ARES:
Well...I had this odd dream last night...

Xena, Gabrielle and Eve exchange startled glances.

GABRIELLE:
Gods get dreams? I didn't know you even slept.

ARES:
We do sometimes.

XENA (narrows her eyes at him suspiciously):
Wait a minute. This dream of yours, did it have anything to do with a town called Coronea and my old friend Nicodemus the Warlord?

ARES (looks at her, surprised):
You had the same dream?

XENA:
So did Eve and Gabrielle. (angry) Ares, what have you done? Were you messing with our heads? That would explain *everything*.

ARES:
No, Xena, I didn't. (impatient) Come on, after everything that's happened between us (Eve looks away at his words, flinching slightly) do you really think I'd mess with your dreams?

XENA (a little uncertainly):
Well...I suppose not.

ARES (sarcastic):
Thank you for that ringing vote of confidence.

There is a flash of golden light, and Aphrodite appears.

APHRODITE:
Hey, stop busting Ar's chops! *I* was the one who gave you that dream, okay?

XENA, GABRIELLE, EVE and ARES (in unison):
You did?

APHRODITE (with a self-satisfied grin):
Yeah. Didn't think I was up to it, didya? I always told you, don't believe everything you hear about blondes.

ARES:
It *would* take a blonde to do something that stupid! (shoots a glance at Gabrielle) Um...yeah. (back to Aphrodite) Don't you know better than to mess with another god's head?

XENA:
Why would you do a thing like that?

APHRODITE:
Because you all have issues, okay? If I left it up to you, *I* would get wrinkles before you did something about it. (rolls her eyes)

XENA (irritated):
And that gives you the right to do it for us?

APHRODITE (beaming):
I'm a god, Warrior Babe. I don't *need* rights. (looks at Gabrielle) Hey, Gabrielle--just wanted to tell you one thing.

GABRIELLE (a little sadly):
Yeah?

APHRODITE:
Joxer--you *did* talk to him. Yeah, it was a dream, but he was really there.

GABRIELLE (smiles brightly, her eyes growing a little moist):
He *was*?

APHRODITE:
Yeah. It was his chance to...say some things, too.

Gabrielle smiles contentedly.

During the conversation between Aphrodite and Gabrielle, Xena has ridden forward a little, stopping under a large tree. Ares comes up to her. She dismounts and they face each other.

XENA:
So...

ARES:
So.

They are silent for a moment.

XENA:
I guess your sister had a point. We're just not very good at talking when we're awake.

ARES:
Xena, the things I told you in the dream--I really did mean them.

XENA:
I know you did.

ARES:
Want me to say them again, when we're awake?

Xena slowly shakes her head, looking him in the eye.

ARES:
Hey. What's that?

He points to a small piece of chain sticking out of Xena's breastplate. She reaches into it and pulls out the medallion that Ares gave her in the dream. She looks at it and then at Ares, smiling warmly.

XENA:
It's beautiful.

ARES:
So...what *you* told me in the dream...

XENA (quickly):
I didn't tell you anything. (off his indignant look) Just kidding.

ARES:
I know you are.

He smiles and then disappears. Xena stands looking at the spot where he vanished, the medallion in her hand. A close-up on the dreamy look on her face.

GABRIELLE (off screen):
Xena. (Xena doesn't hear her as the camera pulls back for a wide shot of Xena, Gabrielle and Eve) Xena! (louder) *Xena*!

XENA (jolted out of her trance):
Yeah?

GABRIELLE (smiles):
Still dreaming?

XENA (grins):
Maybe.

GABRIELLE:
Well, wake up and let's get to that village.

XENA (mutters as she gets back in the saddle):
Maybe I don't want to wake up.

GABRIELLE ("did I hear that right?"):
What?

XENA:
I didn't say anything.

GABRIELLE (rolls her eyes):
Oh...there we go again.

Gabrielle kicks her horse and starts off, followed by Eve. Xena continues to look at the medallion. Then she shakes her head with a smile, puts it back in her breastplate and hurries to catch up with Gabrielle and Eve as we:

FADE OUT

THE END

[Eve's reputation as an herbalist suffered during the production of this motion picture.]